Knowledge Management in Event Organisations Instructor's Manual

3: Knowledge Management Activities, Models and Frameworks

Chapter 3: Knowledge Management Activities, Models and Frameworks

Lecture 3

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

Knowledge management activities

The key question for Lecture 3 is "what can we 'do' with knowledge?" A brainstorming session with students would be good to start with, where knowledge management activities such as the ones in Table 3.1 below can be identified. The six most commonly defined knowledge management activities are: create, identify, acquire, use, share and store knowledge, although there are many synonyms used in the wider literature and students will probably come up with some of the other terms mentioned in Table 3.1 as well.

Table 3.1: Knowledge management activities

KM activity	Synonyms and similar activities
Create	Generate, develop, innovate, build/sustain, produce, evolve
Identify	Organise and classify, structure, analyse, determine, review, locate, investigate, discover, survey and categorise, map, find
Acquire	Collect, import, provide, get, source, gather
Use	Apply, leverage, re-use, enable, exploit, capitalise, deploy
Share	Transfer, distribute, communicate, collaborate, diffuse, disseminate, allocate, network, cooperate
Store	Retain, capture, codify, package, secure, archive, document, maintain, preserve, protect, accumulate

Alternatively, they could be asked to create a word cloud such as the one below (Author's own, 2021):

A suggested additional reading for this is:

♦ Heisig, P. (2009). Harmonisation of knowledge management – comparing 160 KM frameworks around the globe. *Journal of Knowledge Management, 13*(4), 4-31

The 6 key knowledge activities can then be defined and discussed further:

♦ *Knowledge creation* – The production and development of new ideas, the generation of new knowledge for specific tasks, in order for the organisation to evolve and innovate.

♦ *Knowledge identification* – The process of proactively identifying internal organisational knowledge; the knowledge management process whereby organisations take steps to identify the relevant and needed knowledge that exists within their boundaries (e.g. Knowledge Audit or Knowledge Sourcing) through locating, finding and discovering knowledge; mapping, organising and classifying knowledge; as well as structuring, analysing and reviewing existing knowledge within the organisation.

♦ *Knowledge acquisition* – The process of sourcing knowledge that is relevant to a certain problem faced, as well as collecting and gathering knowledge and importing it into other business processes; can be formal or informal, e.g. learning-by-doing.

♦ *Knowledge use* – The process of applying knowledge, exploiting and capitalising on the knowledge created and identified, as well as re-using knowledge in different situations and at different times.

♦ *Knowledge sharing* – The process of communicating knowledge with others inside and outside the organisation; transferring, disseminating, diffusing and distributing knowledge to those who need it; as well as networking, collaborating and cooperating with others.

♦ *Knowledge storage* – The process of archiving and preserving knowledge; codifying knowledge in order to make it explicit; as well as packaging, securing and protecting knowledge to create an organisational memory and to avoid knowledge leakage.

The role of ICT

It is important to also highlight the role of ICT in each of these knowledge management activities, for example: online or company-internal forums where ideas, problems, and interpretations can be shared; Lotus Notus discussion databases or corporate directories; electronic billboards and discussion groups; the production of electronic manuals and how-to guides for induction sessions; or intranets where organisational knowledge can be stored, categorised, structured, and reviewed. Students should be reminded though that most of these are costly and time-consuming and hence difficult to implement in small- and medium-sized event organisations. Furthermore, they are limited to the sharing and storage of explicit knowledge, whereas the creation, acquisition, use and transfer of tacit knowledge will always require human interaction and cannot be achieved through ICT systems alone.

Knowledge sharing in event organisations

The human element of knowledge management has been acknowledged in the events literature in recent years and knowledge sharing (knowledge transfer) has therefore by far received the most attention in an events context. Some key additional readings for this are:

♦   Clayton, D. (2016). Volunteers' knowledge activities at UK music festivals: a herme-neutic-phenomenological exploration of individuals' experiences. *Journal of Knowledge Management, 20*(1), 162-180.

♦   Muskat, B., & Deery, M. (2017). Knowledge Transfer and Organizational Memory: An Events Perspective. *Event Management, 21*(4), 431-447.

♦   Ragsdell, G., & Jepson, A. S. (2014). Knowledge sharing: insights from Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) festival volunteers. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management, 5*(3), 279 - 296.

♦   Stadler, R., Fullagar, S., & Reid, S. (2014). The professionalization of festival organizations: A relational approach to knowledge management. *Event Management, 18*(1), 39-52.

Students can be asked to do their own research on different knowledge sharing activities and approaches in event organisations as suggested in these articles and/or based on their own practical experience of working at or volunteering for an event. It will become clear that event staff members and volunteers will only share their knowledge if there is a positive and open culture, if they are motivated to share, if they trust each other and if they are happy to collaborate. Most tasks in planning and organising an event require a team effort and hence effective knowledge sharing is a key activity and is important for the overall success of the event. It is also crucial in building an organisational memory; if knowledge has been shared many, many times, there is a good chance it will stay with the organisation, even if individual members leave once the event is over.

Sample short-answer questions:

♦ In your own words, outline the six main knowledge activities and provide an event-related example for each.

♦ Define 'knowledge sharing/transfer' and highlight challenges for transferring different types of knowledge between event stakeholders.

