

Virtual Communities of Practice as a Knowledge Sharing Tool: Recommendations for International Business

Knowledge sharing is essential for a person to grow individually and professionally. In recent years, international businesses have tended to realize the importance of having a good knowledge management system in place. The COVID-19 pandemic, back in 2020 brought a shift to the way of how companies operate with the majority turning to remote work. As a result, companies needed to adapt their knowledge sharing strategies to more remote possibilities. To guarantee that the employees are sharing their knowledge and are able to learn from others, more businesses started to adopt innovative tools for knowledge sharing. One of such tools is virtual communities of practice that brings a chance for employees to have a collaborative tool where they are connected with likeminded people. The objective of this article is to provide recommendations for ensuring knowledge sharing through virtual communities in international business organizations. To achieve this objective, potential knowledge sharing practices in the context of international business are discussed. Additionally, an original research methodology based on virtual ethnography for identifying knowledge sharing practices in an international business organization is presented, and the qualitative research findings are discussed and interpreted.

Keywords: virtual communities of practice, knowledge sharing, international business, knowledge types.

Asmeniniam ir profesiniam tobulėjimui svarbu dalytis žiniomis. Pastaraisiais metais tarptautinės įmonės pastebėjo gerai veikiančios žinių valdymo sistemos svarbą. COVID-19 pandemija 2020 m. pakeitė įmonių veikimo būdą – daugelis parėjo į nuotolinį darbą. Dėl šios priežasties įmonės turėjo pritaikyti savo žinių dalijimosi strategijas prie nuotoliu dirbančių darbuotojų. Tad pradėjo naudoti inovatyvias žinių dalijimosi įrankius, kad užtikrintų darbuotojų žinių dalijimąsi bei mokymąsi vienas iš kito. Vienas tokių įrankių – virtualios bendruomenės, kai darbuotojai gali bendrauti ir dalytis žiniomis su kolegomis, turinčiais tokių pačių interesų. Šio straipsnio tikslas – parengti dalijimosi žiniomis užtikrinimo per virtualias praktikos bendruomenes rekomendacijas, skirtas tarptautinėms verslo organizacijoms. Siekiant įgyvendinti tikslą, aptariamos galimos žinių dalijimosi praktikos tarptautinio verslo kontekste, pateikiama originali virtualios etnografijos požiūriu grįsta žinių dalijimosi praktikos identifikavimo tarptautinėje verslo organizacijoje tyrimo metodika bei aptariami ir interpretuojami kokybinio tyrimo rezultatai.

Raktiniai žodžiai: virtualios praktikos bendruomenės, žinių dalijimasis, tarptautinis verslas, žinių tipai.

Introduction

Knowledge sharing is one of the most important concepts in the world nowadays.

The ability of a person to learn new abilities allowed him to survive, however this learned knowledge needed to be shared with others to ensure the growth of the

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community. According to the researchers - knowledge sharing is an interaction between individuals where the raw material being shared is knowledge (Castaneda, Cuellar, 2020).

Knowledge sharing is important in the personal and professional life of an individual. International businesses are starting to understand the importance of right knowledge management strategy in the company. As the world went into lockdown back in 2020, it was important for the companies to ensure the knowledge exchange between employees and therefore more virtual knowledge sharing tools were adapted into daily business operations (Blagov, Anand, 2022). For the companies it is also important to ensure that employees are communicating with one another and are creating team spirit in their community (Davidavičienė, Al Majzoub, Meidute-Kavaliauskiene, 2020). However, there is a visible gap of usage between open and collaborative knowledge-sharing tools such as virtual communities of practice. Virtual communities of practice are an effective way to share knowledge between individuals that are connected by the same interests and international businesses should put more emphasis on creating open spaces for these communities to strive.

The research analyzing the aspects of knowledge sharing has been increasing in numbers during the past decades. In scientific literature it is possible to find a broad variety of research done on topics related to knowledge sharing. One of these topics are knowledge management. Back in 2014, B. Meihami and H. Meihami stated that knowledge management is the process in business during which organizational managers improve

overall performance by setting the way of how to manage organizational knowledge better (Meihami, Meihami, 2014). In 2016, R. Nowacki and K. Bachnik described process of knowledge management as a willingness of a company to introduce an innovative way to process information in order to execute business strategy (Nowacki, Bachnik, 2016). Overall, the majority of scientists describe knowledge management as a process through which companies can manage their interorganizational knowledge in order to reach the designated goals.

As the field of knowledge management has gained interests from the researchers, the companies started to recognize the importance of correctly managing their knowledge to gain a competitive advantage. Researchers started talking about employees' motivations to share their personal knowledge with others. In 1997, Robert J. Vallerand created the *hierarchical model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations* (HMIEM) (Vallerand, 1997). The model considers multiple motivational representations in diverse settings, how these various motivations are related, and the factors that influence and have an impact on these representations of motivation. The individual motivation to participate in virtual communities of practice, can be separated into three categories: intrinsic, extrinsic, and community motivation. If the person is motivated by intrinsic motivational factors, he is motivated by performance and the ability to share knowledge. These people do not seek rewards, but rather enjoy helping others. If the person is motivated by intrinsic factors, he feels that by sharing the knowledge with others, he takes his personal life into

his own hands and uses his powers to improve it (Wang, Zhang, Jin-Xing Hao, Chen, 2019). Furthermore, a person can be motivated by extrinsic factors. These factors are rewards granted to employees, mostly these rewards are monetary (Setiawan, Kurniabudi, Fernando, 2016).

