

3 Knowledge Management Activities, Models and Frameworks

Learning objectives

- Define and discuss key knowledge management activities.
- Understand the role as well as the limitations of ICT for each of the knowledge management dimensions.
- Understand the particular importance of knowledge sharing in event organisations.
- Explore different knowledge management models.
- Apply knowledge management frameworks to event organisations.

Introduction

The knowledge-based theory of the firm is centred on two key principles: first, knowledge can be a source of competitive advantage, especially if it is difficult to replicate and copy, if it is organisation-specific, and directly related to the organisation's products, services or processes. Second, the sharing of information and knowledge within organisations is believed to be more effective than within markets (Hislop et al., 2018). Furthermore, if knowledge is considered the most important asset for achieving competitive advantage in an organisation (where competencies, capabilities and skills are more important than other types of assets and resources), then the organisation can be defined as 'knowledge-

intensive'. Or, as Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995: 7) famously argued, "the future belongs to people who use their heads instead of their hands." Knowledge-intensive firms can be described as companies with work that is intellectual and where the workforce consists of well-qualified employees. They can also be different to other, non-knowledge-intensive firms, in terms of their structure (i.e., less hierarchical), the character of their workforce, products and services (e.g., non-standardised products, high quality services, such as memorable experiences), as well as the nature of the work processes themselves (i.e., complex, creative, requiring collaboration between different teams and departments) (Alvesson & Kaerremann, 2001; Hislop et al., 2018). Taking these characteristics into account, event organisations can to some extent be classified as 'knowledge-intensive' and it is therefore important to effectively manage knowledge management activities and processes within these organisations.

Hislop et al. (2018: 79) nicely summarise a number of sources from the wider knowledge management literature that define an organisations' intellectual capital to consist of three elements, which together constitute the sum of all the knowledge used to gain organisational competitive advantage:

- ◆ *Human capital*: consists of all the knowledge, skills, abilities, and expertise residing in and used by individuals within the organisation;
- ◆ *Organisational capital*: is the collective institutional knowledge and organisational memory which has been codified/made explicit in databases and other repositories, systems, processes, and structures; and
- ◆ *Social capital*: is all the knowledge embedded in and available through personal relationships (networks between people) within the organisation. This implies that a certain element of trust between people needs to exist in order for them to share knowledge with each other. In other words, social capital is more than the sum of all the individual employees' capital, it is according to Dalkir (2017), the glue that holds them together.

All three types of capital underpin the process of knowledge management and are equally important. This chapter will first cover the most

commonly identified activities in knowledge management: the creation of new knowledge; the identification and acquisition of knowledge for individuals, teams and the organisation as a whole; the implementation and utilisation of knowledge in day-to-day practices; the sharing and transfer of knowledge with others (inside and outside the organisation); and finally, the storage of knowledge in order for it to be documented and hence, made explicit. The role of ICT systems as well as their limitations will be discussed throughout each of these dimensions of knowledge management. Where applicable, examples from the events and festival literature will be presented at the end of each section to show how some of these knowledge activities have been explored and investigated in an events context. The second part of the chapter summarises some of the best-known knowledge management frameworks built around these key knowledge management activities: it starts with Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) knowledge creation spiral model, then discusses Wiig's (1995) knowledge management model and finally McElroy's (2003) knowledge life cycle framework. Each framework or model will be applied to event organisations and event-related examples throughout.

Key knowledge management activities

According to Heisig (2009) most knowledge management frameworks in the 1990s and early 2000s identified six key knowledge management activities: create, identify, acquire, use, share and store knowledge (with some using synonyms). Each of them will be discussed more in-depth below, and the supporting role of ICT in each knowledge activity will also be briefly summarised. It is commonly acknowledged that technology can never replace knowledge; it is merely a channel or medium for conveying, sharing and storing data and information (Halawi et al., 2017). Furthermore, it is interesting to note that out of the six knowledge management activities, knowledge sharing has by far received the most attention in both academic literature and management practice so far. Over the last 10 years, these trends have continued, but are now embedded in a more practice-based understanding of knowledge management (see Chapter 4). Table 3.1 below summarises typical knowledge management activities and some of the synonyms used in the literature as well as similar activities, which can be classified under the same category: