



2013

Knowledge Management and Change Management Strategy



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5/3/2013

INTRODUCTION:

The VRA has been operating the Ghana power generating system in a dynamic and ever-changing energy sector, for over 5 decades. VRA recognizes and believes that an environment of free and open knowledge sharing is critical to the success of the Authority. In order to help foster an open and enabling forum for the communication of thoughts, ideas, concepts and information throughout the Authority, the Knowledge Management section was established. This document sets to effect and manage the concept of Knowledge Management.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Technical and non-technical Knowledge gathering in VRA has been very challenging and has led to problems of identification and classification of sources, access, retrieval, sharing as well as channel of communication. This phenomenon has resulted in knowledge being stored in silos; people keep knowledge acquired to themselves for their personal use alone.

Also knowledge is not appropriately classified; as tacit and explicit, no retention schemes; no communities of practice; no documentaries on lessons learnt, no best practices, as well as knowledge that can be articulated, codified, and stored in certain media which can be readily transmitted to others.

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE OR OPPORTUNITY?

Currently the following challenges have been identified:

- Source of knowledge
- Channel of knowledge
- Communication of knowledge
- Technology of accessibility of knowledge
- Helps ensure the right information gets to the right people at the right time to make the right decisions

- Improved team communication and reduced problem solving time
- The challenge of the individual versus the team in knowledge sharing
- The process of knowledge capture and integration
- New employees will be able to become efficient much more quickly because there'll be a clear guide to the information they need.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION?

The current situation is a deplorable one, where knowledge is held up in the silos, staffs do not know where and how to get the type of knowledge needed to apply in their daily routine, work processes are duplicated and standards are not adhered to. Again the average staff is not abreast with new developments best practices within the VRA. Explicit knowledge is scattered over operational areas and this makes it difficult to reach accurate knowledge. Furthermore, staff holds knowledge close to their bosoms with the fear of losing it when mostly needed. They are in the habit of personally and physically assessing knowledge making electronic knowledge sharing seem very remote. Most of the valuable documents do not have legal backing of intellectual property. Again the roles of existing repositories are not well defined.

WHAT WOULD WE LIKE TO SEE DIFFERENTLY?

- One stop shop of Knowledge management through the Knowledge Management portals
- Easy access to knowledge anytime anywhere
- Easy dissemination of knowledge of knowledge by push and pull technology
- Stimulate a learning culture among staff of VRA
- Secure legal backing to VRA intellectual properties
- Encourage an open organization
- Retention of knowledge through the retention policies
- Formation of communities of practices that are active and prominent.

THE CHANGE PLAN

Statement of the desired change:

Mechanism of sharing knowledge in VRA is nonexistence; there are no effective knowledge retention schemes with laid down procedures as to how to collect and manage practices for future use; no communities of practice to share ideas; no documentaries on lessons learnt so past mistakes are not repeated; no learning culture among staff.

Purpose:

To harness, organize and store both explicit and tacit knowledge in a central knowledge repository that addresses VRA's needs and establish a system of knowledge management collaboration and knowledge sharing within VRA.

Also to develop a system for easy access/retrieval of the organizational knowledge within the Authority, as well as establish Communities of Practice that is effective.

To use technology to stimulate and Connect VRA workforce through an effective community of Practice that will build a relationships and trust among employees to create effective and productive teams. Identify and share knowledge, experience and expertise across VRA.

Foster the culture of openness in stimulating the habit of learning, sharing and innovation across the Authority. To encourage employees to use knowledge access platforms that will be provided for sharing knowledge to help foster an open and enabling forum for the communication of thoughts, ideas, concepts, and information throughout the Authority. Finally to preserve critical knowledge that is at risk of being lost.

Who and What needs to change:

- People
- Processes
- Technology and
- Culture

Whatever knowledge management tools and techniques that are in use, they are unlikely to work in isolation – they need to be supported by the right kind of environment. The three key elements of that environment are outlined as follows: **People, Processes, Technology and culture** which forms part of the peoples' environment. These will at all-time be acting as either enablers of, or barriers to, effective knowledge management. VRA thus needs to identify the barriers and remove them, build on existing enablers and create additional ones, because within these environments lays the greatest knowledge management challenges.

Among the three key elements, the most important is undoubtedly people. Because creating, sharing and using knowledge is something that is done by people. Processes and technology can help to enable and facilitate knowledge management, but at the end of the day it is people who either do it or don't do it.