With personal motivation, employees are expressing the need for knowledge sharing, however the international companies are the ones that provide tools for this. With the changing world around, knowledge-sharing tools are evolving. The first generation of knowledge-sharing tools were designed to resolve issues that are related to geographical distance of workers or temporary challenges in daily life. The second generation of knowledge sharing tools are designed to reduce social distance in work since the majority of the teams can work from home and meet only online (Lee, Wang, Yeoh, Ikasari 2020).

In international businesses, second generation knowledge sharing tools are not used as wisely as they could. Second generation tools like social media, video conferencing or sharing and storing documents online are used way less than tools such as email or companies' intranet (Deloitte, 2013).

Within virtual teams, knowledge sharing can simultaneously happen in a few different online platforms. This may happen since some platforms are more user friendly or have specific functionalities or features that are necessary for the employees (Lee, Wang, Yeoh, Ikasari, 2020). The most valuable tool for sharing knowledge within virtual teams is collaboration sites while simultaneously this being the most important tool while performing at work. Chat groups

and direct messaging also is viewed as a useful tool to maintain relationships between team members, while at the same time helping the members to obtain new knowledge (Trees, 2021).

Even though companies adopted new virtual collaboration tools, there is still a visible gap in usage of open and joined collaboration tools. Communities of practice are not visible as a useful tool to perform daily job functions; however, communities allow the employees to connect with like-minded colleagues and all of this is critical to ensure innovation, creative problem solving and knowledge sharing inside the organization. Therefore, there is a need to understand the activities of virtual communities of practice to understand how knowledge is shared in them.

The aim of research is to prepare recommendations for boosting knowledge sharing through virtual communities of practice in international business settings.

The objectives of research:

1. To conduct a literature review on knowledge sharing practices in international business.
2. To carry out a qualitative analysis on knowledge sharing in virtual communities of practice in international business.

Literature review

Types of knowledge

Each person during their life have obtained different knowledge that they are able to share. Knowledge that can be shared is divided into two main

dimensions: tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge was first described back in the 20th century and is considered to be a knowledge that is hard to articulate to others (Mohajan, 2017; Smith, 2001). Tacit knowledge is the knowledge we draw in actions like driving, operating a machine. It is hard for a person to describe how to ride a bicycle but is easier to show. Tacit knowledge is personal, mostly gained from other people.

Due to the difficulty writing down the tacit knowledge individuals have; managers are more likely to turn to explicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is considered to be data or information that is coded, stored, and spread within people. This kind of knowledge is easily transferred and shared within individuals (Smith, 2001). Explicit knowledge is considered to be logical and objective. Explicit knowledge is easily transferred since it is related to theories (Maravilhas, Martins, 2018). This type of knowledge is considered to be technical knowledge that can be described in formal meetings, manuals. Explicit knowledge is mostly shared via electronic methods, prints or other methods that are considered to be formal ones. For a person to gain explicit knowledge he needs to have a formal education or needs to finish some structural studies (Smith, 2001). Since this type of knowledge is easily coded and stored it is also way faster to be shared.

During more recent years, the knowledge type division has grown. Based on the recent research, it is possible to find more knowledge types than only tacit and explicit. These knowledge types are:

- Implicit
- Declarative
- Procedural

- Posteriori
- A priori (Drew, 2023, Gasik, 2011).

The additional knowledge types allow to understand, that each individual has their own personal knowledge that is gained via different experiences. Within teams, this knowledge can be shared via social interactions. Companies need to ensure that social interactions are constant in the organization in order to keep the knowledge sharing.

Knowledge sharing practices in international business

For the international companies to succeed in knowledge sharing, first of all they need to figure out the knowledge management strategies best suitable for their company goals. In scientific literature, researchers have identified two different strategies the companies can use to enable the knowledge sharing in their organization.

The first strategy that can be used in knowledge management is called *codification*. The main idea of codification is the people-to-document approach. If the company is using this method the main goal is to capture, codify, store and reuse the information gained from individuals. The collected knowledge later can be used to reach the set goals by the company (Bolisani, Padova, Scarso, 2020).

The second strategy is *personalization*. In personalization strategy, knowledge management is focused on person-to-person interaction. While using this method, the main focus is on the sharing of tacit knowledge using tools such as human interaction or social networking (Bolisani, Padova, Scarso, 2020).

The correctly identified strategy can allow the business to choose the knowledge sharing tools that will be based on what types of knowledge the company wants employees to share. The communities of practice in the recent years gained popularity as it brings the possibility to merge knowledge sharing and societal activities in the company. While participating in the community employees feel the sense of belonging and for this reason, they share more which brings the knowledge into the company.

