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The Librarian/Lecturer: Successful Course Development Based on KM Principles

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Abstract

This presentation focuses on a highly successful and award winning course taught by a librarian/lecturer.

It was specifically designed to serve the knowledge needs and aspirations of students, faculty, companies, publishers and the educational institution to which all these parties are connected. The unique manner in which the KM needs of the parties are met by establishing synergies is highlighted as well as how it is assessed.

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Comments

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The librarian/lecturer: successful course development based on KM principles

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Abstract:

This presentation focuses on a highly successful and award winning course taught by a librarian/lecturer.

It was specifically designed to serve the knowledge needs and aspirations of students, faculty, companies, publishers and the educational institution to which all these parties are connected. The unique manner in which the KM needs of the parties are met by establishing synergies is highlighted as well as how it is assessed.

Knowledge Management (KM) is usually perceived to be a technology based information collection and access issue. We think of it as a "process" behind the scene of user activity— a passive role that serves the activities of others. However, this is only one aspect of KM and a somewhat short-sighted view from my perspective.

Why develop the following course?

- The actors were operating in silos without understanding their mutual relationships with the knowledge base and the other actors

- Major personal concern: the actors were not using the Internet or the library effectively to meet their needs

Appropriate use and awareness of knowledge is most often a result of human interactions driven by a **multiplicity of agendas, goals, and bottom-line interests.** To find and collect useful knowledge in this context requires an astute understanding of situational interplay among all the actors **who generate, store, sell, and utilize** the information in question.

librarian/lecturer
as a
knowledge management facilitator and trainer

Questions addressed:

1) What is the **"active service role"** of an information specialist (librarian) if the real goal is to facilitate the interactive functions of human behavior and needs?

2) What is the role of the librarian as an active facilitator and partner in the research endeavor?

In brief, what is the "active service role" of an information specialist (librarian) if the real goal is to facilitate the interactive functions of human behavior and needs? What is the role of the library/librarian as an active facilitator and partner in the research endeavor?

These are the questions that I will address with this case study. Indeed, the course that I developed at Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) places the librarian/lecturer squarely in the middle of all the actors/players as a knowledge management facilitator.

WHAT IS KM?

(1) From IFLA KM Brochure
http://www.ifla.org/files/km/KM%20brochure%202010%20v3_0.pdf

Within the context of IFLA, KM is defined as: " ... a process of creating (generating, capturing), storing (preserving, organizing, integrating), sharing (communicating), applying (implementing), and re-using (transforming) organisational knowledge to enable an organisation to achieve its goals and objectives. KM is extending the concept of "knowledge" beyond existing concepts like "memory", "storage", and "information." The term "knowledge" is not limited to published information; it also covers such areas as tacit knowledge (expertise), implicit knowledge, explicit knowledge, and procedural knowledge."

You will see from the following KM definitions and principles that the role of an active facilitator is implied, if not required, in order to make KM effective. In any event, there is no obstacle to libraries and librarians taking a pro-active stance in making KM meaningful.

(2) From the Asian Development Bank (ADB)
http://www.adb.org/Documents/Presentations/Knowledge-Management-and-Learning/managing-knowledge-at-work.pdf

- **Knowledge management is the fusion of information management and organizational learning.**
- **Knowledge management is the explicit and systematic management of processes enabling vital individual and collective knowledge resources to be identified, created, stored, shared, and used for benefit.**
- **It is the provision of the right knowledge to the right people at the right time, in such ways that people can apply it to improve organizational performance.**

(3) Guiding Principles – from the ADB

http://www.adb.org/Knowledge-Management/knowledge-framework.asp

Fostering a knowledge-supportive environment
The framework promotes staff contribution to knowledge activities and encourages staff to be a knowledge worker.

Ensuring results orientation and continued improvement
The framework works to sharpen the results of knowledge management initiatives.

Enhancing operational relevance
Operational strategies will drive ADB's approaches to knowledge management and guide the business processes and planning of administrative and information technology support.

1) What KM principles are involved in your case study?

2) Who benefits from your initiative and why?

3) Is this effort valued?

4) If so, do you have measurable outcomes or evidence?

In the process of conveying this case study, I will answer the four questions that each member of the panel has been asked to address.

ILRHR 6640 HR Online Research and Reporting Methods for Executive Decision-Making

Spring. 4 credits. Prerequisite: ILRHR 560/260 or equivalent. Enrollment limit: 20. S. Basefsky.

Designed to develop key HR competencies and skills for researching and presenting information necessary for executive decision-making. Included is a comprehensive overview of primarily web-based resources available to HR executives. Emphasis is given to hands-on training in the best techniques and methods for extracting conceptual frameworks, checklists, best practices, competitive intelligence, legal information, statistical data, and academic research on topics of current interest to industry. Interviewing skills, report writing and presentation methods are imparted. Following five weeks of intense information instruction and hands-on experience, students act as consultants in a combined classroom and workplace setting as they work on special projects and topics posed by HR executives of primarily Fortune 500 companies. These team-based assignments give students exposure to different companies, their cultures, and executives while providing real work experience.