- **People**

Getting an organization's culture (including values and behaviours) "right," for knowledge management is typically the most important and yet often the most difficult challenge. Knowledge management is first and foremost a people issue. Are people motivated and rewarded for creating, sharing and using knowledge? Is there a culture of openness and mutual respect and support? Or is VRA hierarchical where "knowledge is power" and so people are reluctant to share? Are people under constant pressure to act, with no time for knowledge-seeking or reflection? Do they feel inspired to innovate and learn from mistakes, or is there a strong "blame and shame" culture?

The main source and consumers of knowledge in an organization is its workforce. Tacit knowledge and experiences are the greatest assets that organizations must leverage upon to eradicate redundancies and improve learning and innovation.

A Knowledge Management System looks into Knowledge Engineering – how to package knowledge and learning to suit various consumers. Often the assumption is that the same knowledge can be consumed by any level of users. This has resulted in a backlash and negative spotlight on the effectiveness of managing knowledge.

One of the biggest deliverables of knowledge management is the ability to increase personal and organizational capability in improving competencies and producing innovative results. Both can only happen when there is an environment for holistic learning and cross-pollination of ideas and experience among people.

It is therefore crucial that employees are able to collaborate with their peers to tap implicit knowledge and experience and know how, when and where to find explicit knowledge relevant to their performance in the organization.

More specifically, whilst drafting up KM strategies, it is essential to pay much attention to how collaboration and learning can be fully leveraged from both implicit and explicit knowledge sources. Such strategies must give importance to connecting the right person, to the right knowledge at the right time. It also works the other way around, when individual knowledge is captured and transformed into organizational knowledge, which will be a field for talent management and ensuring organizations are only head count poorer and not knowledge poorer when crucial employees decide to leave. The change will affect all staff both individuals and groups and so there is the need to define their key knowledge goals that needs alignment to the departmental objectives and goals.

Staff needs to be responsible for the gathering, organizing and sharing their own explicit and tacit knowledge; they therefore need to understand how much their work habits will be affected. It is therefore imperative, that staff are encouraged to be part of the creating and sharing process for it to be successful.. According to Alvin Toffler "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." Training of staff would be directed at all levels to equip them for the task ahead. Individual staff would also be encouraged to attend knowledge sharing session organized that will be by the authority.

As a first step, staff will be taught and encouraged to continuously update their profile in the 'Expert/Staff Directory' at the VRA Workforce Portal (SharePoint). Also they will be

tasked to update databases of good work practices and lessons learned to retain organizational knowledge in the performance of their job functions. Every individual staff will have to champion the change campaign by taking part fully in all Knowledge management activities.

Why people don't want to share knowledge?

There is a traditional view that knowledge sharing is not a natural act and that people need not be coerced or cajoled into it. Some of the values and attitudes that constitute barriers to seeking, sharing and using knowledge are:

- Knowledge is power
- I don't have time
- I've got too much real work to do
- That's not my job
- You're just using other people's ideas and taking the credit
- I want to do things my way
- This is how it's always been done
- I'd like to help, but my manager won't like it if I waste time doing things for another team
- That's not how we do things around here
- I don't trust them
- Are you telling me how to do my job?

- **Processes**

In order to improve knowledge sharing, within VRA there is the need to make changes to the way internal processes are structures and sometimes even the organizational structure itself. For example, if an organization is structured in such a way that different parts of it are competing for resources, then this will most likely be a barrier to knowledge sharing. Looking at the many aspects of “how things are done around here” in VRA, there is the need to find out which processes constitute either barriers to, or enablers of, knowledge management? How can these processes be adapted, or what new processes can be introduced, to support people creating, sharing and using knowledge?

These are clear, concise and easy steps which may exist in virtual or non-virtual settings in which employees can quickly learn and apply the right knowledge at the right time. It ensures that learning happens by design and not by chance.

Humans are creatures who learn from myriad types of styles and activities. More importantly however, the chances of learning will automatically increase when people know how to learn. Having a process of learning then becomes crucial in ensuring that learning is not only gained but can also be applied as well.

