

BENEFITS ARISING FROM THE APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT IN ORGANISATIONS*

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Knowledge management now interweaves all managerial activities within an organisation and its introduction, as well as the introduction of knowledge continuity management, is always associated with certain benefits. The purpose of the contribution is to identify the benefits that the application of knowledge continuity management brings to organisations. The research has been concentrated on two types of benefits, i.e. on benefits having a relationship to knowledge management and knowledge continuity management as such and benefits directly linked to basic business goals of organisations. The contribution is processed on the basis of the analysis of secondary resources and the evaluation of outcomes of the quantitative survey. One of the conclusions of the contribution is that organisations deliberately applying knowledge continuity management are likely to see benefits not only in the area of knowledge utilization, but consequently also in the increase of the overall performance of the entire organisation.

knowledge management; knowledge continuity management; knowledge; employees; organizational objectives; processes

INTRODUCTION

Although knowledge management as a scientific discipline originated only in the course of the 1990s, it has been developing rapidly and its importance has been growing. At present, it is one of the modern fields that organizations are increasingly interested in. The development of knowledge management was initiated by the gradual shift of an organisation's interest from information to knowledge that currently represents significant strategic value for organisations. Knowledge management represents a group of strategies and approaches contributing to the development, securing and, in particular, the efficient use of knowledge assets. The purpose is to ensure that the required knowledge is at or reaches the place where it is required. If this works, the knowledge can be transferred to employees who can subsequently use it and thus create a competitive advantage for the given organization. In the past knowledge management and knowledge administration used to be in the charge of individual in-company units, later however, its strategic importance for the entire organization began to grow. At present knowledge management is one of the most monitored areas in organizations, as without their employees organizations would be unlikely to fulfil their goals.

Knowledge management is an activity aimed at ensuring that the necessary knowledge is available to those who need it for their work and that it is available to a suitable

extent and at the right time (Mládková, 2004; Truneček, 2004). Wilson (2002) characterises knowledge management as a formulation of an organizational strategy for the development of the application of knowledge that will contribute to the improvement of an organization's processes and ability to respond.

Knowledge continuity is an area associated with knowledge management and defines the ratio of knowledge retained by the organization when a knowledge employee leaves the organization and the knowledge leaving together with the knowledge employee. Knowledge continuity management is a branch of knowledge management. While knowledge management focuses on the capturing and sharing of know-how important for colleagues who have similar tasks in the organization, knowledge continuity management is targeted at the transfer of crucial knowledge from departing employees to their successors (Beazley et al., 2002).

Knowledge continuity management is very important for organizations as it increases the willingness of new employees to gain new experience, reduces stress and improves their morals (Stráck, 2008, cit. Stám, 2009). It is essential for employees to transfer and share their knowledge in the course of their work, on a regular basis, but certainly before leaving the organization. The aim of knowledge continuity management is to find a suitable successor for the departing employee to prevent any loss of knowledge or to eliminate it to the maximum possible extent (Stám, 2009).

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The introduction of knowledge continuity management is expected to generate certain benefits. These benefits can be divided into two categories. The first category covers benefits with a direct relation to knowledge management as such and knowledge continuity management associated with the implementation of knowledge processes, etc. The second category consists of benefits directly associated with the basic business goals of an organization (Bureš, 2007). In this case the application of knowledge continuity management contributes to the achievement of standard goals connected with the running of organizations.

The article also deals with the findings of other authors, such as Jones (2003), North, Hornung (2003) and others, who examined the benefits of knowledge management introduction and compared their findings with the above-mentioned survey. Although the practical experience gathered through surveys shows a great number of benefits associated with the implementation of the strategy of management of knowledge in organizations (Jones, 2003), technical literature provides only few examples of how these benefits can be measured. In his survey, Jones (2003) attempted to demonstrate the advantages of knowledge management by measuring its impacts by means of the Balanced Scorecard conception.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The objective of the article is to identify the benefits arising from the application of knowledge continuity management in organizations. While the first part of the article is dedicated to the theoretical approaches to knowledge continuity management and ensuring of knowledge continuity in organizations, the second part analyses the outcomes of the survey carried out among managers of organizations in the Czech Republic.

The article has been processed based on the analysis of secondary sources, outcome synthesis and the evaluation of results of a questionnaire survey. The data for the evaluation of knowledge continuity management benefits has been gathered through a quantitative survey, i.e. a questionnaire survey, in which 167 higher and middle management managers from various organizations took part; the branch in which the organizations operate has not been taken into account. The survey took place from 4 January 2010 to 30 March 2010. The data have been processed by means of absolute and relative frequencies using the LimeSurvey application and the Excel 2007 programme.

