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Chapter 3

Leading in a Knowledge Era A New Dawn for Knowledge Leaders

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge management (KM) has been found to be a critical success factor for organizational performance. However, most organizations are found to be purely focused on the technological perspectives of KM initiatives at the expense of people perspective. They fail to realize that the success of any KM system relies upon the acceptance and motivation of knowledge worker (k-worker), the primary player in any KM initiatives. Here, knowledge leaders have a crucial role to play in influencing and encouraging k-workers to adopt KM practices. However, a transformation of leader behavior is required to manage this new generation of workers. This chapter thus highlights the power-influence approach to leadership behavior in promoting and instilling KM practices among k-workers.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is one complex phenomenon that is evolving and has been addressed from

diverse perspectives. A review of the current literature (Pearce, Sims, Cox, Ball, Schnell, Smith, & Trevino, 2003; Yukl, 2006) indicates that there are a myriad of

leadership models that have been constructed to define leadership behavior. Leaders have been elucidated in terms of character, mannerism, influence and persuasion, relationship patterns, role relationships, and as administrative figures. In short, leadership is defined as influence processes that affect the action of followers (Ansari, 1990; Yukl, 2006).

Recently, there is a strong call for transformation of leader behavior. The underlying essence of this call for transformation is that the various models and taxonomies on effective leader behavior that have been developed over time may no longer be directly applicable in this knowledge era. With the advent of a new generation of workers--k-workers who are clearly different from other workers--there is a significant change in leader-subordinate relationships (MacNeil, 2003; Viitala, 2004) with a noticeable shift of power from leaders to k-workers (McCrimmon, 1995). In fact, Gapp (2002) reported that leadership and management style has undergone a major revolution under the system of profound knowledge. In essence, k-workers require eccentric people management practices (Amar, 2004; Hislop, 2003; Ribiere & Sitar, 2003).

Although it is apparent that leadership permeates as the foundation for KM system success, there is very little research to support the relationship between leadership behavior and knowledge management (Politis, 2001). The present chapter aims at bridging this gap in the literature by advocating the use of power-influence approach to leadership in a knowledge-based context. Given a relative paucity of research in the KM area, our discussion builds upon a narrative review (rather than meta-analytic review) of the literature to develop a framework based on the power and influence taxonomy (Ansari, 1990; French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1962).

We have divided the discussion into four major sections. First, we discuss the failure of KM initiatives and the key role of the leaders in ensuring the acceptance and eventually the improved performance of these initiatives. Second, we set the stage for further discussion on the issue of the transforming workforce and the emergence of a new generation of workers referred to as "k-workers." The discussion on the transforming workforce is an eye opener to the need for the transformed leadership behavior which would be based on the interpersonal influence and social power model. Third, we advocate the effectiveness of leadership behavior that we believe should be employed to successfully influence k-workers to embrace KM practices. Fourth, we suggest directions for future research, followed by a conclusion.

THE BACKGROUND

The Underlying Essence of KM Initiative Success

Knowledge management (KM) can be defined as the organized process of creating, capturing, storing, disseminating, and using knowledge within and between organizations to maintain competitive advantage (Darroch, 2003; Davenport & Prusak, 2000; Nonaka, 1994). It requires the transformation of personal knowledge into corporate knowledge that can be shared and applied throughout the organization (Skyrme, 1997).

Over time, KM has evolved as a strategic process that has a clear link to organizational performance. Most organizations are seeking benefits of KM in order to build on their competitive advantage such as capturing and sharing best practices, effectively managing customer relationships, and delivering competitive

intelligence (Ming Yu, 2002; Syed-Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004). A survey by Reuters (2001) revealed that 90 percent of the companies which deploy KM solutions benefit from better decision making whereas 81 percent say they noticed increased productivity (as cited in Malhotra, 2001). Some companies such as the BP Amoco, Xerox, and Dearborn experience great levels of cost savings by leveraging knowledge it had (Ambrosio, 2000; Lam & Chua, 2005). In essence, KM initiative has a forceful influence on maximizing organizational performance (Axelsen, 2002; Karlenzing & Patrick, 2002; Talisayon, 2002). Bearing this in mind, most organizations are trying to outdo one another in implementing the best KM systems to evade being left out and to harvest the promised benefits (Lam & Chua, 2005).

However, despite the focus on implementing KM enabling technologies and systems, countless KM initiatives fail to realize what they set out to do (De Long & Fahey, 2000; Smith, Blackman, & Good, 2003). Disturbingly, KM experts divulged that KM failure rates are estimated to be between 50 percent and 70 percent (Ambrosio, 2000). In addition, about 84 percent of KM projects implemented had no notable result on the organizations, which indicates the failure of these projects (Lucier, 2003).

The major cause for the letdown would be the failure of organizations to comprehend that the success of the KM system does not solely rely on technology or a web of networks, but even more so on the k-workers' acceptance and commitment towards the KM system (Ambrosio, 2000; Lam & Chua, 2005; Malhotra, 2002). The fundamental nature of KM involves the attainment of organizational aspirations through strategy-driven motivation and facilitation of k-workers to develop, improve and employ their ability to deduce data and

information using their experience, skills, culture, character, personality, and feelings (Beijerse, 1999). Although undeniably, information technology plays a key role in establishing KM systems, human capitals are the ones who create, share, and use the knowledge to contribute towards organizational effectiveness (Asllani & Luthans, 2003; Malhotra, 2002).