Whenever, instances of learning are wasted and knowledge not managed, the end results is attrition of crucial know-how and know-what which will in turn result in serious impact on the organization. Another important factor is that when learning is a process that can easily be navigated by employees, it does not become an ‘extra burdensome’ task rather it is seen as an incentive to make both work and life easier and thus increasing the desire of staff to learn and manage knowledge within organizations.

- **Technology**

A common misconception is that knowledge management is mainly about technology – getting an intranet, linking people by e-mail, compiling information databases etc. Technology is often a crucial enabler of knowledge management – it can help connect people with information, and people with each other, but it is not the solution. And it is

vital that any technology used “fits” the organization’s people and processes – otherwise it will simply not be used.

Technology helps link People with Process, in a Knowledge Management setting. Clever manipulation of Knowledge Technology (as compared to Information Technology) will help improve learning and yield results. A common misgiving is the fact that technology investment is costly and is beyond the scope of many organizations. However, with the rise of social networking software, workplace portals and Web 2.0 applications, that assumption is far from the truth. It is now almost theoretically free to implement knowledge technology in organizations that will help learning in organizations.

A good example is how social networks have now exploded into the scene. As a micro blogging tool, it can be cleverly used to transmit and connect people to knowledge. It is often used to connect people regularly. VRA staff on their part would just have to follow the process of logging into one channel to know all they need to know to make their work and life easier.

Knowledge Management Section shall therefore ensure that VRA maximizes the value of knowledge assets through the facilitating and work place portals the deployment of knowledge info structure by the use of technology to stimulate and Connect VRA workforce through vibrant effective Communities of Practice. The use of technology to create effective and productive teams that will result in building relationships and trust among employees.

Again the deployment of a technological system that facilitates the identification and sharing of knowledge, experience, and expertise across VRA, that will enhance organizational learning and knowledge.

- **Culture:**

Culture is “the way we do things around here”. A more complete definition is a set of values, beliefs, assumptions and attitudes that are deeply held by the people in an organization. They influence the decisions people make and they ways in which they behave. In organizations in

where individual achievement is recognized, people are rewarded for their personal knowledge but no incentive to share it. In a knowledge sharing culture, people can be rewarded for individual achievements, but are also recognized and rewarded for their knowledge sharing and contributions to team efforts. Key characteristics of a knowledge sharing culture include the following:

Key characteristics of a knowledge sharing culture include the following:

- Top leadership sees knowledge as a strategic asset and provides incentives and support for knowledge management processes;
- The organization focuses on the development and exploitation of its knowledge assets;
- Tools and processes for managing knowledge are clearly defined;
- Knowledge creation, sharing and use are a natural and recognized part of the organization's processes, not separate from normal work processes;
- Groups within the organization cooperate instead of compete with each other;
- Knowledge is made accessible to everyone who can contribute to it or use it;
- Rewards and performance evaluations specifically recognize contributions to, and use of, the organization's knowledge base;
- Communication channels and a common technology infrastructure enable and enhance knowledge management activities.

We need to acknowledge that organizational cultures run deep and the older and the bigger the organization, they deeper they will tend to run.

To enhance good culture, there is the need to nurture positive habits and rewarding those staff who serve as change agents, by particularly, acquiring, sharing and preserving of knowledge as everyone's responsibility in VRA.

Ensure the maintenance of an effective organizational culture in VRA; managers should be responsible for applying new knowledge to improve positive behaviours. Staff should be made to cultivate the culture of using existing knowledge repositories:- archives; libraries; e-libraries; e-learning; work place portals; intranet, in their daily routines to enhance work activities.

Individual behaviours:

People's behaviours are largely a function of organizational culture, which are easier to see and to identify as "makers or breakers" – enablers or barriers – to knowledge sharing.

Knowledge management requires changes in individual behaviour. Individuals must be encouraged to incorporate knowledge management activities into their daily routines. This includes activities relating to seeking out knowledge when they have questions or problems, finding and using existing knowledge rather than reinventing the wheel, sharing their own knowledge, learning from others' experience and helping others to learn from theirs as well.

How do we make the changes?

To bring about changes in both individual behaviours and organizational culture, VA has to:

- Focusing on changing individual behaviours first
- Understanding the barriers to knowledge sharing and seeking to eliminate them
- Introducing policies and practices that enable and encourage knowledge sharing
- Understanding your organizational culture and working within it rather than against it while gradually working to change it.

What are the strategies for changing culture?

