

Not Innovation, but Evolution!

Clemens Wudel
KMU Net Informationssysteme
Bremen, Germany
wudel@kmu-net.de

Dipl.-Ing. Michael Pieper
agiplan ProjectManagement GmbH
Muelheim and der Ruhr, Germany
mpi@agiplanpm.de

Abstract: The Test-Center is an easy to use application, that allows employees to test their knowledge about their organization. It's fun to use, but it produces serious results. Depending on the content of the test sequences information and knowledge essential for the daily work can be distributed effectively.

Introduction

SENEKA – Service Networks for Training and Continuing Education

SENEKA (Service Networks for Training and Continuing Education) is a large-scale entrepreneurial and research program, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Research and Education. The program aims not only to improve the management of information flow and knowledge creating, but seeks to re-design processes of innovation and research. The pool of participating companies in this program consists mainly of SMEs empowering their capabilities and competencies with regards to the management innovation. Approximately 30 companies funded, mainly located in Germany, 40 associated national and international partners and 6 research institutes from all over Germany are working in different fields of activity, seeking to find new methods and tools in the fields of knowledge management, networking and competence development. Recent trends in information and knowledge management describe challenges, the participating companies try to meet, while developing these new methods and tools.

The Consortium is led by the Centre for Learning and Knowledge Management (ZLW) and the Department of Computer Science in Mechanical Engineering (IMA) of the University of Aachen (RWTH). agiplan ProjectManagement GmbH (Mülheim an der Ruhr), is responsible for the coordination of the industrial subprojects.

Test-Center

This lecture represents results from knowledge management and knowledge transfer. Based on scientific work practical solutions were developed, often by “trail and error”. This approach of learning in practice and continuing the development process from attained intermediate results is rather a process of evolution than of innovation.

Contents

Sharing knowledge is still a challenge in an enterprise. The larger the enterprise is, the more difficult it is to transfer knowledge and pass on information to exactly the employees who need the knowledge and information. To enable the sharing of knowledge several organizational and technical conditions are necessary. Beyond these basic conditions however above all humans in their working environment and motivation are of crucial importance successful transfer of knowledge. This may not be new to experts for knowledge management. We

avoid a deeper scientific view on knowledge processes. We have a long standing experience of practical work on knowledge, specially with small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME).

What has been done so far?

KMU Net has worked for many years on intranet collaborative platforms, based on the product FirstClass. The platform is designed for co-workers and also includes information corners, so-called conferences, that accessible for everyone. With this common platform the technical conditions for uncomplicated transfer of information are settled. The product FirstClass makes it easy for the co-workers to take part in communication processes since the FirstClass Client is easy to install simple to handle. Although there are other products on the market that meet these demands, all experiences presented here are based on FirstClass.

After many years of working with intranet platforms the following problem has crystallized: After a short hype the employees reduce the use of the platform for information retrieval. Current knowledge and information transfer falls asleep after some time.

What did we do to solve this problem?

One idea that was implemented by KMU Net was the development of a test center. A well-known TV-show is "Who wants to a Millionaire?" It's fun for participants and the audience to guess the right answer and test the own knowledge.

Several test sequences were created for the employees. Every Monday morning was test-day at KMU Net. The content of the test sequence was a combination of questions focussed on expertise, enterprise organization and processes, social aspects and leisure activities. All content was taken out of the FirstClass platform.

The content, the score to be earned and the valuation of the final result was incentive enough for the employees to take part in the test-day. Testing your knowledge is fun!

The success was approved.

For more than six month KMU Net has accomplished this tests the most remarkable results are:

1. The training period for new employees could be reduced from three months to six weeks.
2. The motivation to participate in test-day rose to near 100%, everybody is curious about the news of the week.
3. Through intelligent questions and answers the employees acquire information and knowledge beyond their daily work and get an entrepreneurial view.
4. Changes within the organization or enterprise can easily be distributed through the Test-Center.
5. The results of the participants allow the evaluation of the effectiveness, how new processes or changes are communicated in the organization. This enables fast corrective measures.

We are not at the beginning, but somewhere in the middle of an evolutionary process, how to transfer knowledge and information in SME with effective and easy to use tools. Sharing knowledge can be fun. Let's do so and start different tracks of evolution by implementing the Test-Center in more organizations and learn from our experiences.