Therefore, simply boasting of a technologically advanced KM system and providing access to it will not initiate changes in behavior or lead to greater understanding (Smith et al., 2003). Instead, knowledge organizations need to focus on influencing and motivating k-workers to be committed and involved in their KM initiatives. Organizations must realize that unlike technology, human capital--the source of internal competency--cannot be copied by competitors. Thus it serves as a critical ingredient in sustaining the competitive advantage of any organization (Smith & Rupp, 2002).

However, influencing k-workers to adopt KM practices is easier said than done. The difficulty in motivating employees poses as the major stumbling block for many KM initiative implementations (Davenport, 1999; Fedor, Ghosh, Caldwell, Maurer, & Singhal, 2003; Lam & Chua, 2005). Hence, changing the k-workers' attitude and behavior to be more supportive of KM system implementation requires the practice of excellent leadership skills (Chong, 2006a, 2006b; Gapp, 2002; Ribiere & Sitar, 2003). Forceful interactions should exist between leadership and KM to encourage k-workers to adopt KM supportive behaviors (Politis, 2001).

Then again, one would assume that the earlier models of effective leadership behavior may be applicable to the present situation. However, these traditional models have been challenged in recent times. Gapp (2002) highlighted that it is necessary for

knowledge leaders to change their style to match the major upheaval of the system of intense knowledge. The need for transformed leaders arises because of the changing nature of workforce. At present, the workforce is evolving to become more knowledge based. In fact, knowledge has become a new buzz word that is taking over organizations like a tidal wave. This interesting development has paved the path for the adjustment in leader-subordinate relationships (MacNeil, 2003; Viitala, 2004). Leader power is being transferred to k-workers (McCrimmon, 1995). In short, knowledge leaders must be prepared to lead k-workers using unconventional people management practices (Amar, 2004; Ribiere & Sitar, 2003) to encourage them to be active participants of any KM initiatives.

Understanding the Transforming Workforce: The Reason for Transformed Leadership

Numerous researchers have attempted to clearly define k-workers. The term “k-worker” was first coined by Peter Drucker about 50 years ago in his book *Landmarks of Tomorrow*. Drucker classified k-workers as people who rely on brains over brawn in carrying out their job. Based on his definition, Drucker (1959) quoted an extensive array of k-workers ranging from scientists to hamburger flippers. However, not many people went by this classification of a k-worker. Instead, most early researches on k-worker were exclusively focused on workers from the field of information technology. Subsequently, this classification scheme was considered to be too narrow and limited. As time went by, researchers broadened their horizon and allowed the term “k-worker” to include other workers involved in knowledge work such as lawyers, medical practitioners, business

experts, and so on. Withey (2003) classified k-workers into three broad categories to help facilitate the process of understanding who k-workers actually are. The three categories were as follows: *High* (e.g., professors, scientists, researchers), *moderate* (e.g., managers, coordinators), and *low* (e.g., clerical workers, administrative officers).

Put simply, k-workers are “participants in the knowledge economy” (Spira, 2005) with the fundamental aspiration to achieve organization goal (Scott, 2005). A comprehensive yet simple definition of a k-worker would be as follows: K-workers are individuals who are highly educated and possess specialized knowledge and skills that are utilized for knowledge creation and complex problem solving that improves organizational performances through value creation (Davenport, 1999; Kelley, Blackman, & Hurst, 2007; Ware & Grantham, 2007). Essentially, their work strongly relies upon “their dependence on technical knowledge and prior expertise, their ability to manage their own schedules and process, dealing with different people to perform their work, and being in an environment with a relatively flat hierarchy and coordination among personnel that are not physically collocated” (Scott, 2005, p. 270).

This new generation of workers as often referred to as “gold-collar” workers with the underlying notion that these workers are essentially different from other workers (Amar, 2004; Kelley et al., 2007; Ribiere & Sitar, 2003). K-workers are highly knowledgeable and thus confidently exercise self-control and self-learning (Awad & Ghaziri, 2004). They equip themselves with enhanced knowledge and expertise to build their personal career development and not for corporate advancement (Bogdanowicz & Bailey, 2002; Kelley et al., 2007). They are also willing to take risks and expect to learn from their mistakes.

In line with k-workers' wider skills, expertise and work responsibilities, they have an increasing need for autonomy and empowerment (Gapp, 2002; MacNeil, 2003). In addition, these workers need autonomy to successfully deal with their daily work that consists of ambiguous, unstructured, unpredictable, multidisciplinary, non-routine, and complex tasks (Scott, 2005). Therefore, they do not enjoy working under close supervision or direct control (Kubo & Saka, 2002). In fact, with most valuable knowledge locked within the mind of k-workers, they tend to exercise their power to decide what they want to contribute to the organization and how they want to contribute (Hislop, 2003; Lang, 2001; Syed-Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004).

K-workers have also been found to be widely connected with people and divisions both within and outside their own division. Besides relying on networks as prescribed by the hierarchy, they also tend to source for resources outside this formal network to get their job done (Scott, 2005).