- Work with it the existing culture while you work towards changing it.
- Lead by example
- Align rewards and recognition with a noticeable change in culture
- Make knowledge work part of everyone's job
- Develop relationships
- Educate people about what is involved and skill them to do it

- Demonstrate the value
- Create champions and heroes
- Make it easy

We must bear in mind that culture change is not just a knowledge management office's or management's business alone but each and every body's business.

How will we increase driving forces?

- Empowerment through education
- Rewards for sharing (commendation, recognition, publicity etc.)
- Online discussions
- Social networks

How will I reduce restraining forces (stakeholders)?

Restraining force will be reduced through the following actions and activities;

- Education
- Presentations
- Workshops
- Posters and fliers
- Manuals
- Publications
- Meetings and group discussions
- Social media
- Intranet chatrooms etc.

Planning a Change Communication Strategy:

In planning the communication process the KMO will develop a communication plan which will be used to determine core messages; communicate the reasons the importance of sharing knowledge to resolve Issues, problems, etc.

The communication plan will address intent-Objective and provide information about the processes of sharing and encourage staff to share.

The plan will make room for modalities to anticipate and answer questions Q&A, FAQ, above all share progress and “small wins.” It will also provide for two way communications like town halls, feedback strategies and social networks and group discussions.

Methodology:

The communication plan will involve the use of pushing out critical information, in the form of town hall meetings of sharing information; working groups to problem solve, posters, the use of the intranet, power point presentations and seminars to create awareness and communicate the knowledge management message.

The method will also employ the use of focus groups deploy learning mechanisms to large groups designed to assist in problem solving meetings *all hands on deck* . Work out sessions – *quick feedback, quick action*. We will also employ action learning assignments to help staff learn by doing and visiting information websites (Blogs) – through the use social technologies. Flyers and education tours will be organized to carry out presentations to sensitize the workforce as well.

Evaluation methods:

Carry out a feedback surveys on how well the concept is being assimilated by staff. Surveys, questionnaires and knowledge audit among other tools will used to access the plans and processes deployed in the propagation of Km within the authority.

Benefits of km:

The benefit of carrying out a change management programme is to encourage the free flow of information/knowledge among staff.

Streamline operations and reduce cost by eliminating redundant/unnecessary, processes.

Facilitate staff orientation and learning transfer among peers to foster innovation and best practices

Maintaining continuity, consistency and surviving departures from negative organizational culture promote good decision making and turn VRA into a learning organization

The change in km:

The change we set to seeing KMO is to improve team efficiencies, increase sale productivity, and reduce overhead cost associated with employee turnover by retaining key performance area to stimulate organizational change and innovation

Celebrating Successes:

In the celebration of successes, there have to be clear deliverable results that may be classified as short term, medium term, and long term. The successes in the form of outcomes and of knowledge sharing and uses that have resulted in concrete gains chalked must be announced and celebrated. To achieve these, there is a need to motivate people who take pride in the use of knowledge resources in their daily activities. There is also the need to reward success stories. This must not necessarily be in monetary terms, but could take the form of publications in the house newsletters, publications on notice boards, letter of commendations and worker of the month among others.

Conclusions:

VRA is faced with unprecedented knowledge loss in the next few decades. In order to successfully cope with this exodus, utilities will need to use a variety of approaches to capture, retain and transfer critical knowledge. While we may be tempted to just “write it down” as a solution, a blend of different types of knowledge retention and transfer

approaches will be necessary to deal successfully with the challenge and capture all the types of knowledge critical the organization. Some of the appropriate actions to be taken to retain knowledge are:

Documenting the knowledge and transferring it to others, by the use of people-to-people approaches, identifying alternative resources, reengineering the need for the knowledge, transfer through education and training.

After action reviews are also an important means of sharing useful information. Staff should be encouraged to review whatever actions they have taken to their colleagues, especially they should be impressed upon to make presentations within their unit whenever they attend training programmes.

For employees who plan to leave the organization within a particular year, VRA would need to put the necessary arrangements in place to find out from the employee and his or her manager what unique or critical knowledge that employee has. This can be done by asking a variety of questions including general, task based, facts and information, and pattern recognition/lessons-learned types of questions by means of exit interviews. With this information in hand, VRA will determine the importance, immediacy, feasibility and transferability of the type of knowledge gathered. VRA then identifies what issues to ignore, correct with minor effort, or take immediate action.

