

The study of the relationship among career success, career competencies, and knowledge management

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Abstract

Organizations are continually influenced by environmental factors, but today the organizations are located in a different environment compared with the past. Mobility and speedy changes are the main characteristic of this environment. In such an environment, the organizations which have gained more knowledge and use them in their strategies and methods can survive and progress. Knowledge leads to better performance of the organization. Hence, knowledge management and proper use of it is important in order to achieve organizational goals. Knowledge management focuses on power of thought and analysis. Knowledge is thrived and created in human's mind and will be served and spread based on situations and need. Therefore, the success of knowledge management is achieved when an environment established in an organized pattern. This encourages individuals to create and spread their knowledge. But lack of environmental certainties caused the corporate companies to organize and shape their structures differently. Adoption of strategies, like downsizing, leads to a change in psychological contract. So, in this condition, job security will put organizations to trouble. Organizational boundaries have been intertwined and employees are facing with the new realities of career and it has influenced personal belief about the organization. In such a situation, the knowledge management can process successfully.

Keywords: career, career success, career competencies, knowledge management

Introduction

Knowledge is a key source in each organization. In knowledge era in which knowledge is considered

as the major capital, the organizations need a different management approach, regarding organizational and personal issues. Therefore, knowledge management, as a physical resource management such as money, should be part of standard policies of the organization (AhmaandSalehi, 2010). Innovative efforts in the organization resulted from investing in knowledge management and knowledge workers. Knowledge has no meaning without human. Human is the main actor in creation, storage, distribution and application of knowledge. Not only knowledge is hidden in separate individual, but also in human groups, communities and finally also in organizations

To Carneiro (2001) organizations are able to acquire organizational benefits and efficiency by adopting a proper knowledge strategy in framework of knowledge management. To him, organizational efficiency cannot exist unless smart agents are able to perform tasks related to their performance (Hosnavi *et al*, 2010). Managers should create integrity among recognition, personal satisfaction, sense of security and a lot of other factors (Ahmadi and Salehi, 2010). Method of utilization talents and potential competencies of any individual has turned to a major challenge for managers and organizations in order to promote organizational innovation level (Hosnavi *et al*, 2010).

On one hand, the organizations expect people making a lifelong learning, thinking globally, handling dynamisms and fluctuations successfully and developing on-time and quick accountability culture to customers' expectations. On the other hand, today's organizations are working in volatile and uncertain environments and they use strategies like downsizing for success, so they can come over challenges and uncertainties influencing employee's belief regarding the organization (Hasan-

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poor and Abbasi, 2009). Moreover, employees are mostly worked in some positions that their competencies are beyond them or there is no chance of progress (SeyedJavadin, 2008). Less than 35% of well-trained and professional human resources hold required competencies for their own jobs (R Lindner, 2001). Allocation and better exploitation of workforce and knowledge resources can increase exploitation and performance by 20% which can be done through better coordination of job, workforce and concentration on developing human resources (Novak and Bekman, 2007). Prominent staffs are always scarce and competition over their services is always remarkable. Such individuals prefer employers who care about future of their employee. These individuals are more loyal and faithful to the organizations which offer useful guidance's regarding career (Disenzo and Rabins, 2009).

Comprehension of knowledge, specialty, competencies and demands for work are the important findings for organizational improvement (Novak and Bekman, 2007). Recognizing a proper career can be related to individual's success in the organization. Also, individual's success is closely related to organization's success. Moreover, career compe-

tencies of all staff are considered as personal competencies related to the job. Additionally, recognizing these competencies can provide a career success to pass.

Knowledge Management

It is difficult to define knowledge management and there is no identified definition which has been accepted worldwide. A typical problem to define knowledge management is that knowledge management is so vast that almost every phenomenon that leads to comprehension of certain concepts, which is needed for effective function in the world, can be named as knowledge management (Ahmadi and Salehi, 2010). Knowledge management is transformation of implicit knowledge to explicit one and sharing them in the organizations. In the more detailed and technical term, knowledge management is a process through which an organization is created based on intellectual properties and knowledge. As mentioned in this definition, there is relationship between obviously knowledge management and recognition process, achievement, sharing and maintenance of knowledge which is necessary for the organization.

Table 1. Definitions of knowledge management.