Unlike their predecessors, k-workers are extremely mobile and are constantly looking for greener pastures to move on to (Bogdanowicz & Bailey, 2002; Ware & Grantham, 2007). They generally have the penchant to switch jobs often. This propensity to leave causes k-workers to take their individual knowledge with them in their search for self-advancement and this evidently exposes organizations to the risk of losing crucial knowledge—the underlying ingredient of competitive intelligence (Bogdanowicz & Bailey, 2002).

In a nutshell, k-workers “have substantially different expectations of their employers than ordinary workers” (Kelley et al., 2007, p. 208). The workforce is transforming and being different, k-workers require idiosyncratic people management practices. As leadership has often been quoted as an important element in managing

k-workers (Gapp, 2002; MacNeil, 2003; Viitala, 2004; Politis, 2001, 2002, 2005), this prominent change in the workforce naturally calls for a transformation in leader behavior. We next turn our attention to discussing in depth the leader behavior that is deemed suitable in influencing and motivating k-workers.

THE KNOWLEDGE LEADER

Linking Knowledge Leader's Roles to the Influence Process: The Need for Certain Types of Power to be Perceived as Effective

People are the fundamental contributor to the social system of KM initiatives (Ribiere & Sitar, 2003; Alvesson, 2004). Past research (e.g., Crawford, 2005; Jayasingam et al., 2008; Politis, 2005) has highlighted that motivating and influencing the human capital to significantly contribute and be part of the KM initiatives requires effective leadership behavior. Despite that, there is very little pragmatic research conducted to identify the specific leadership behavior that can promote KM supportive behavior and subsequently KM initiative success.

Nevertheless, an analysis of the roles outlined by several researchers (e.g., Dfouni, 2002) for knowledge leaders clearly supports the notion that the ability to influence important players particularly the top management and k-workers to work towards a concept or idea is a crucial leadership skill that is needed in the knowledge network. The need for certain type of social power is highlighted by the fact that KM initiatives thrive through the active involvement of the human capital (Dfouni, 2002). Essentially, leaders are in a position to use their personal influence to motivate k-workers to do better and bring

about innovation (Amar, 2001; Politis, 2005).

The significance of certain types of social power can be highlighted by assessing distinctive roles of a knowledge leader. Firstly, knowledge leaders are expected to convince senior management about the benefits and potential of KM initiatives (Dfouni, 2002). Chong (2006a, 2006b) stressed that the most important critical success factor for any KM initiative is top management leadership and commitment towards KM. He stated that only the top management has the ability to move all other critical success factors to support and initiate KM implementation success.

Once top management support has been established, knowledge leaders also need to obtain support from the staff (Dfouni, 2002). In order to successfully convince them and create shared awareness, knowledge leaders are also expected to develop well thought out strategies for the KM initiatives (Dfouni, 2002). The strategies would include getting staff to learn and create knowledge (Vitaala, 2004), voluntarily share their knowledge (Dfouni, 2002; Ribiere & Sitar, 2003), and finally, apply that knowledge. The successful execution of the knowledge strategies stated above requires the leader to enlist the support of the staff to carry out these practices.

For case in point, the facilitation of knowledge creation requires the leader to provide intellectual stimulation and expert guidance to encourage employees to seek new knowledge (Politis, 2001; Ribiere & Sitar, 2003; Vitaala, 2004). Leader may also need to network with sources of knowledge both inside and outside the organization to obtain access to usually unattainable expertise to bring in new ideas that would contribute towards knowledge creation and application (Sarin & McDermott, 2003; Fedor et al., 2003). To further encourage and

influence employees to continuously derive new knowledge, attractive rewards must also be provided by the leader (Crawford, 2005).

On the other hand, getting people to share their distinctive knowledge is particularly challenging as employees tend to perceive a loss of power if they share their unique knowledge (Gray, 2001). Handling this behavior of knowledge hoarding requires the leader to be a role model and cultivate trust among their staff so that they become more open to the idea of sharing knowledge (Chen, 2004; Ribiere & Sitar, 2003). In addition, rewarding knowledge sharing behaviors would also lend a helping hand to knowledge leaders to induce knowledge sharing among employees (Chen, 2004, Crawford, 2005).

In essence, being able to convince and marshal the support of the important participants is necessary for the successful implementation of any KM initiatives. Therefore, knowledge leaders must be able to influence and convince the top management and k-workers, who in turn would contribute to the dynamic process of knowledge creation, sharing, and application. The next section intends to provide a broad picture on ideal social power knowledge leaders should adopt or shun in order to reach out to k-workers.

The Proposed Framework

Although a number of power typologies or frameworks exist, perhaps the most influential and frequently used and cited is that of French and Raven's (1959) bases of power. A power base is the source of influence in a social relationship (Ansari, 1990). Power is defined as the ability to influence or "influence potential" (French & Raven, 1959), whereas influence is the demonstrated use of power or power in action (Ansari, 1990). Initially, French and

Raven's power taxonomy distinguished among five bases of power that could contribute to the agent's overall ability to influence a target. These bases of power were reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, and expert. Subsequently, two more bases of power—information (Raven, 1965) and connection (Ansari, 1990; Hersey, Blanchard, & Natemeyer, 1979)--were incorporated into the French and Raven (1959) taxonomy. The general definitions of the bases of power are specified below to fit the case of knowledge leaders (Aguinis, Ansari, Jayasingam, & Aafaqi, 2008; French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1965).

