
CASE STUDY: ATLANTIS SYSTEMS INTERNATIONAL – USING KM PRINCIPLES TO DRIVE PRODUCTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE, PREVENT CRITICAL KNOWLEDGE LOSS AND ENCOURAGE INNOVATION

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“Knowledge and information are different. You can manage information; you can’t manage knowledge. However you can manage the process that converts information into knowledge. At Atlantis, we treat knowledge management as a construct of information management (product, content) and knowledge building (process, people)”

In 2003 Atlantis Systems International a 28 year old Aerospace engineering company was on the brink of insolvency.

While the company was a leader in providing simulation-based training products, their market share had decreased steadily over the past 3 years. This decline was due in part to uncontrollable external forces - The formation of the European Economic Union and the tragic events of September 11. Both events lead to restricted market access in the U.S. and Europe for Atlantis’s products and services.

In addition to these external forces, the company experienced prolonged instability at the management level that resulted in a loss of key personnel to other companies. As no formal knowledge management processes were in place for capturing Intellectual capital, these employees took their knowledge and with them when they left the firm leaving critical gaps in knowledge base of the company.

For a company to become knowledge centric organization where knowledge is continuously captured and leveraged to drive innovation requires an understanding of the processes that convert information into usable knowledge. This is as much a social challenge as it is a systems or use of technology challenge. The central question the company or organization has to address is, “how do we get people (employees and management) to willing share what they know in order to grow the company?”

The type of organizational change is synonymous with building a “learning organization”, but while this is certainly implicit, the term is sufficiently ambiguous as to include almost any activity where there is some transfer of information or knowledge - It does not necessarily produce innovation in the form of new products and services or in the continual improvement of work flows.

Innovation at this level requires the creation of a knowledge building culture where the explicit goal for everyone in the organization is to continuously build and contribute new knowledge to the benefit of both the individual and the organization.

By 2007, Atlantis revenues had grown by over 200%; the workforce increased from 102 employees to approx 210 employees; retention rates have remained consistent at 3% over a three year period, and the business has expanded its operations into the United States. In addition the company successfully leveraged its knowledge and expertise in training from the aerospace sector to enter the nuclear energy sector.

The paper will present a conceptual framework for understanding Knowledge Management as it relates to organizational development, change management and innovation. Using concrete examples over a 3 three period, it will describe how knowledge management strategies applied by Atlantis to increase performance and profitability, encourage growth, accelerate innovation, attract and retain key talent, prevent knowledge loss, can be applied to the address the looming ‘Grey Out’ of the nuclear energy sector .