

Reading for Session 4

A summary of some articles related to session 4 of the MIS and Strategy course for the World Med MBA

The Articles

- They are all:
 - From Harvard Business Review
 - Relate to key concepts at the intra-organizational level
 - Available on-line
 - Relevant, practical and easy to read

The Articles

- **Intraorganizational (internal) use of Information systems**
 - Edmondson, A. C. (2008). The Competitive Imperative of Learning. *Harvard Business Review*, 86(7/8), 60 - 67.
 - Davenport, T. H., & Glaser, J. (2002). Just-in-Time Delivery Comes to Knowledge Management. *Harvard Business Review*, 80(7), 107 - 111.

The Competitive Imperative of Learning

Edmondson (2008)

- The article is about how to ensure that knowledge is shared and the organization as a whole 'learns'.
- The article is *not* directly about technology, but it does offer a critique of 'traditional' approaches to KM

The Competitive Imperative of Learning

Edmondson (2008)

- The core of the article is about the distinction between 'execution as efficiency' and 'execution as learning'
- This distinction is one that we have already touched on in session one; it concerns how to deal with complexity

The Competitive Imperative of Learning

Edmondson (2008)

- 'Execution as efficiency'
 - To control complexity and variability managers transform complex and unpredictable jobs into simple, uniform and predictable work
 - Once this has been done, the way in which the work is done can be gradually refined and made more efficient

The Competitive Imperative of Learning

Edmondson (2008)

- 'Execution as efficiency' - the problem



- Efficiency becomes an evolutionary dead end

The Competitive Imperative of Learning

Edmondson (2008)

- Ideas and innovations are suppressed
 - Managers become risk adverse as the goal is to make the most efficient use of resources. Questions and experimentation 'waste' time and energy
- There is no time to learn and change
 - Change and moving up a learning curve involves a short term sacrifice in terms of efficiency for a long term improvement in performance

The Competitive Imperative of Learning

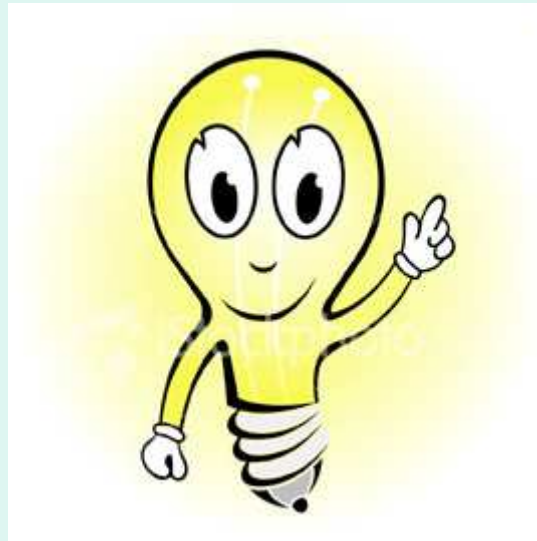
Edmondson (2008)

- There is no incentive to learn
 - Focusing on efficiency is often associated with rewarding 'top performers'; this can act as an incentive not to share best practice with others in the organization
- Companies develop tunnel vision
 - Success in the short term is seen as confirmation of the correct approach. Without any opportunities to learn, the fate of the dinosaurs awaits.

The Competitive Imperative of Learning

Edmondson (2008)

- 'Execution as learning'- some solutions



- Create an open environment where failure is seen as a learning opportunity

The Competitive Imperative of Learning

Edmondson (2008)

- Provide guidelines not rules
 - seek out 'best practice' from all sources to establish a standard, but use this as a baseline not as bedrock
- Provide tools for collaboration
 - IT has an obvious role to play here but social networking and face to face meetings are also tools for collaboration

The Competitive Imperative of Learning

Edmondson (2008)

- **Collect data at the process level**
 - collect data at the right time and the right level, without imposing too heavily on normal working patterns
- **Institutionalise reflection**
 - build opportunities for learning and reflection into normal working patterns and develop systems to disseminate the results

Just-in-Time delivery comes to KM

Davenport & Glaser (2002)

- This article deals with some of the issues associated with the management of 'hard' (factual) knowledge and offers some insights into how KMS work in practice.
- The main theme of the article is the need to link the design of Knowledge Management Systems to the work systems they are supposed to support.

Just-in-Time delivery comes to KM

Davenport & Glaser (2002)

- The article is based on a case study of an American hospital where:
 - new knowledge (mainly medical research and patient histories) is generated so quickly that doctors and others can not keep track of it
 - research indicated that an unacceptably high level of avoidable errors were being made, some of which could be life threatening
- The solution was to use a KMS to improve the management of this knowledge.

Just-in-Time delivery comes to KM

Davenport & Glaser (2002)

- The article highlights the problems and the solutions that were found.
- Problem
 - how to get people to enter knowledge into the system and use the knowledge that is already there
- Solution
 - 'embed' the system into everyday work in such a way that it does not disrupt work but also can not be avoided

Just-in-Time delivery comes to KM

Davenport & Glaser (2002)

Keys to success?

- Motivation
 - Crucial to success, provided by concern over avoidable errors
- Credibility
 - Content of knowledge base was monitored by top experts in their field

Just-in-Time delivery comes to KM

Davenport & Glaser (2002)

Keys to success?

- Process orientation
 - the KMS is linked to key processes in patient care
- Decisions rest with user
 - System only advises, but if overridden collects (and uses) information about why this was

Just-in-Time delivery comes to KM

Davenport & Glaser (2002)

Keys to success?

- Culture of measurement
 - need to get acceptance of the importance of measuring outcomes
- IT and users work together
 - backroom IT and frontline physicians worked together as a team

Compare and Contrast

- When you have read these articles, you might like to reflect on how they relate to some of the earlier case studies, in particular:
- Google vs Dell
 - efficiency vs innovation
- The BPR and KM case studies
 - linking information and work systems