- *Reward power* is based on the perceiver's assessment that the knowledge leader has the ability to offers reward to them for doing something he or she wants.
- *Coercive power* is based on the perceiver's assessment that the knowledge leader has the ability to inflict various organizational punishments.
- *Legitimate power* is based on the perceiver's assessment that the agent has the right to prescribe and control others by virtue of his or her organizational position.
- *Referent power* is based on the perceiver's assessment that the knowledge leader is worthy of emulating based on a sense of identification.
- *Expert power* is based on the perceiver's assessment that the knowledge leader possesses special knowledge, experience, or judgment that others do not possess themselves.
- *Information power* is based on perceiver's assessment that the knowledge leader has the ability to control the availability and accuracy of information.¹

- *Connection power* is based on the perceiver's assessment that the knowledge leader is well connected with other powerful individuals.

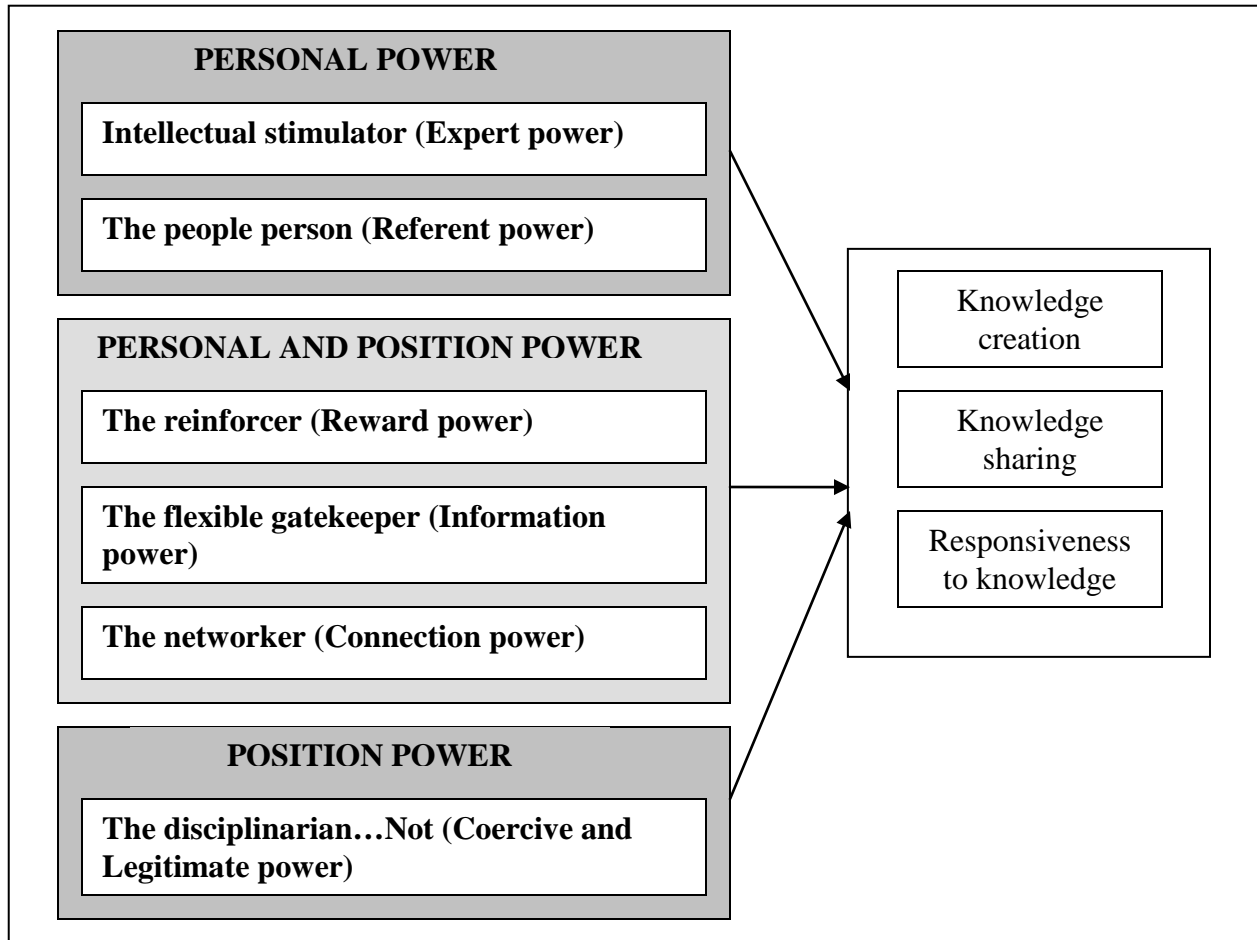
Numerous researches have been conducted to determine the relationships between bases of power and important outcomes such as satisfaction, productivity, and compliance, among others. Bases of power such as expert, referent power, connection, and information power consistently had positive relationships with various criterion variables. For example, soft power bases such as expert and referent power were considered more effective (Erchul, Raven, & Ray, 2001). Ansari (1990) found connection power to affect most of the influence tactics, regardless of whether it was upward influence or downward influence. In fact, it was found that the possession of adequate expert, referent, connection and information power clearly distinguished successful entrepreneurs from unsuccessful ones (Aguinis et al., 2008; Jayasingam, 2001). On the other hand, coercive power was negatively related to criterion variables such as commitment, satisfaction and entrepreneurial success (e.g., Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989; Elangovan & Jia, 2000; Jayasingam, 2001). The effect of reward and legitimate power has been found to be inconsistent. Some studies on reward power have reported positive impact on certain criterion outcomes such as quality of relationship (Aguinis, Nesler, Quigley, Lee, & Tedeschi, 1996), efficiency rating (Ivancevich & Donnelly, 1970), and entrepreneur success (Aguinis et al., 2008; Jayasingam, 2001), whereas others have highlighted the negative effect on variables such as satisfaction with the leader (Bachman, Smith, & Slesinger, 1966). Legitimate power demonstrated weaker, yet significant, positive relationships in some