Result-oriented Knowledge	Having the right knowledge at the right place and time and to the correct statue
Process-oriented Knowledge	Process systematic management by which the knowledge created, collected and shared and it is applicable.
Technology-oriented Knowledge	Business intelligence + Cooperation + Search Engines + smart agents

All the above-mentioned definitions have similar point of view, but each of them focuses on a specific aspect of the knowledge management (A.Uriarte, Jr, 2008). Not only main responsibility of knowledge management is managing knowledge, but also is changing the whole culture of business and strategies of the organization to whom worth learning and sharing. Organizations can alter their own knowledge properties using a proper implementation of knowledge management which depends on quality of organizational knowledge and intangible assets and it generally provides achieving an appropriate opportunity to acquire competitive advantage (Aghajani *et al*, 2011). Knowledge-based view assumes that existing knowledge properties

presents an opportunity at any time to acquire competitive advantage (Chang Lee *et al*, 2005). Recent researches obtained the view based on resources which regards knowledge as organizational assets to study its effects on organizational capabilities and performance. These studies identified significant effect of knowledge management activities on innovation and performance of the organization (Chen *et al*, 2010). This view causes capitals and capabilities of the organization be regarded as major resources for competitive advantage. Therefore, one should differentiate resource and capability in this view. Organizational resources consist of tools and equipments, skills, patents and liquidity which are major sustainable competitive inputs. Organization-

al capability intends to achieve and take advantages of these resources in line with implementation of works and competitive activities (Abbasi, 2007). Knowledge management focuses on people as knowledge resources. Although gaining knowledge is important it will not guarantee the success of knowledge management. Knowledge should be used and entered into organizational processes in a way that any improvement occurs in performance of the organization. In order to succeed of this issue, required motivations should be provoked in individuals. Moreover, knowledge management should pay attention to increase quality of workforce (Ahmadi and Salehi, 2010). To Carl Calst (1999) since competitors use more or less similar mechanism, tools and resources to precede their own organizational goals, major factor of distinction among organizations is proper exploitation rate of workforce element in line with knowledge management. In opinion of certain researchers, attention to people in process of knowledge management matters due to following aspects in today's modern enterprises: people conduct the job, not structures and processes. Rightful genius of the organization is unusually impromptu and of ten intuitive approaches. Rightful individuals solve rightful problems through methods that formal processes do not expect them. Organizations are a network of participation. The main core of the enterprises is participation and heart of the participation is located in heart and shoulder of knowledge staff. Only employees select creation of leading organization (Hosnavi *et al*, 2010).

Career

Hall *et al.* (1986) have defined career as following: "lifelong process of setting up a sequence of related activities and attitudes or behaviors that occur during one's working life." Career is still regarded as a work pattern related to experiences like positions, duties or career activities, decisions related to work and subjective interpretations, work-related events such as job demands, expectations, values, needs and feelings, regarding specific job experiences which determines career of an individual. Clearly, a career is not only a job but also it turns around a process, an attribute, behavior and a position in working life of an individual in order to achieve set of career's objectives (Adekola, 2011). Evaluation of career depends on whether it is seen by organizational view or personal perspective. In organizational or human resource management view, career development includes tracking careers and developing career ladders. Human resource management

looks for certain data to guide and monitor progresses of particular groups of staff and seek for assuring existence of talent and professional management and technical capability to achieve enterprise needs. Career development is also called organizational career planning in terms of organization's view. Instead, personal career development or career planning focuses on helping people to identify major objectives and their accessibility. It is noticeable that this status concentrates thoroughly on one's own life in outside or inside the organization. While organizational career development considers individuals as supplier of organization's needs, personal career development considers career in the work of every individual and other issues of life style.

Both personal and organizational career approaches are valuable (Disenzo and Rabins, 2009). Compared with the last decade, dramatic changes in organizations' work have been increased. These changes are related to profound changes on employment like imposed pressures on globalization of economics, increasing workforce variety and technological developments. These background changes lead to what Kidd (1996) stated as "New realities of career". In order to mention changes in concept of career, experts have attempted to define concept of career once more. Among the theories, three of them are outstanding: protean career, career as a repository of knowledge, boundaryless career (Haase, 2007). Traditional career was being generally determined through the initial training of employees, but investments of employers have been shifted to a new career which is guided by all staffs (Kuijpers and Scheerens, 2006). In these careers, identity is not determined organizationally any longer, but it is determined through work experiences and career successes and also through the work similar to a life partner, parents and member of a community. A consensus is shaping that other people cannot expect just to have a job for life. However, it is a controversial issue whether such situation was always available for majority of staff or not. However, the increase in short-term employment arrangements brings implications for both individuals and organization. It has been suggested that in the world of motions, diversity, flexibility and short-term relationships, organizations need to revise their approaches for human resources development and growth of careers (Redman and Wilkinson, 2009).