To start with, what is the course that is being described?

As you can see from the official course description, this class provides highly focused, applied information competence training. It takes the role of the library/librarian and elevates it. The role becomes one of providing and facilitating a serious and vital exercise in developing workplace and occupational relevance for its participants. Beyond the normal library training, it couples information seeking with writing, communication, and presentation skills. It is designed to not only promote consultancy skills but to train future HR executives to be information savvy.

The course was conceived to bridge the academic
experience with the needs of practitioners. It does this
successfully by creating interplay between and among the
following groups:

See explanation of the course at-
http://www.library.cornell.edu/ins-work/source/Stuart_Basefsky.doc

- **students**
- **librarians**
- **professors**
- **human resource executives**
- **publishers**
- **college administrators**

You will notice that six actors/players have been identified. In an academic environment, these are the normal parties involved in any course. Only the fourth one—the occupation and/or sector of society whose interests are being served by the class (in this case, human resource executives)—changes in any given class depending on which school or department is offering the course. In other words, the librarian should already know the interests and motivations of five of the six players. Subject specialty is necessary to understand completely the needs of the "fourth player." In brief, we should all know intuitively as librarians what the knowledge management needs are of the majority of actors in this knowledge management interplay.

The end result is that

- **Students** undertake a truly professional experience as an academic endeavor.
- The **librarians** can certify that the information skills, with which they empower students, are valued by industry, publishers, and the academic community.
- The **professors** become aware of questions from companies to which there are few or inadequate answers. Later, these inquiries often become the subject of intense academic study knowing in advance that the results will mean something to industry.
- **Human resource executives** come to know the true value of professionals empowered with information skills and how their productivity is exponentially increased.
- **Publishers** begin to recognize the true value of skill-based instruction provided by librarians and how this process creates an ongoing discussion with industry.
- And, **college administrators** find that their students are sought after by recruiters and that their programs garner the support of companies and publishers.

So what are these so-called knowledge management needs beyond the end results listed above?

Students want courses that :
- •Take theory and apply it in practical ways—provide skills they can use at work
- •Motivate them not just for good grades, but for possible job opportunities
- •Develop networks with influential people in industry
- •Give them advanced skills -- a competitive advantage in the work world

Librarians want situations that:
- •Prove their value to the institutions and persons whom they serve
- •Showcase their unique skills and services

Professors want to know:
- •How is industry changing and what research is needed and valued
- •Their students are well-trained in the latest research techniques and methods
- •Their students can be outstanding research assistants
- •Their students are appreciated and valued by industry

Publishers want to know:
- •What industry is seeking in terms of information and content
- •That students (their future market) are well-trained to use their resources
- •That they can have a relationship with librarians to better their bottom-line but also to advantage the schools most interested in their product

Finding Synergies to Advance All Parties
(brief overview based on KM principles)

- Class as unique service to **Industry/Company**
  - Each company pays $18,000 to belong to the Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies (CAHRS)—current list of sponsors
    http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/cahrs/about/corppartners.html
  - Only these companies can propose questions for class(get consulting/prospective employee—the **Student**)

- **Students** graded 50% on research competence/method & 50% on substantive output and presentation—get **Company** relationship

- **Professors** asked if they want to do research where little information is available (usually no)

- If little/no information in literature, this lack of content is given to **Publishers** if professors are uninterested

- **Publishers** seek researchers and give discounts to **Library/Librarian** for content relationship

This slide provides only a glimpse into the complexity of interplay among the actors that the librarian/lecturer can facilitate. Each party is brought together in a win-win situation with the other players because of the manipulation of the "knowledge management" needs by the librarian/lecturer. The librarian understands (or ought to) the reasons why the class can be a focus for this community of actors. Everyone has something to gain by participating.

Desired Outcomes

Students:

- get trained in the use of information tools which empowers them to find data to analyze on their own;

- learn how to negotiate with publishers to get the best price on tools they need on the job;

- learn how to give employers what they need and to ask questions in a way that allows for productive communication;

- learn how to present findings in a brief and concise format for ease of use and decision-making;

- develop real working relationships with HR Executives and opportunities for their own careers

This and the following few slides illustrate what each player can gain by interacting with this class. There are actually many more desired outcomes than can be listed here.

Companies:

- receive the benefit of a few free literature searches;
- develop closer ties with the ILR School and a highly desired employee pool;
- can review the work and developing expertise of prospective employees;
- learn that students at ILR are getting beneficial training which the companies themselves cannot provide.