situations such as helping relationships (Burke & Wilcox, 1971) and compliance (Rahim, 1989). On the other hand, the use of legitimate power was found to evoke negative feelings such as dissatisfaction with the leader (Bachman, et al., 1966) and employee stress (Elangovan & Jia, 2000).

Evidently, the power framework has been useful for managers in general and entrepreneurs in particular. Given that, we

are expecting KM specialists to also use these bases of power. As established earlier (in the “*Linking knowledge leader’s roles to the influence process*” section), it is evident that knowledge leaders need to be actively involved in influencing people to ensure the successful implementation of KM initiatives. Therefore, using these bases of social power as the foundation, a framework is developed (see Figure 1) specifically for the knowledge leader.

Figure 1. A proposed framework for leadership behavior for knowledge leaders



The framework above clearly delineates six leadership aspects considered as important for knowledge leaders to practice to be able to influence k-workers to

adopt KM practices. These six leadership dimensions were developed with reference to the seven power bases discussed earlier. Theoretically, these seven bases of power

can be grouped into two distinct categories—personal power and position power (Etzioni, 1961). These two concepts of power have been found to be relatively independent and each includes several distinct but partially overlapping components (Ansari, 1990; Yukl & Falbe, 1991). Position power refers to the potential influence derived from the opportunities inherent in an individual’s position in the organization (Yukl, 2006; therefore, legitimate and coercive power that originate from the leaders’ position are clustered together as position power. In contrast, personal power is derived from the attributes of the agent and the agent-target relationship (Yukl, 2006). Thus, expert and referent power which are derived from a leader’s

own training, experience and personal qualities are grouped as personal power (Ansari, 1990; Yukl, 2006). Finally, reward, information, and connection power can originate from overlapping sources—a leader’s position as well as the leader’s personal qualities. Therefore, these powers were grouped together.

These leadership dimensions have been reviewed to suit the needs of the knowledge network. A brief description of these dimensions is presented in Table 1. A detailed discussion about each of these dimensions follows. As mentioned earlier, the discussion builds upon narrative reviews (rather than meta-analytic reviews) of the literature since not many studies were available on this subject in the KM area.

Table 1. Description of the leadership dimension

Leadership dimensions	Description
Intellectual stimulator	The use of leader’s expert power to stimulate intellectual activities such as knowledge creation among their staff
People person	The use of the leader’s personality and warmth (referent power) that is expected to draw respect from their staff and subsequently influence them
Reinforcer	Leader’s use of reward power to influence k-workers
Disciplinarian...Not	The reduced use of legitimate and coercive power in influencing k-workers
Flexible gatekeeper	The leader is expected to exercise relaxed control over information access and facilitate the dissemination of information to employees (reduced information power)
Networker	The leader should network with important others (connection power) to source for new knowledge

The Intellectual Stimulator

Researchers have long advocated that effective leaders should possess specialized knowledge and be experts in their relevant field in order to guide subordinates (Aguinis

et al., 2008; Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989; Yukl, 2006). At present, with k-workers known to be experts themselves, do we still need leaders with expertise to function as a coach or guide for them? The answer seems to be in the affirmative. In essence, although k-workers strongly embrace the “I did it on

my own” concept that advocates solving all problems on their own (Amar, 2002) using their wider skills, expertise, and work responsibilities (Amar, 2004; Janz & Prasarnphanich, 2003; MacNeil, 2003), they still seek expert guidance indirectly from their respective leaders to solve their problems, without even realizing it (Amar, 2002).

Knowledge leaders need to grasp the fact that power derived from the possession of specific knowledge and not hierarchical position, facilitates influencing k-workers (MacNeil, 2003). Leaders who encouraged intellectual stimulation were found to have a positive effect on knowledge acquisition (Politis, 2001, 2002), knowledge sharing (Chen, 2004), and overall KM practices (Crawford, 2005). This was further substantiated by findings which reported a positive relationship between leader’s expert power and knowledge acquisition (Politis, 2005, Jayasingam et al., 2008), knowledge sharing, and knowledge utilization (Jayasingam et al., 2008).