Career success

Career success is defined as a "positive psycho-

logical or work-related outcomes or successes that people gather as a result of work experience". Moreover, this interpretation is considered as objective and subjective components. Objective indicators of career success include factors such as total compensation, number of promotions and other tangible trappings of accomplishment. Of the subjective perception, career success is considered as the role of personal comprehension, job satisfaction and career developments (Callanan, 2003). Objective success refers to verifiable results and review that was considered for a long time as a sign of professional success in terms of social point of view. Subjective or psychological career success has been determined as the results of experience in the pursuit of professional careers. In fact, subjective success is defined as individual's inner comprehension and evaluation of their professional career in any dimensions which matter to them and they mostly act as individual satisfaction of professional career. Therefore, subjective career success depends on individual subjective evaluation of their career goals and expectations which reflects the all sets of individual values, attitude and goals in order to judge the obtained success through professional career (Simo et al, 2010). Obviously, there is a relationship between subjective and objective career success, so that people define their success somehow based on their own objective successes. Indeed, recent studies found that subjective and objective success are positively related. As Locke stated (1976), job satisfaction is generally defined as a sense of enjoyment or positive feeling resulting from evaluation of individual's job or job experiences. Career satisfaction is in turn as individual satisfaction raised from inner and outer aspects of their career including salary, development and development chances (Judge et al, 1995). Referring to the former researches, it is rational to expect that the success of objective and subjective career is positively associated with each other. People tend to attribute success to inner factor and failures to outer ones. Similarly, success of one's objective career is likely to create positive perceptions of his/her own, which in turn should lead to more satisfaction of his/her own career. Theory of social comparison leads to the same predictions. According to this theory, people tend to compare themselves with others. The salaries and promotions are important tools in such comparison. Achieving higher salaries and more promotions, in comparison with others, likely shape one's perception of social and economic success.

Tangible career success may lead to more job satisfaction. Although we expect objective and subjective career success be positively related, we assume these terms are separate in practice. In particular, subjective career success may not be predicated exclusively through tangible indicators of career success such as salary or development but some people may focus more on their job or career satisfaction as career success. However, there are many reasons that people may go along with the organization for reasons other than career satisfaction (opportunity costs associated with quitting job, accumulated profits, pension, lack of alternatives) to follow (W.H.NG *et al*, 2005). According to the definition and results of some ideas and researches, career success is primarily considered from the perspective of an employee. More specifically, career success is evaluated by former tangible success of the individual or perceptions of satisfaction or developments. From the view of organization, career success can be significantly different from evaluation of career success based on previous achievements of an individual or perceptions of satisfaction and they are mostly such. As Enron stated, career success is unstable in view of the organization and it is based on an individual's ability to work in the current situation along with being faithful to commands of organizational culture and inner control systems. That "what you've done lately?" is performance rating in direct confrontation according to past performance as indicator of career success. It is not achieving high positions or salaries that determine job position but it is somehow able to maintain the individual in the position in order to continue the path to achieve higher positions (Callanan, 2003).

What is competency?

Competency was the idea of McLyland (1973) who mentioned that, education level or IQ score is not associated with job performance but competencies are associated. Therefore, they can sometimes reduce traditional prejudices which exist in race, gender, economics of societies and features (Azmi *et al*, 2009). Movement toward competencies started in America. McLyland (1973) raised findings of competency modeling as "Test of competency instead of intelligence". He introduced a new view of point to define a tool for career or job success