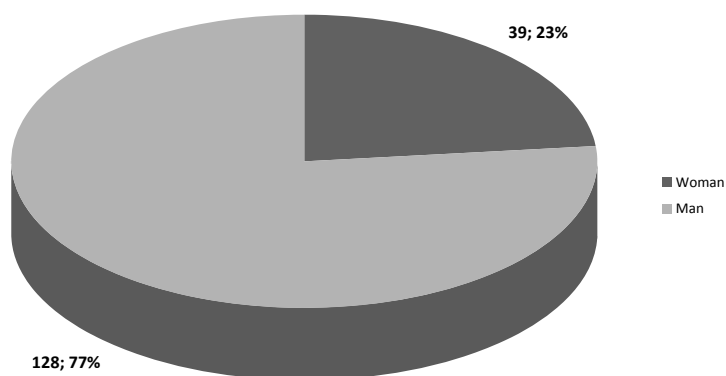


Fig. 1. Structure of respondents according to sex

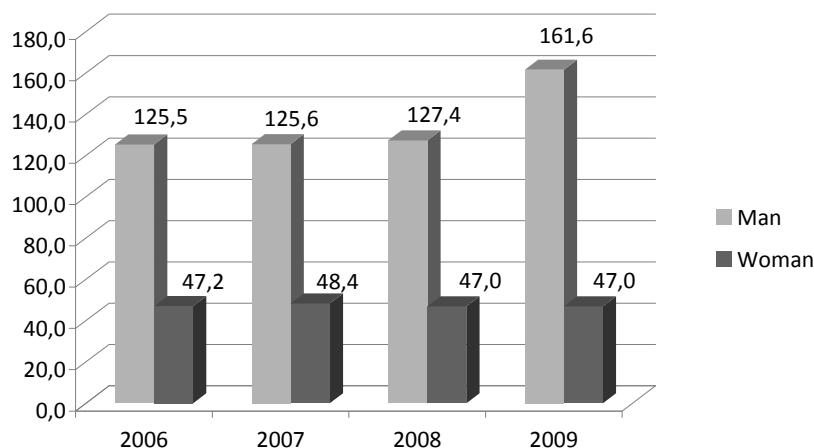


Fig. 2. Structure of managers in the Czech Republic according to sex (on the basis CSO) in thousands of managers

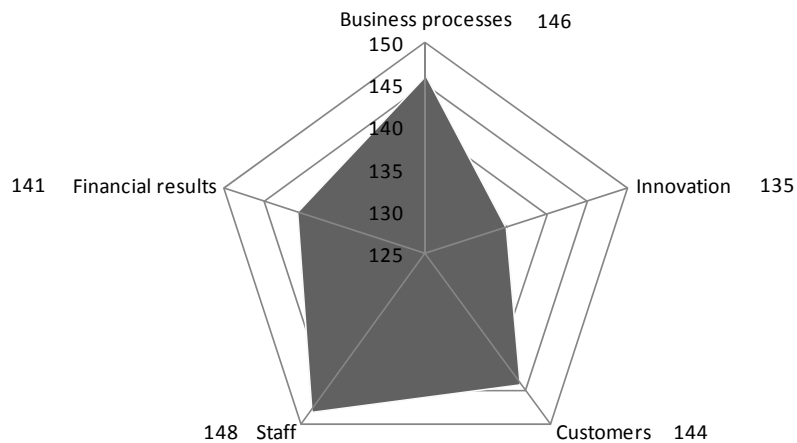


Fig. 3. Benefits arising from the application of knowledge continuity management in organisations (source: author's survey)

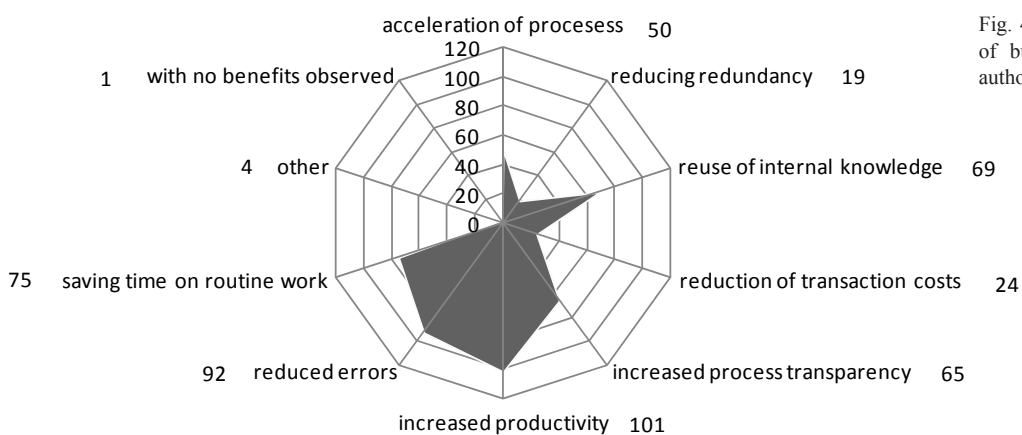


Fig. 4. Benefits in classification of business processes (source: author's survey)