Hence, influencing k-workers with specialized expertise requires leaders to lead through intellectual power, conviction, persuasion, and interactive dialog (Ribiere & Sitar, 2003). Leaders with expertise can embrace the role of knowledge coaches or experts to help novices learn how to create and utilize knowledge through guided experience (MacNeil, 2003; Amar, 2002). They can promote and support behavioral skills and traits of k-workers indispensable for knowledge acquisition (Politis, 2005). Besides guiding, leaders with expertise can also inspire k-workers to develop new ideas or stimulate their creative streak (O’regan & Ghobadian, 2004; Jong & Hartog, 2007). In short, leaders should be able to tell k-workers what they do not already know and stimulate a healthy debate that leads to the development and application of new knowledge.

The People Person

Unlike the “Intellectual Stimulator,” the concept of “People Person” refers to the leaders who are relationship oriented, likeable, respected, and perceived as worthy of emulating. Effective leadership has been associated with individuals who strongly display the people person qualities (e.g., Bachman et al., 1966; Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989; Yukl, 2006). Interestingly, knowledge based organizations have given this relationship a fascinating twist.

We advocate a “people person” leader when encouraging knowledge sharing among k-workers. In a knowledge network, leaders are expected to adopt personal mentoring and internal consulting (McCrimmon, 1995) and help build a culture of trust by demonstrating concerns, keeping promises, morality fairness, openness, honesty, discretion, consistency, integrity and delivering expected results (Ribiere & Sitar, 2003). These dispositional elements encourage trust building and social interaction and are therefore essential for knowledge sharing (Connelly & Kelloway, 2003). Individualized consideration dimension was found to positively influence knowledge sharing (Chen, 2004) in particular, and KM processes, in general (Crawford, 2005). Consequently, a leader who displays personal qualities that supports knowledge sharing will become a role model for k-workers to emulate.

However, in other scenarios such as when promoting knowledge acquisition and utilization, we believe that knowledge leaders should not rely on the display of these characteristics. Known to be independent, k-workers determine what knowledge they want to contribute and how they aim to apply it (Amar, 2004; Politis, 2005). They trust their own proficiency and

do not reckon their leader to be correct based on the leader's personal appeal and relationship-oriented behavior (Politis, 2005). In fact, Politis (2001, 2002, 2005) and Jayasingam et al., (2008) found being considerate to workers and subsequently being likeable to be negatively related to knowledge acquisition.

Basically, k-workers are matured and independent enough that they no longer perceive the need for a leader to be supportive and nurturing. Instead, they want their leaders to "walk the talk." They expect their leaders to be great role models who display values such as honesty and integrity. However, the leader's personal magnetism stops at meriting respect, admiration, and identification among k-workers. Being likeable and respected may not take a knowledge leader far when it comes to getting k-workers to do things in accordance with the leader's desire. K-workers avoid doing things because they like someone. They have their own mind and strongly rely upon their own judgment.

The Reinforcer

The "Reinforcer" is different from the "Intellectual Stimulator" and the "People Person," as they do not rely on personal attributes such as expertise or personality. Instead, the use of rewards to influence people is the dominant characteristic of this leadership dimension. The form of reward varies from tangible or monetary rewards (e.g., pay, bonus) and non-tangible or non-monetary rewards (e.g., assignment of challenging task, promotions, social recognition, praise, and award). The use of any form of rewards has been claimed to be a powerful tool to reinforce behaviors needed for performance. However, there seem to be two schools of thought when analyzing the effect of reward power. Although some studies have found leaders

who use reward power to have a *positive impact* on certain criterion outcomes such as quality of relationship (Aguinis, Nesler, Quigley, Lee, & Tedeschi, 1996), efficiency rating (Ivancevich & Donnelly, 1970), and entrepreneur success (Aguinis et al., 2008), most studies have found *no significant relationship* with any outcomes (e.g., Elangovan & Jia, 2000; Rahim, 1989; Schriesheim, Hinkin, & Podsakoff, 1991;) or *negative effects* on various indicators of leader effectiveness (e.g., Ansari, Aafaqi, & Oh, 2008; Elangovan & Jia, 2000; Schriesheim, et al., 1991).

The same scenario seems to exist in the current knowledge-based environment. Several studies reported that reward power was negatively related or unrelated with leader effectiveness. These findings were supported in a knowledge-based environment when Politis (2002, 2005) stated that leaders who provide rewards if k-workers perform in accordance, disable rather than enable knowledge acquisition. Typically, k-workers view reward administration to motivate them as manipulative and too simplistic (Amar, 2002).

On the other hand, a good number of studies on reward power or contingent reward have reported reward as a powerful motivator in influencing k-workers' behavior and commitment (Crawford, 2005; Jayasingam et al., 2008; Kubo & Saka, 2002). The need for reward was also evident in Smith and Rupp's (2002) research that reported reinforcers such as management's concern for work-life balance, followed by career acknowledgment, professional accomplishment, remuneration, customer relations, prospects of career progression, career and intellectual challenges, workforce benefits, coworker relationships and personal growth were found to be important incentives in a knowledge-based organization to foster employee

commitment. It should, however, be noted that k-workers typically indulge in KM practices for their own interest rather than for the betterment of the organization (Gal, 2004) and are extremely mobile, dangling a carrot in front of them would definitely serve as a motivating factor.