Mclyland (1973) defined competencies as personal traits which can lead to high performance. McLegan (1997) presented competency models as

central point of planning, organizing, integrating and improving all aspects of human resource management such as individual development planning, success planning and determining career. Since then, competencies are considered as major factors in human resource development activities (Haase, 2007). Concept of competency in human resource management has been used by Boyatzis (1982) who believed in the differentiation between successful and unsuccessful managers. He found out that a number of factors are involved in determination of success like quality, motivation, experience and personal features. In other words, this positive trait is a competency that generally managed with high performance hold. Boyatzis (1982) defines a competency as “an essential characteristic of an individual that can be a motivation, features, skills, an aspect of one’s conception of oneself or one’s community or a body of knowledge that he uses” (Kumar, 2006). Bartram *et al.* (2002) defines competencies as “a set of behaviors which are important for achieving desirable results and outputs. A competency is not a behavior or performance per se, but it is a display of capacities, activities, processes and useful responses which enable a series of work requirements to be linked more effectively to certain people comparing with others (Haase, 2007). Competencies are behaviors including knowledge, skills and required point of view for successful performance. In addition to intelligence and talent, basic properties such as character, habits, motivations, social roles and one’s conception regarding oneself or community enable an individual to perform better a job or role (Laroca, 2012). According to Le Boterf (2000), competency is a moral quality and it doesn’t have material nature and it depends on excellent performance of an individual. Thus, competency is not a status but it is an activity resulting from combination of personal resources (knowledge, abilities, qualities, experiences, cognitive capacities, psychological resources and) and environmental resources (technology, data base, books, social networks). When an individual lacks required knowledge for an excellent performance, he can search environmental resources to complete personal resources. Combined knowledge is center of all competencies (Lustri, 2007). There are two types of competencies which are Essential competencies and Differentiating competencies. An individual can only succeed in a job when he/she can handle harmony between these two competencies. Essential competencies are knowledge, skills and

abilities which can be improved easily through education whereas Differentiating competencies or basic competencies are concepts, characteristics and incentives which are difficult to improve and they differentiate superior performance and average performance (Kumar, 2006).

Competency Management

There is no superior organizational performance because of the lack of a qualified, coordinated and motivated workforce. Competency management can be an effective method for progress of such staff. It can be absolutely mentioned that competency management should be main focus of any trading systems which does not exist clearly in most organizations (Novak and Bekman, 2007). Today, workforces have higher expectation than before and they do not accept any jobs, at any situations or with any salaries. Moreover, they highly care about quality of work and desirable working life. As a result, experts of human resources should devise jobs in a way that working in an organization area is satisfying and desirable for employees (Saadat, 2011). Competency management has a significant benefit for organizations, work groups, teams, managers and equally all staff. For organizations, work groups, teams or managers, competencies and key skills have been recognized, evaluated and improved through centralized competency centers. Competency management guides business vision and strategy through validating the feasibility of achieving the strategy, improvement of required competencies and certainty of competitive capacities by an enterprise-wide sourcing strategy. Competency management also can improve productivity and quality intensively through integration and allocation of workforce. Moreover, competency management complete and help certain fields as strategic sourcing, intellectual capital management, knowledge management, project management, financial management and performance management. It is also useful for the employees because this field can improve fair payments, better job allocation and realizing career. Therefore, competency management provides intelligent development of workforce through education, counseling and job allocations and thus improvement of career management, employee motivation and commitment. Finally, this field represents sets, tools and methods that support performance and improvement of total workforce. The implemented competency management results in better improvement of workforce,

performance, opportunities, motivation and commitment and finally supports organizational performance through bundling of resources into capabilities that provide key business value (Novak and Bekman, 2007). Competency management is an activity which is being more important every day in private and governmental organizations in helping them to attract and improve employees, to recognize proper people for a position, to play successful performance, to analysis education and other main duties of human resources. Additionally, competency management is a research base in knowledge management and competency management system is mostly related to learning management systems. Competency management can be a great help in organizational and personal levels and it also recognize key knowledge that an employee should hold in order to achieve his goals. Competency management is obviously associated with organization's attempt to apply inner knowledge and stable start of management innovations (Draganidis and Mentzas, 2006).

Career competency

New career requires people who take responsibility for their personal career development. One effective approach for supporting people in this challenge is through competencies. Organizations have used competency models for improving personal performance. The recent used competencies generally focused on job performance and other important issues to improve career which have been neglected. In regard to career development and application challenge of competency structures, as it is used now in concept of career development, competencies which emphasizes merely on career performance are not sufficient. This criticism has been presented through introducing idea of career competencies as a list of behaviors and a knowledge that are a tool to achieve results related to the desired career (Haase and Francis-Smythe, 2005).