An interesting digression: This class became legendary a few years ago when NOVARTIS, a major pharmaceutical company from Basil, Switzerland posed a question about how it could better recruit top MBA students from the USA. They were losing talent to Merck and Pfizer (major competitors). This is known as an "employment branding" issue. Two undergraduate students took on this case. Novartis liked their work so much that they asked them to buy airline tickets to Basil on a Friday. They flew from Ithaca, NY to Basil on Saturday. They brainstormed with the company on Monday and then flew back to Ithaca on Tuesday.

Recruiting

A.   *top students to the ILR School*

B.   *ILR students to companies*

- As the only school capable of providing this level of skill-based training, because of the scope of the Catherwood collections, recruiting is enhanced.

Support for the ILR School & the Catherwood Library:

- Companies will be more likely to support our programs because they see a long-term benefit for themselves.

Publishers:

- Publishers recognize that, with their cooperation and assistance, this course acquaints future clientele with the potential value of their products. The class is, in effect, a training and demonstration venture that benefits the long-term interest of the publishers. Publishers are likely to support this endeavor with funding, discounts, and technical assistance. They, too, learn what information is sought by industry and not yet on the market

Please remember that publishers are our friends, not our enemies. They provide needed content for us and for their markets. Do not forget that academic discounts on information products exist because publishers understand that librarians provide indirect sales and training for their current and future clientele. In other words, through our cataloging and public services, we act as voluntary sales people for their products. We make them look good and they make us look good. In biology, this would be a symbiotic relationship known as mutualism.

This class takes this relationship one step further by informing the publisher of needed content not currently available (a knowledge management need). The librarian serves as a market researcher who deserves additional compensation—deep discounts.

EVALUATION FORM USED & RESULTS

This is the evaluation form used for the class in 1997. The same form is used to evaluate all classes at Cornell's ILR School currently. The class has been subjected to evaluation each year.

Basefsky, Stuart: Spring 2007, Course=664.01, Type=SE

E-HR:HRM AND WEB INFORMATIO

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15
Average	4.92	4.83	4.33	4.75	4.5	4.83	4.5	4.5	4.25	4.78	4.36	4.33	4.2	4.73	4.67
Freq 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Freq 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Freq 3	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	3	1	0
Freq 4	1	2	4	3	6	2	4	4	3	2	5	6	2	1	4
Freq 5	11	10	6	9	6	10	7	7	4	7	5	5	5	9	8
Frequencies															
Median	5	5	4.5	5	4.5	5	5	5	4.5	5	4	4	4.5	5	5
Non-response	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	1	0	2	1	0
Pct 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pct 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pct 3	0	0	16.7	0	0	0	8.33	8.33	0	0	9.09	8.33	30	9.09	0
Pct 4	8.33	16.7	33.3	25	50	16.7	33.3	33.3	37.5	22.2	45.5	50	20	9.09	33.3
Pct 5	91.7	83.3	50	75	50	83.3	58.3	58.3	50	77.8	45.5	41.7	50	81.8	66.7
Percentages															
Std. Dev.	0.29	0.39	0.78	0.45	0.52	0.39	0.67	0.67	1.04	0.44	0.67	0.65	0.92	0.65	0.49
Total	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	8	9	11	12	10	11	12

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Combined
Averages																
Basefsky, Stuart	4.92	4.83	4.33	4.75	4.50	4.83	4.50	4.50	4.25	4.78	4.36	4.33	4.20	4.73	4.67	4.57
SE	4.64	4.64	4.37	4.52	4.40	4.68	4.39	4.46	4.40	4.51	4.23	4.30	4.34	4.53	4.41	4.45
All Courses	4.55	4.36	4.11	4.39	4.21	4.47	4.22	4.20	4.32	4.26	3.86	3.98	4.11	4.32	4.10	4.23
Standard Deviations																
Basefsky, Stuart	0.29	0.39	0.78	0.45	0.52	0.39	0.67	0.67	1.04	0.44	0.67	0.65	0.92	0.65	0.49	0.60
SE	0.75	0.71	0.90	0.85	0.90	0.66	0.92	0.84	0.95	0.85	1.04	0.91	0.93	0.76	0.89	0.86
All Courses	0.82	0.98	1.07	0.93	1.06	0.91	1.06	1.06	0.98	1.00	1.19	1.13	1.10	0.96	1.10	1.02

You will note that this class is rated as among the top classes taught at the school. It has been consistently evaluated at this high level every year.

All of the above is the final result of what started out as a librarian/professor partnership. I am now a "trusted librarian" who has been given the title of lecturer in the Human Resource Studies Department at the School of Industrial & Labor Relations (ILR).

Originally I was not allowed to teach this class by myself. Cornell has a rule that only academic departments can sponsor a credit class—not the library. It was incumbent upon me to find an appropriate department and one of its professors to sponsor this class. For the first four years, I team taught the class with a professor. I taught 75% of the class and the professor 25%. When the professor left for another university, I was appointed a lecturer and asked to continue teaching the course by myself. The course was first taught in the Spring of 1997.