One important point to bear in mind when assigning rewards is that the link between reward and performance must be equitable. A clear link between k-workers' contribution and the reward system strongly motivates them to embrace change and display considerable involvement in KM practices (Smith & Rupp, 2003). However, it is crucial to note that when assigning reward in relation to performance the "new pay goes beyond rewarding the traditional measures of performance, and places emphasis on other measures, such as customer service, leadership, employee satisfaction, cycle time, quality, teams, skills, and competencies" (Smith & Rupp, 2002, p. 254).

Evidently, leaders need to reform their culture and reward system so that employees are encouraged to generate, implement innovative ideas (Jong & Hartog, 2007), and share their knowledge with others (Lin & Tseng, 2005; Un & Cazurra, 2004). Provided that knowledge leaders do not manipulate the use of reward in influencing k-workers, and reward k-workers fairly based on their contribution to the knowledge base of the organization, we believe reward is a powerful motivator. Leaders can resort to reward mechanisms such as assignment of interesting tasks to their k-workers or even offer personal recognition (O'Regan & Ghobadian, 2004). Leaders need to also ensure job prospects are challenging and the pay scheme is competitive enough to retain their valuable k-workers.

The Disciplinarian.....Not

The "Disciplinarian" refers to a greater reliance on the leader's formal position to influence employees. Traditionally, leaders believed they needed to exercise some form of control using their position power to create compliance (Bachman et al., 1966; Burke & Wilcox, 1971; Ivancevich & Donnelly, 1970). With the passage of time, this perception was proven wrong in most cases. For example, leaders who used punishment to control their subordinates caused negative effects on levels of satisfaction and commitment (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989; Elangovan & Jia, 2000). In fact, leaders who used position power caused people to perceive them as ineffective (Aguinis et al., 2008; Erchul, Raven, & Ray, 2001, Yukl, 2006). In simple words, although the use of authority to gain compliance seems to be an easy way out, the reliance on position power to force subordinates to comply with the leader's request were deemed ineffective in the long run.

The effect of this power erosion is felt even more in the knowledge era. At present, the power relationship between managers and k-workers has arguably evolved and caused the attrition of formal authority in the knowledge-based environment (Amar, 2002; McCrimmon, 1995). As such, acts of controlling and reprimanding workers with the use of formal power and status is considered a barrier to KM practices such as knowledge acquisition (Politis, 2005), knowledge transfer (Riege, 2007), and knowledge application (Jong & Hartog, 2007).

The complete disregard towards the use of authority by leaders stem from k-worker's need for greater autonomy and power in the workplace. This can be attributed to their wider skills, expertise, and work responsibilities (Amar, 2004; Janz & Prasarnphanich, 2003; MacNeil, 2003).

Therefore, they do not enjoy working under close supervision or direct control (Kubo & Saka, 2002). Any attempt to manage, control, or codify organizational knowledge is likely to produce internal conflict (Hislop, 2003). In a nutshell, k-workers mock at influence attempts based solely on position power (McCrimmon, 1995).

Fundamentally, a knowledge-based organization functions best as a symbiosis and leaders are expected to avoid drawing their power from their formal position (Amar, 2002). Thus, managers can no longer depend on the traditional command and control mechanism to influence k-workers (MacNeil, 2003). A reprimand or punishment will not only obliterate k-workers' initiatives to create, share or apply knowledge, but also dampen future attempts by others (Amar, 2002). In order to promote idea generation and implementation, leaders are expected to delegate and adopt consultative measures instead of practicing excessive monitoring (Jong & Hartog, 2007).

The Flexible Gatekeeper

Besides relying on their personal and position power, leaders also tend to use their control over access of information to influence. This behavior is best described as a "Gatekeeper". They hold the key to the source of information and they hold the power of controlling the availability and accuracy of information—in other words, "information power" (Raven, 1965, 1992). Losing control over this "goldmine" reflects loss of information power (Gray, 2001, Kelly, 2007). Thus, leaders tend to avoid providing uncontrolled access to sources of information in order to maintain their indispensability (Gray, 2001). However, knowledge leaders may also be worried about the issue of knowledge protection. Bearing that in mind, they may want to

govern the access to valuable information and ensure that this crucial information does not fall into the wrong hands.

Knowledge leaders may have good intentions in mind when controlling the access to valuable information. However, the tight control of information may be detrimental to the success of KM practices in the long run. With the proliferation of information, leaders would be buried in them and would eventually find it difficult to filter ceaseless flow of information. This would possibly cause a loss of relevant information needed by k-workers, as leaders would not be able to pay full attention to the limitless information available. Moreover, depriving k-workers of crucial information may affect the worker's ability to function effectively in generating ideas, sharing their information, and subsequently applying appropriate knowledge.

Instead of functioning as a "Gatekeeper", knowledge leaders should cultivate a scholarly network and foster network, and sharing of information needed for the development of expert intelligence (Smith & Rupp, 2002). K-workers need information about the needs, development, and tribulations within their business environment to process and create valuable knowledge (Beijerse, 1999; Beveren, 2002). Stimulating the dissemination of information among subordinates enhances idea generation (Jong & Hartog, 2007). Hence, if leaders control access to crucial information, they may be depriving their workers from necessary information needed to support knowledge creation.

