

What's in a name? Knowledge sharing or knowledge management?

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I would like you all to consider the core nature of marketing a concept for a moment. How many of us assume that the rest of the world understands what a librarian does? I know that up until ten years ago I always felt very comfortable telling people that I was a corporate librarian knowing that they would forget the 'corporate' and instantly lock me into the image of a 'really helpful person who knew how to find answers and was totally non-threatening or ambitious'. Yes, I was comfy with that and took delight in surprising them by occasionally 'pouncing' or displaying 'uncharacteristic behaviour'.

However, the past decade has bought huge changes to libraries in the corporate sector and company boards and executives are constantly questioning the cost-effectiveness of the services provided. In many cases these 'non-librarians' are still working with the images and feelings of the past and this means that they may have failed to understand that the 'quiet achievers' have morphed their services levels into the areas of knowledge management.

So, I hear you ask — 'Can I use knowledge management to market what I do within the firm?' Yes, you certainly can because it is the current 'flavour of the year' at board and executive level. These people may not have an in-depth understanding of

what knowledge management involves (or the fact that you are already doing it), but they are aware that it is a KPI (Key Performance Indicator) and therefore is a way of measuring the effectiveness of the information flow and usage within the business.

Let me suggest a way to increase their understanding of your function, experience and skill level. Start telling people you do not deal with knowledge management you deal with *knowledge sharing*. As I said previously, marketing a concept leads to 'buy-ins' and if you present a concept that evokes a question you will be getting an increased understanding.

So, when asked what is the difference between knowledge management and knowledge sharing offer this simple explanation. To 'manage' is to find, capture and place in a box for future use — libraries have been doing this exceptionally well for centuries and librarians do this 'with their eyes closed'. To 'share' is to knock down the walls of that box and turn on an industrial-sized fan to create a constant knowledge swirl across the organisation while at the same time using technology to create processes and protocols to allow users to pluck information quickly from the swirl. The sharing also means that the swirl is constantly updated and audited by the human element (librarians) who work unceasingly to discover and nurture new pockets of knowledge within the firm.

Therefore, I urge you to market the concept of knowledge sharing and paint an image of a dynamic swirl of core intellectual capital. If faced with a person who says that technology will provide a solution, I always agree that it provides a knowledge management 'quick fix' but does *not* provide a long-term knowledge-sharing strategy as the concept of using captured information is dynamic and needs the human element.

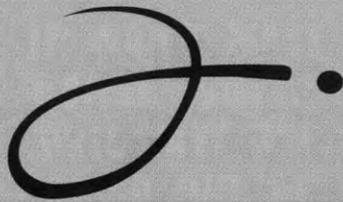
Therefore, to grow a knowledge-sharing culture, do not start from scratch! Leverage a core professional resource by acknowledging that they have 'morphed' over the past decade and feed them 'caviar' so they can fulfil their new role in the organisation. ■

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