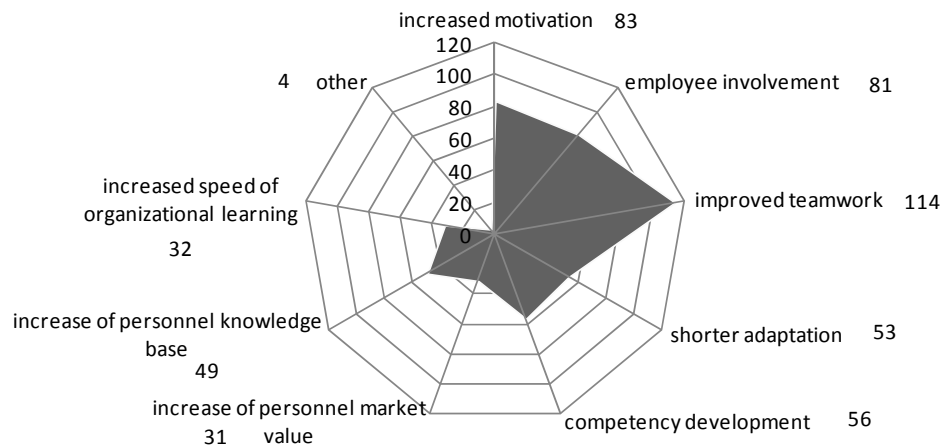


Fig. 5. Benefits in classification of staff (source: author's survey)

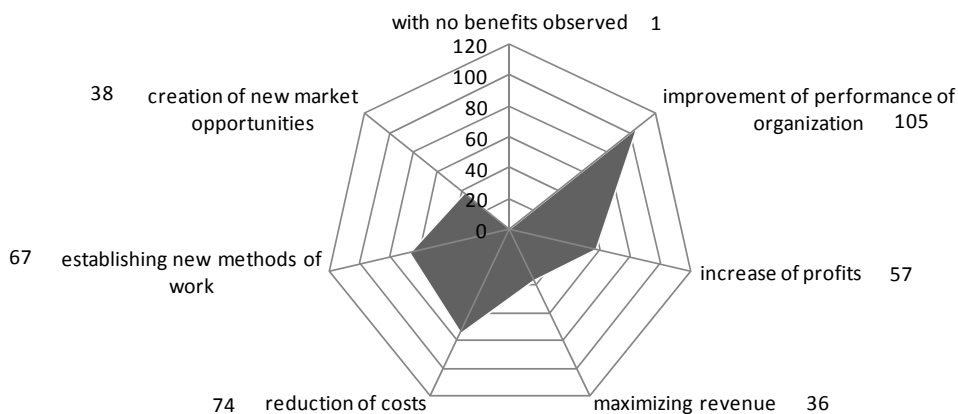


Fig. 6. Benefits associated with primary commercial targets of organisation (source: author's survey)

RESULTS

Benefits arising from the application of knowledge continuity management in organizations

A voluntary supplementary questionnaire, which was also prepared, was completed by 148 respondents (out of the total of 167 managers who participated in the survey) who were able, thanks to their position and experience, to answer the questions of this part of the questionnaire. Their answers (more than one answer per category were permitted) have been evaluated.

There are statistics (see Fig. 2) that show that in the selected group of managers at the middle and higher level of management the number of male managers in organizations in the Czech Republic exceeds the number of female managers. According to the Czech Statistical Office, in 2009 males held 77.5% of managerial positions, while women accounted for only 22.5%, which corresponds to the structure of respondents in the above-mentioned survey. Women are represented in higher numbers only at lower levels of management.

In the first part of the supplementary questionnaire benefits associated with the introduction of knowledge continuity management were identified according to 5 categories. The basic four categories have been taken from the Balanced Scorecard system, and the "Learning and Growth" category has been subcategorized to Innovation and Employees (Kaplan, 1996). In the first part of the questionnaire the following categories were evaluated:

- Business processes
- Innovation
- Customers
- Staff
- Financial results.

Those respondents who were able to evaluate the benefits based on their position determined whether knowledge continuity management had any impact on the determined categories in their organization. In the graphs provided below the absolute frequencies of responses are shown.