Additionally, when leaders are perceived to control and hoard information, they would pave the path for k-workers to follow. K-workers would imitate this behavior portrayed by their leaders and knowledge sharing practices would be stifled. Leaders need to model the proper behavior to cultivate knowledge supporting

culture within the organization (Ribiere & Sitar, 2003).

Furthermore, access to information provides k-workers a frame of reference of what knowledge should be applied and how to apply. K-workers need to keep up with the happenings in their business environment to ensure the knowledge they apply in their strategies are up-to-date and in-line with the current business conditions. When information availability is controlled, knowledge utilization could meet a dead end.

In summary, although maintaining control over who has access to important information is necessary, knowledge leaders should maintain some flexibility and allow k-workers to have easy access to information they specifically need. This would allow the k-workers themselves to source and filter all relevant information related to their area of interest. Instead of operating as a strict gatekeeper to information sources, they could employ mechanisms to facilitate easy yet protected knowledge access such as the use of passwords to allow authorized access. This brings about the leadership dimension “Flexible Gatekeeper” as an ideal behavior to be practiced by knowledge leaders in order to be perceived as effective.

The Networker

Connection with important others is the distinguishing feature of the “Networker” when compared to the other leadership aspects discussed earlier. Asllani and Luthans (2003) suggested that successful knowledge managers need to pay relatively more attention to networking and communication activities. Knowledge leaders who established connections both inside and outside the organization often have access to unattainable information and expertise which, in return, equips them with

integrity and authenticity (Fedor et al., 2003; Sarin & McDermott, 2003). This facilitates knowledge creation within the organization as the leader would bring in new ideas and concept to further stimulate intellectual activities. Moreover, a leader’s display of effort to source for knowledge from important others and share it with k-workers, displays a positive model of knowledge sharing to be emulated. To boot, leaders who establish and maintain connection with important people may bring in new knowledge to stimulate thinking and subsequently lead towards knowledge application. As a result, it is good for senior executives to network outside the organization and pull together groups with likely synergies (McCrimmon, 1995) to bring in new ideas and concepts needed for knowledge generation and application.

In a nutshell....

An overall observation of the above discussion seems to suggest that knowledge leaders can no longer go by rules of traditional leadership practices. Traditionally, leaders focused on the organization, and subsequently set out to mould their workers to display behavior that leans towards the achievement of organizational objectives. Now, with workers who are extremely independent, motivated, and autonomous, leaders should set out to serve their workers. The underlying belief is that when subordinates are catered for, they would naturally perform their best that results in improved organizational performance (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). As well, knowledge leaders need to seek and fulfill the needs of k-workers—feed their curiosity, stimulate their intellect, acknowledge their achievement, and supply them with all resource (e.g., networks, information).

Providing k-workers with what they need will help them flourish.

What Next

Knowledge leaders need to modify their approach when managing k-workers. However, there are many more unturned rocks that could provide interesting findings in future research. We have a few major concerns that we have not addressed here but strongly believe has a significant impact on the domain of this topic. First, our recommendations and suggestions are based on the generalized conception of a k-worker. It is possible that k-workers may be different among themselves on the basis of tenure, skill level, personality, relationship with leader, and so on. For example, with reference to Withey's (2003) classification of *high-moderate-low* k-workers, it is possible that *high* k-workers may require different leadership behavior in comparison to *low* k-worker. Future research could determine whether knowledge leaders need to vary their style from one k-worker to another.

Second, we have not incorporated the cultural context when dealing with k-workers. There have been indications of cultural effects on the preferred leadership behavior among k-worker. For example, although hierarchy and position have been strongly advocated to be detrimental to KM practices, some researchers (e.g., Forstenlechner & Lettice, 2007; Jayasingam et al., 2008) have found that in different regional context, authority and power is needed to encourage knowledge sharing practices. Forstenlechner and Lettice (2007) also found regional differences in terms of preference for reward. It is important for future researchers to explore this grey area and identify whether cultural differences might influence the preference for behavior displayed by knowledge leaders.

CONCLUSION

Undeniably, KM has become the catchphrase for establishing competitive advantage. As much as we would like to believe that technological systems are the success factor for any KM initiative, we have been proven wrong over the years. With the technological systems as the foundation, any KM initiative needs human capital to ensure its success.

The human capital in the knowledge age is currently undergoing a metamorphosis. Commonly referred to as k-workers, this fresh breed of employees are pushing forth the need for organizational change. One area that is facing the pressure to evolve is the role of knowledge leaders. As leading k-workers require idiosyncratic practices, knowledge leaders should be prepared to embrace their new role with zest. Failure to cater to the expectations and preferences of this new generation of workers would definitely be detrimental in the long run.

We believe knowledge leaders to no longer hold their reigns too tightly. They should learn to exercise flexibility when leading k-workers. K-workers do not want to be suffocated with a leader always hovering over them with the pretext of keeping a watchful eye. After all, k-workers are confident, independent, and autonomous individuals. Instead, knowledge leaders should embrace the role as a facilitator or a knowledge coach that guides and serves their workers when deemed necessary. They should acknowledge valuable contribution and stimulate KM practices indirectly by being a good role model.

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ENDNOTE

- ¹ Expert power and information power are related but distinct constructs. Expert power refers to the knowledge leader's personal knowledge and skills, whereas information power refers to the knowledge leader's ability to secure accurate information (Aguinis et al., 2008).