



Suliman Hawamdeh

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READERS FORUM

Knowledge management is growing field

By SULIMAN HAWAMDEH

Despite years of restructuring and outsourcing activities, Tulsa's economy is showing signs of strength and it is on its way to recovery. The latest figures are an indication of how the economy is improving and adapting to the new environment. But organizations in Tulsa as well as in the rest of the country are struggling to compensate for the lost knowledge as a result of restructuring and outsourcing activities.

Lost knowledge can be a by-product of trimming the work force and reducing costs. Or it can be a by-product of outsourcing activities in which jobs and knowledge are moving overseas. It can also be a by-product of an aging work force and few replacements to a large number of retired workers.

Whatever the reasons for the lost knowledge, organizations are slow in reacting to the knowledge loss and protecting their intellectual capital. Knowledge management is being promoted as an important and essential factor in organizational survival and maintaining competitiveness. Organizations that undergo restructuring and outsourcing activities are the most vulnerable to knowledge loss and need knowledge management practices to help them minimize the impact of restructuring and outsourcing.

To remain competitive, organizations need to examine their knowledge management practices and have the capacity to develop, organize, retain and use their human and knowledge resources. Customers now more than ever want better products and services. As we become part of the global village, many of the products and services that organizations offer have to be transformed to meet these challenges.

Technology opened the door for small businesses to compete globally on an equal footing with larger organizations. This forced larger companies to restructure and consider outsourcing the majority of their activities in order to reduce costs. This was apparent in many sectors in Tulsa's economy, such as the oil and gas, telecommunications and manufacturing activities.

Technological advances and globalization have opened the doors for increased competition. Knowledge management needs to be seen as a critical and strategic resource. Organizations need to pay special attention to their knowledge

resources that are no longer protected by geographical barriers or filing cabinets. Some of the knowledge management practices such as learning organization, communities of practice, knowledge sharing, and knowledge organization provide organizations with the means by which they can protect their intellectual capital and minimize the knowledge loss. Managing intellectual capital effectively not only minimizes knowledge loss but also dramatically improves the human performance output.

Two years ago, the University of Oklahoma in Tulsa realized the importance of knowledge management and started the Master of Science in Knowledge Management. The program is designed to educate a new generation of knowledge professionals capable of working at different levels in their organizations. Knowledge management, being inter-disciplinary in nature, draws upon the theories and practices of a number of fields including information technology, business and management, communication and cognitive science and library and information science.

Our program focuses on a set of core competencies in the key areas of organizational learning and communication, intellectual capital, knowledge management technologies, tools, and measurements, knowledge organization, and information management. The knowledge management program at OU-Tulsa offers courses in the management of knowledge organization, the learning organization, knowledge commerce, intellectual capital, business intelligence, knowledge management measurements, and knowledge discovery and data mining.

The increase in job postings at the executive level for positions such as knowledge managers, chief information and knowledge management officer, chief knowledge officers and so on is an indication of the growing interest in this area. As outsourcing and restructuring activities continue, organizations are bound to turn to knowledge management in recognition that the talent and the innovative capabilities of their employees is their best resource.

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Bill Day The Commercial Appeal
by Tulsa Tribune Syndicate

READERS FORUM

C.S. Lewis

By DANNY M. ADKISON

Maybe you saw the PBS show that will be one of the best on television this year. The two hour program (which was continued in a later show) was called "The Question of God" and was based on a 2002 book by Armand Nicholi Jr., a professor and clinical psychiatrist at Harvard Medical School.

It was a great program that examines the debate between C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud on the question of God's existence, but it failed to capture the essence of one of my all-time favorite authors.

It was the same feeling I had after viewing the film "Shadowlands" in 1994. A great film, but where was the "real" Lewis? While both the movie and the PBS show depicted the thoughtful and serious Lewis, neither demonstrated the fun-loving, witty, passionate Lewis.

One reason has to do with Lewis' private life. When Lewis first started becoming popular in the United States he was typically depicted with a cigarette in his hand. He was also known to be a beer drinker (although never seen by friends to be drunk). These facts and certain theological positions Lewis took have not endeared him to fundamentalists.

In fact, it is when Lewis is with friends drinking beer that he can be at his cleverest and most endearing. For many years he met with his friends and colleagues on Tuesdays for lunch at a pub called the Eagle and the Child (which they referred to as the Bird and the Baby). On Thursday evenings he would meet with mostly the same friends in his rooms at Oxford.

Read "Lewis at the Breakfast Table" (edited by James Commo) or William Griffin's "Clive Staples Lewis: A Dramatic Life," and you'll discover a Lewis that does and says the following:

(This is supposed to be Lewis' bawdiest joke that he loved to tell); "There was a new waiter being instructed in a hotel by an old waiter as to his duties. The older waiter informed the younger one that the most important thing was

tact. asked the of is an I wen leave there so I soap, as if r "We waiter asked along ger w proble days a of tea there brideg the ve "So plaine tray d immed early men.' sor at Club and in often invited per ch Christ somec ating asked prove can y blue no?" T ed as in wh When from to the finish erator nounc now Walter is gen ator: think, At meeting that th Lewis perspi fessor