Fig. 3 demonstrates that the organizations engaged in the survey have benefited from the introduction of knowledge continuity management primarily in the area of employees and company processes. The least evident benefits have been noticed in the area of innovation. In each of the categories respondents were allowed to provide examples from their practice. The categories have been dealt with individually and the article concentrates on the findings in the area of employees and company processes where the benefits were the most significant; see Figs 4 and 5.

In the category of company processes, respondents see the major benefits in higher productivity (101 respondents) and the lowering of error rates in processes (92 respondents). A large number of respondents also mentioned the category of further utilization of internal knowledge (69 respondents) and higher process transparency (65 respondents). Respondents who ticked the option "other" did not specify their choice. Only one respondent men-

tioned that there were no benefits tracked in the category of company processes. A more detailed list of benefits is shown in Fig. 4.

In the Staff category, the greatest benefit is, according to respondents, the improvement of teamwork (114 respondents), but also increased motivation (83 respondents) and better engagement of employees in the processes (81 respondents). In this area benefits are always evident. All benefits in the given area are shown in Fig. 5.

In modern society the requirements for the knowledge and skills of individual employees constantly vary and employees, in order to succeed in the labour market and to stand up to competitors, have to gradually deepen and extend their knowledge and thus increase the so-called organizational knowledge which enhances the competitiveness of the organization they work for. This turns them into knowledge employees possessing critical knowledge that is much appreciated by today's organizations.

In the second part of the supplementary questionnaire, respondents determined whether the application of knowledge continuity management impacts the basic business goals of the given organization. A total of 105 respondents stated that the biggest benefit lies in the improvement of the organization's performance, 74 respondents found that it was beneficial in terms of cost lowering, 67 respondents mentioned the introduction of new methods of work and 57 the increase of profit. It is necessary to state that the benefits related to the introduction of knowledge continuity management in organizations is, according to surveys of Reinhard and North (2003), usually of a long-term nature.

DISCUSSION

Organizations are aware of the fact that an efficient transfer of knowledge is beneficial and contributes to the improvement of competitiveness of the given organization, which has been confirmed by the survey. Based on the above, it is also possible to agree with the conclusion of the surveys by North and Hornung (2003) that the benefits of knowledge management depend in particular on the manner of acceptance of this conception, its application and adherence by the organization. If an organization applies knowledge continuity management intentionally, if it realises that their employees' knowledge is the greatest asset and efficiently supports knowledge sharing and transfer among current employees, it can expect benefits not only in the area of knowledge utilization and team work, but consequently also in the improved performance of the entire organization, lowering of costs and increasing of productivity.

The outcomes of the executed survey show that the application of knowledge continuity management definitely brings benefits. The advantages are evident only in the long-term perspective, as there are activities where knowledge and experience transfer takes longer.

CONCLUSIONS

The summary of the findings shows that the benefits arising from the application of knowledge continuity management in organizations are demonstrated, according to respondents, primarily in the category of employees. An organization's employees are the most valuable asset of the organization. The efficient management, extension, sharing and preservation of employees' knowledge can ensure not only deeper individual, but also the so-called organizational knowledge. In general, the introduction of knowledge processes improves the performance and productivity of the entire organization.

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Přínosy plynoucí z aplikování managementu kontinuity znalostí v organizacích.

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Všechny organizace si v dnešní době, kdy se nacházejí v prostředí, které vytváří tlak na úspěch, stále intenzivněji uvědomují význam znalostního managementu, který zabezpečuje transfer znalostí mezi současnými zaměstnanci, a managementu kontinuity znalostí, jež se zabývá transferem znalostí mezi generacemi zaměstnanců. Znalostní management v současnosti prolíná všechny manažerské aktivity v organizaci a s jeho zavedením i se zavedením managementu kontinuity znalostí jsou vždy spojovány určité přínosy. Cílem článku je identifikace přínosů plynoucích z aplikování managementu kontinuity znalostí v organizacích. V článku jsou uvedeny teoretické pohledy na oblast znalostního managementu, kontinuity znalostí a jsou analyzovány výsledky na tuto oblast orientovaného výzkumu. Výzkum se zaměřil na přínosy ve dvou oblastech – oblast přínosů mající vztah přímo k managementu kontinuity znalostí a přínosy spojené se základními obchodními cíli organizace. Článek je zpracován na základě analýzy sekundárních zdrojů, syntézy poznatků a vyhodnocení zjištěných výsledků kvantitativního výzkumu. Jedním ze závěrů článku je, že organizace, které budou management kontinuity znalostí aplikovat cíleně, mohou očekávat přínos nejenom v oblasti práce se znalostmi, ale v konečném důsledku ve zvýšení výkonnosti celé organizace.

znalostní management; management kontinuity znalostí; znalosti; zaměstnanci; cíle organizace; procesy

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