

# Evening Talk on “Managing Knowledge in an Engineering-Based Organisation – Awareness and A Perspective Overview”



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## CHEMICAL ENGINEERING TECHNICAL DIVISION

A talk on the above subject, organised by the Chemical Engineering Technical Division, had the objective of creating awareness on knowledge management (KM) through an understanding of its conceptual principles and key implementation parameters.

The event presented and described the conceptual principles and implementation parameters in the perspective of KM being defined as “a set of professional practices which improve the capabilities of an organisation’s human resources and enhances their ability to share what they know for the purpose of achieving the organisation’s objectives and business results”.

The speaker was Encik Agil Atan who had over 30 years of working experience, including at senior positions in the planning, design, engineering, procurement, inspection, construction, project management, and engineering maintenance in KM at Petronas.

Conceptually, KM practices involved the lateral convergence of processes (approaches and methods), technology (tools), and people (behaviour) aimed at capturing and delivering the right knowledge content to the right people, at the right time, and in the right context – all toward enabling them to make the best valued decision, exploit business opportunities and promote innovative ideas.

Such lateral convergence required the understanding of rudimentary concepts that included, among others, the distinctive meaning and value between data, information, knowledge, and wisdom (Knowledge Hierarchy), knowledge assets and their tacit and explicit nature (Types of Knowledge), and henceforth, the cycle of creating, storing, seeking, acquiring, using and learning knowledge (Life Cycle of Knowledge). The practices would enable the three groups of key parameters essential in implementing KM, namely, Knowledge Asset, Strategy/Governance, and Change Management.

As an executive operational tool, KM helped make available increased knowledge content in the development and provision of products and services, leverage the expertise of people across the organisation, solve intractable problems, manage intellectual capital and intellectual assets (e.g. engineering expertise and knowhow) in the workforce, facilitate and manage innovation and organisational learning, increase network connectivity between people, and manage business environments and allow employees to obtain relevant insights and ideas.

Past experiences by several established organisations had shown, generally, the bottom line benefits of pursuing KM – savings in business operating costs, reduction in research and development costs, facilitation in problem-solving and decision-making, improvement of executive processes, and reduction in technical mistakes.

In strategic planning, KM strategies had been used as the basis for building competitive strength and sustainable growth as part of the overall business strategy. In the short term, KM would contribute to improved exploitation of information and knowledge resources available to the company; in the long term, it would build a new foundation towards improved business advantage and strengthen capabilities for a sustainable future.

Implementing KM would thus require top management’s steering and commitment; it would additionally require – from all its members and at all functional levels – an appreciation and acceptance of the strategic value of data/information/knowledge, capability and willingness to change and engage in KM team processes, a driving passion for improvement, and an acceptance of the openness for sharing data/information/knowledge.

In reflection and overview, KM in an engineering-based organisation would be about continually and effectively equipping its staff with pertinent knowledge and knowhow to strategically achieve and sustain best value performance in delivering business results. Knowledge and knowhow need to be harnessed and up kept toward establishing, improving, and/or accelerating staff and organisational capability, to achieve the targets of the organisational goals such as optimum assets performance, leadership development, capability building, and mindset and behaviour change.

Indicators of achievement would be, among others, such evident organisational characteristics as a management steered KM efforts, footed knowledge sharing and continual learning culture, creation of a knowledge-sharing environment, delivery of knowledge-based services, and maximising the value of intellectual capital. ■

## CONGRATULATIONS

The IEM Council would like to congratulate the Vice President of IEM, Ir. Choo Kok Beng, for being appointed as an Advisor to ISTIC by the Chairman, Y.Bhg. Academician Dato’ Ir. Lee Yee Cheong.

*Editorial Board, JEM*