To support individuals in their career management, focusing on issues which are centralized on job performance is not enough but considering other competencies at the longer period through which competencies can be improved leads to create a new valuable opportunity, not only for creator of career but also for employers (haase, 2007). In spite of stable organizations in which issues and problems are repetitive and normal, and are solved based on pre-determined reg-

ulations and provisions, most issues are new and fresh in dynamic and energetic organizations. As a result, employees in such organizations should generally use their innovations and creativities to find solutions which were unprecedented. Moreover, naturally there were no obvious criterion or standard for solving them. In such situations, benchmark skill and efficiency of an individual should be his talent on overcoming this problem, not his performance in conducting a set of certain and determined duties (Saadat, 2011). It is a place where concept of career competencies emerges (haase, 2007). Career competencies can be observed as self-management of an individual in his career and learning experiences in order to achieve the determined career development (Kuijpers *et al.*, 2006). As Greenhous (2000) confirmed, any individuals need to accept responsibility to comprehend variety of careers they want to follow and the decision about career which is compatible with their preferences. Therefore, it is possible to claimed that career success does not only depend on professional knowledge and abilities but also identified individual's career competences help identifying frustrations arise in career situation and making appropriate decisions to solve that situation (Tubutiene, 2009). All staffs can recognize potential positions by studying required competencies in each situation and comparing with their own competencies and develop their own career plans (Draganidis and Mentzas, 2006). Competencies which are relevant to career development result in enhancing employees' performance or ready them for future development (Beheshtifar, 2011). Knowledge as an important outcome of career competencies has been considered through focusing on career as a continuous learning process. According to Sveiby (1996), "knowledge is an activity which will be better explained as a process of knowing". Therefore, inclusion of knowledge with requirements of effective definition corresponds with a competency. Career competencies are defined as "list of behavior and knowledge which are used in creating outcomes related to desirable career. They are learnt competencies resulting from effective performance in career management of an individual. It should be focused that career competencies are not focused on personality and intelligence. They do not include features as motivations, characteristics and aspects of one's image from oneself and determination of any individuals' talent for specializing in career management, but they focus in fact on extent of realization of the individual's

talent and explanation of behaviors and knowledge. Career competencies defines attention to career competencies depending on placing any individual opposed to important environmental experiences, learning positions or experiences (Haase, 2007). According to Czerepaniak – Walczak (1997), career competence as a special ability which is characterized by demonstrating, at society defined level, the ability to behave adequately and to take responsibility for one's behavior. Competence allows not only to assess and reflect upon one's work in an efficient way but also to take responsibility for the results of the work (Ordon, 2008). Career competencies are those competencies which are common in all jobs. By combining it with extensive organizational capabilities, series of jobs are created (Ogrea *et al.*, 2009). As Arthur explain "...career competencies are typically framed in conventional schema of "technical competencies", "interpersonal competencies" and "conceptual" or "strategic competencies". In contrast, the "career" spans wider social roles, occupies a much longer time frame than the "job" and provides a more complex framework for conceptualizing competencies and their accumulation. Development of career competency is not separate from career management and it is main component of this process (Tubutiene, 2009).

Importance of Career Competencies in Organizations

One of the most significant objectives of each organization is to enhance efficiency and effectiveness that can lead to organizational success (Beheshtifar, 2011). In other word, organizations are concerned about productivity which has two aspects: productivity resulted from highly-motivated workforce and productivity resulted from being equipped with combined skills or hot skills which are needed for doing job. Thus, for profitability of an organization, career management should equip people for proving their skills, anticipating needs of future skill and commitment to continuous learning. It is expected that results of an effective career management is a successful career which is required by both individuals and organizations (Neault, 2002). Need for responding quickly to complexity of volatile environment leads that organizations focus increasingly on knowledge of individuals and competencies which are regarded as key resource for competitive advantages. Competencies of individuals should be related to organizational capabilities

