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KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES IN THE NEW ZEALAND STATE SECTOR

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Masters of Business Information
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Abstract

This research study attempts to determine whether New Zealand State sector organisations do benefit or can benefit from using knowledge management. After considering various approaches taken to developing and implementing knowledge management initiatives, the use of knowledge management in a range of New Zealand State sector organisations is investigated. The practices discovered in each organisation are compared. The positive and negative outcomes experienced from undertaking knowledge management initiatives are discussed. These experiences suggest what similar organisations need to be aware of if contemplating using knowledge management.

The research was a comparative study of several New Zealand State sector organisations that have either implemented or are planning to implement knowledge management initiatives. The research approach was qualitative, and the methodology involved in-depth interviews. These interviews allowed for cross-analysis and comparison across eight different State sector organisations to gain an insight into what has occurred around knowledge management initiatives in each one.

All organisations have gone about developing and implementing knowledge management initiatives in different ways, but all have begun knowledge management work from the common starting point of developing a knowledge management strategy to guide an overall programme of work.

The results of the research indicate that New Zealand State sector organisations have used knowledge management as a change tool, to effect culture changes and staff behaviour changes, and to counteract loss of organisational knowledge.

The key benefits obtained by the organisations that have undertaken knowledge management initiatives have been improving knowledge sharing cultures and environments, and achieving cultural and behavioural changes desired. The critical cornerstones for knowledge management success have been good leadership and buy-in of the knowledge management initiative at chief executive and senior management level.

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SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured into the following sections:

Section 1: Introduction

Section 1 sets out an overall introduction to the matters to be discussed in this thesis. The key components of this section are: providing a background and setting the overall scene for the research undertaken; explaining key concepts which are discussed in more detail throughout the research; and illustrating definitional problems for the terms data, information and knowledge, and introducing working definitions.

Section 2: Literature Review

Section 2 sets out the conclusions and findings of the review of literature in the field undertaken to aid this research study. It begins by providing a background on how knowledge management has arisen. The way in which knowledge is managed in organisations is discussed, including knowledge creation, use, sharing, and transferring, along with the roles of information technology and knowledge management in supporting the management of knowledge in organisations.

Knowledge strategies and knowledge management strategies are then explored, and the role of knowledge management systems outlined. Knowledge management's use in the State sector is then introduced, along with the New Zealand situation regarding knowledge management. This section ends with a summary of key conclusions drawn from the literature review undertaken.

Section 3: Research Methodology

Section 3 sets out the research methodology used in this research study. It begins with a background on the research study's aims and the selection criteria used to choose appropriate organisations. The qualitative research methodology chosen (using in-depth interviews) is then described, along with a précis on why this methodology was selected over other types. Questions used during interviews are then discussed, along with the rationale used to determine question types. The use of an interview guide or questionnaire is also introduced.

The research process undertaken is explained including: contact made with organisations selected; conducting the in-depth interviews; what problems were encountered; and how results collected through the research were analysed.

Section 4: Results

Section 4 sets out the results drawn from the in-depth interviews conducted. It begins with a discussion about the nature of the organisations included in the study. It then explores how the organisations studied view data, information and knowledge. The relationship between knowledge management and strategy is then discussed, along with knowledge management drivers, organisational culture issues and their impact on knowledge management.

The stages and timeframes for knowledge management initiatives in the organisations studied are explored. The storage and use of knowledge and information is then investigated, together with the types of knowledge management systems used in the studied organisations.

The design and implementation of knowledge management systems is examined, and the overall lessons learned by organisations who have implemented knowledge management initiatives are presented.

Section 5: Discussion

Section 5 sets out the discussion regarding the key results and answering the research questions posed. It draws out the overall outcomes of the research undertaken. In particular, it confirms the aims of this research study, and explores definitional findings and key messages about definitions.

Knowledge's use and creation are discussed in terms of what was found through the research study. Then different approaches taken to developing and implementing knowledge management initiatives are explored, along with how New Zealand State sector organisations have used knowledge management initiatives. The lessons learned from knowledge management initiatives that have already been undertaken are determined and discussed in regard to their applicability for other organisations.

Section 6: Conclusion

Section 6 sets out the conclusions to be drawn from this research study. The overall findings and conclusions about what was discovered by conducting this research are presented. In particular, a discussion is included about whether the

results were expected, if the findings differed from previous research held and what new discoveries were made.