Toward an agile knowledge connection of employees with regard to business processes

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Abstract

Employee knowledge is a valuable and thus very important asset of a company. However, employees are often not aware of existing knowledge within their organization. As a result, wheels are reinvented continuously within organizations and employees spend unnecessary time learning processes in a cumbersome way on their own. To deal with this problem, databases containing explicit knowledge are often built, but they are rarely used – mainly due to the immense effort of keeping them up to date. In this paper we present a new approach aiming at socially connecting employees – an internal social knowledge network. A major novelty is the use of the organization's business processes as a starting point. Employees can connect to each other by indicating their process-related areas of expertise. The aim is to enable sustainable sharing and distribution of knowledge within an organization.

1 Framework for the knowledge connection of employees

We propose an internal social network system that is closely linked to the processes of an organization and does not contain the tacit knowledge itself. The idea is to motivate employees to indicate their areas of expertise and to claim expert status toward other employees:

- *Setting up the process architecture*: The starting point for the introduction of such a social knowledge network lies in the organization's business processes (Figure 1). The processes define the business-related connections between employees. Such a process architecture is provided to employees within the social knowledge system. The processes should be documented on three levels from top down, thus, being specific in terms of the description but general in terms of the activities to be performed within the process.

- *Social knowledge system*: The social knowledge system is the core of the framework. The implementation of the system should take place via the use of software-based tools. Each employee should have easy access to the available but distributed knowledge in the organization.

- *Usage of the social knowledge system*: Employees can reference their relevant areas of expertise, as well as sources for explicit knowledge. Thus, they provide the necessary information individually. The system can easily be used in daily work by everyone and by the management to identify knowledge gaps. Clear rules for communication have to be established to avoid problems. This should cover a rating of knowledge, timespan for knowledge if not used and incentives.

- *Supporting incentive structure*: In order to ensure sustainable application and widespread use of the social network, an incentive system is recommended. A bonus system should be set up, covering the completeness of the profile, answering of inquiries and the rating of colleagues. The bonus system should be part of the personal salary bonus.

- *Technical implementation*: The system is available for the relevant recipients – that is, management and employees – for their use in day-to-day business as a software tool. A personal knowledge page, the knowledge map and a search engine are provided. Depending on existing process- and knowledge-related systems available a technical connection should take place.

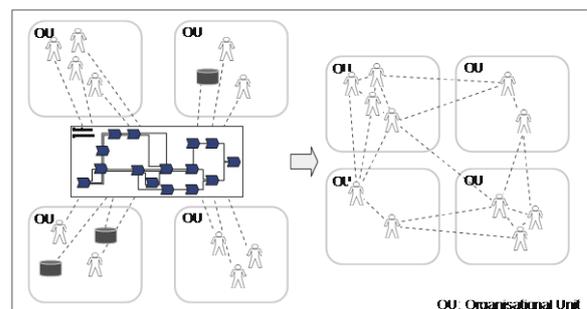An overview of the elements of the framework is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Overview of the social knowledge system

2 Reference of the paper

Michael Leyer and Nina Claus. Toward an agile knowledge connection of employees with regard to business processes. In *Proceedings of the 46th Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, pages 3436–3445, Los Alamitos, California, 2013. IEEE.