and any changes in them should be compatible with strategies of the organization. In order to achieve such alignment of utmost importance for organization, recognition of place of main competencies is for studying amount and quality of individuals that are linked to them (Lustri, 2007). Additionally, the dynamic changes in organizational work have created realities of new career which focus on individuals and their needs to accept responsibility of career development (Beheshtifar, 2011). Although individual self-direction and responsibility in modern career context are important, organizations are still responsible for continuously providing learning opportunities and required resources of employees to manage career (Park, 2009). As Defillippi and Arthur (1994) discussed, concept of career competencies can highlight relationship between development of collective career and creation of constant organizational capabilities. Concept of career competencies shows that which personal competencies may help achieving organizational capabilities through development of collective career (Wakabayashi *et al.*, 2008). According to Wall, a successful organization is the one which can adapt itself with environmental changes in a long time and it can create a targeted management structure and develop key competencies. Organizations can guarantee their success through enhancing competencies which concentrate on performance of the employees (Beheshtifar, 2011) that one of their main is career competencies.

On the other hand, organizational performance is a multi-dimensional combination and one of those dimensions is service quality. Quality of service is an important dimension of organizational performance in public sector because its main output is service. Therefore, public organizations as private organizations are not based on benefit achievement. Quality of service is a subjective action that is determined by evaluation of customer. Competency is related to quality of service. Suhaila (2005) studied relationship between competencies of employees and quality of comprehended service in local accountant of Malaysia. She found that communicative skills stated 48% of variance of the comprehended quality of service. It shows that employees of communicative skills were used based on keeping trust, competence, compassion and sensitivity in behavior toward customers to gain durable quality of service (Azmi *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, for services, all staff (or particularly motivation and perspective of staff) and also the ability to learn or-

ganization's beliefs play an important role in obtaining a quality of service. The resource-based view of the firm, discussed previously, leads to the proposition that if superior service quality is a distinctive competence through which firms gain competitive advantage, it must be based on capabilities and resources that support this competency. In services, we face with this issue that feeling of the staff about their jobs will affect feeling of customers on services they received (Hays and Hil, 1999). Therefore, to make organization capable of competing, policies, plans and activities of human resources should be improved and also the organizations should be improved through their staff. It is related to theory of human capital that suggests individuals who invest on features of human capitals like, education, training and experience; are expected to show higher level of performance and lately achieving better organizational results. Based on this theory, improvement and career success of an individual is related to quality and quantity of human assets and skills and experiences which an individual brings to the market (Lertwannawit and hatSuanDusit, 2009). And competencies relevant to career development lead to enhance performance of the staff or ready them for improvements in their future duties (Beheshtifar, 2011). Career competency reflects interpretations of any individuals regarding their job positions (haase, 2007).

Career competencies and Knowledge Management

Employee and the knowledge which is in their minds are the most significant resource to achieve competitive advantage in today's world and an organization can operate more successfully to encourage its staff gaining, using and spreading knowledge. One of the most important approaches to maintain knowledge employees in organizations and encouraging them is to improve staff through career and creating a sense of satisfaction and career success in them. Career competencies are as learning competencies which lead to successful performance in career management (Haase and Francis-Smythe, 2005) and learning is a key activity in knowledge management. Employee awareness of their own competencies and abilities and in other word, self-awareness and individuals' insights lead to create a sense of power in people and it provides basis of creativity emergence in employees. An individual will go for a way through resources of inside and outside

the organization to amend his weaknesses by knowing them. Similarly, basis of knowledge creation will be supplied by gaining information. Moreover, in relation to information resources, sharing and distribution of knowledge will be possible. Career competencies are looking for challenges associated with creation balance in working life and it follows recognition and insight. Organizations can help determining goals of their career by aiding employees in order to recognize one's competencies and in this process, they create agreement between employees' goals and organizational goals that are important factor in achieving success of employees and organization.

Considering knowledge boom in today's world, it is necessary for leaders to create a view and common sense as a framework to determine what is important for the organization (Ahmadi and Salehi, 2010). In today's circumstances and existence of short-term work relationships, organizations should keep their employees employable, namely by helping employees to recognize themselves and competencies, skills and abilities and improving them, their abilities to create a job position in fluctuations of the market and in time of lack of need, their accordance with new job requirements and in various positions of the organization will be increased and reduced concerns of the employees about job security. This is skill of the employees that can be transferrable, not the employees. When these concerns are decreased, they are provoked to share their own knowledge with others which is the goal of knowledge management.

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