Lecture 4

Learning objectives

☐ Explore different knowledge management models

☐ Apply knowledge management frameworks to event organisations

Introduction

Nonaka & Takeuchi's (1995) model of knowledge creation is used as an example for Lecture 4, but a similar lecture could easily be developed around Wiig's (1995) or McElroy's (2003) knowledge management frameworks. All three frameworks are covered in-depth in Chapter 3 and are applied to event examples; which one to discuss further with students partly depends on individual preferences but also on students' previous knowledge and understanding. In the case of Nonaka & Takeuchi's (1995) model of knowledge creation, it is worth doing a quick recap on the different types of knowledge (explicit – tacit) and the different levels of where it resides (individual – group – organisation) covered in Chapter 1 before going into the framework itself, as it is very much based on these. The model is available in the original book and students should be encouraged to read pages 62-72 before coming to the lecture:

♦   Nonaka, I., & Takeuchi, H. (1995). *The Knowledge Creating Company – How Japanese Companies Create the Dynamics of Innovation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Nonaka and Takeuchi's model of knowledge creation

This model is based on the assumption that knowledge creation is the key activity any company or organisation should aim for in order to create competitive advantage and to be innovative over time. Knowledge creation as defined by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995: 3) is thereby, "the capability of a company as a whole to create new knowledge, disseminate it throughout the organization, and embody it in products, services and systems." But the model also includes other knowledge management activities, such as sharing knowledge with others in the organisation, and documenting/storing knowledge for future use. The 4 knowledge conversion processes are:

1.   *Socialisation*: connecting tacit knowledge with tacit knowledge, which includes the sharing of experiences and creating shared mental models and technical skills. For example through the use of language, through observation, imitation, practice, and hence experience.

2.   *Externalisation:* making tacit knowledge explicit, or in other words, tacit knowledge taking the shape of metaphors, analogies, concepts, or models. Can be achieved through dialogue and collective reflection.

3.   *Combination*: combining explicit with explicit knowledge, through for example, documents, meetings, telephone conversations, and e-mails.

4.   *Internalisation*: transforming explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge, where documents, manuals, or shared stories are used to help individuals create new tacit knowledge in the form of, for example, shared mental models or technical know-

how. Explicit organisational knowledge is regularly used and therefore absorbed into day-to-day (tacit) work practices, through processes like learning by doing.

It is important to note that these four modes of knowledge conversion do not start or end at a certain point; rather, they form a dynamic process of knowledge creation and therefore a knowledge creating spiral, which helps the organisation to continuously improve and learn. Table 3.2 summarises the different types of knowledge conversion, the level of where this conversion takes place, and provides an event-related example for each:

Table 3.2: Four modes of knowledge conversion in events

	Socialisation	**Externalisation**	**Combination**	**Internalisation**
Type of Knowledge Conversion	Tacit ➤ tacit	Tacit ➤ explicit	Explicit ➤ explicit	Explicit ➤ tacit
Change in Level of Knowledge	Individual – individual	Individual – group	Group – organisation	Organisation – individual
Event-related Example	Observing an experienced staff member interacting with a new sponsor	Creating metaphors in the staff room or behind the stage	Database recording attendee contact information and communication	Telling, retelling and reliving stories of past event highlights and successes

Students should be encouraged to identify their own event-related examples for each of the 4 processes. For an additional reading that applies this model to the Olympics, see:

♦ Blackman, D., Benson, A. M., & Dickson, T. J. (2017). Enabling Event Volunteer Legacies: A Knowledge Management Perspective. *Event Management*, *21*(3), 233-250.

Limitations and critique of the model

Lastly, students should be reminded that no knowledge management model is perfect and that they should pay particular attention to how this model of knowledge conversion has been critiqued over the years. The three main points of critique are;

5. There is unconvincing empirical evidence to support the theory in the original book;

6. The simplicity of the distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge, where other theorists have since then argued that there is always an element of tacit knowledge to any form of explicit knowledge, and also that tacit knowledge can never be fully made explicit and the process of externalisation is therefore limited; and

7. The fact that the model was developed in a Japanese context and is hence not universally applicable to other organisations and companies using different (Western) business practices, values, and cultures.

Sample short-answer question

(Similar questions can easily be created for the other two models/frameworks discussed in Chapter 3):

♦ Identify an event-related example of knowledge at the individual, group and organisational level, and discuss how this knowledge can be converted using Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) socialisation-externalisation-combination-internalisation model.

Sample long-answer or essay question

(Similar questions can easily be created for the other two models/frameworks discussed in Chapter 3):

♦ Debate which of the four knowledge conversion processes in Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) model is the most difficult to achieve in an event organisation and why?

Students should by now be able to make the connections between some of the knowledge management challenges in event organisations discussed in Lecture 2 and what this means in terms of the models presented in Lecture 4. For example, the Socialisation process (converting tacit into tacit knowledge) is much more difficult to achieve in an event organisation due to the lack of time and resources, large number of volunteers, and lack of trust among the team, if they have never worked together before. Learning-by doing takes time and requires processes of reflection along the way, both challenges in the fast-paced event environment. The Externalisation process (converting tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge) on the other hand, is very difficult to achieve post-event when temporary/seasonal staff members are keen to move on to other jobs and do not have the time or energy to sit down, turn some of their lessons learned into explicit knowledge, and store it effectively for the wider organisation. They might also feel reluctant to do so and prefer to simply take all the newly gained knowledge with them. Similar issues can also be identified for the Combination and the Internalisation processes of the model. In other words, all four knowledge conversion processes are difficult to achieve in an event organisation due to the 'pulsating' nature of it and all the challenges that come with this.