Virtual communities of practice as a knowledge sharing tool

Maintaining and continuously exploiting an organization's intellectual capital has grown to be a challenging task. Changes in organizational structures and employee distances from one another are putting traditional organizational boundaries to the test. In the past years, communities of practice (CoP) have become an important tool for companies in their knowledge management policies. The term communities of practice (CoP) are defined as an activity in which participants are sharing understanding and concerns about what they are doing and how it affects them and the community itself. (Ardichvili, 2008).

Virtual communities of practice are similar to CoP, however, to share their knowledge these communities use an internet connection. (Wenger-Trayner, Wenger-Trayner, 2015) Virtual communities of practice not only use online learning platforms or websites but also encourage real-time learning methods such as online conferences to remove

geographical barriers and bring the possibility to attract an interactive and diverse crowd. (Bermejo-Caja, Koatz, Orrego, 2019) Virtual communities of practice play the main role in the knowledge management strategies inside the company and within different ones. Moreover, it is being argued that these virtual communities should be considered an important tool for collective learning in the organization (Ardichvili, 2008).

Back in 1996, I. Nonaka, H. Takeuchi and K. Umemoto proposed a SECI model that helps to explain the movement of tacit and explicit knowledge through different phases and how it helps for an individual and organization to gain new knowledge and broaden the already existing knowledge (Nonaka, Takeuchi, Umemoto, 1996). In this model, *externalization process* explains how the knowledge is shared in virtual communities of practice. During the externalization process tacit knowledge is changed to explicit knowledge and takes on forms of metaphors, models, or concepts. In organizational settings, this happens when companies are documenting the processes. The main aim of this process is to generalize the collective knowledge, which later could be transferred to the newcomers in the company (Nonaka, Takeuchi, Umemoto, 1996).

Organizations can benefit substantially from knowledge sharing through virtual communities of practice. As people share their expertise and experiences, new knowledge can be created, which can improve organizational processes and procedures, clarify goals and objectives, and lead to more informed decision-making. The new organizational

knowledge that results can then be leveraged to drive innovation, improve performance, and boost competitiveness.

Research methodology

Research method: As the main idea is to analyze the online communities within specific business the chosen strategy needs to explain the analyses of communities. Therefore, it is important to approach this research using *Netnography*. Netnography uses not intrusive research methods such as observation that allows a researcher to immerse himself in an online community, participate in its activities real-time. (Addeo, Delli Paoli, Esposito, Bolcato, 2019). Based on this information, the data was collected using observation method. This helps to analyze the online community in their comfort zone, therefore will provide a splendid view on how knowledge is being shared within these communities.

The sample: The research was conducted in the international business working around Northern Europe. The main sector where business is focusing

is computer software development, however they also provide consultation, accounting, and investment services. The company is promoting open communication, internal learnings, and self-management therefore they have created virtual communities, where people can meet up and discuss the topics, they find passion for.

In total three virtual communities of practice were observed, the characteristics of each community are presented in Table 1.

Research timeframe: from 16th of January 2023 until 30th of April 2023.

Research data analysis: *the deductive coding* system was chosen. Based on the types of knowledge and the nature of virtual communities of practice, the deductive coding system allowed to create a few codes beforehand and this technique assisted in focusing the coding on topics that were recognized to be essential. Additionally, the deductive coding system narrows down the numbers of codes which could lead to more generalized cases (Skjott Linneberg, Korsgaard, 2019).

The research data was analyzed using MaxQDA platform. As each observed virtual community of practice had their

Table 1. Characteristics of communities

Name of community	Number of members	Topics of interest	Communication channels
Community 1	18	Celebrations (personal and national holidays, specific days) Communication	Google meets; Google chat; Slack channel.
Community 2	13	Benefits; HR topics	Google meets; Slack channel.
Community 3	10	Motivation; Internal learnings.	Google meets; Slack channel.

Source: prepared by the authors.

own document of transcribed conversations, the data was structured accordingly from the most information found to the least. Overall, 3 documents were analyzed using MaxQDA program. While performing the coding, 18 codes connected with the research topic were created. In total 191 segments were coded.

Research ethics: At the first stage of research, all virtual communities of practice were contacted. They were informed about the future research, and they had a chance to plan a meeting or write down the questions they had about the research. Once the consent from the virtual community was gained and the access to communication platforms were granted, all members of the community were information about the ongoing research and also, they were informed about the possibility of withdrawing from the research as any time. All gathered information was coded to protect the anonymity of the community members and the company itself. The transcribed conversations were used strictly for the research, therefore it was not stored or shared.

Research limitations: empirical research has its own limitations. Firstly, the research was conducted in one chosen international business operating in Northern Europe. The organization itself has its own unique culture and technological decisions that may impact the virtual communities of practice. For this reason, it may be hard to transfer the findings of this empirical research to other companies. Secondly, the sample size of the empirical research was three virtual communities of practice. The bigger sample size would have allowed gaining a broader understanding of how

virtual communities of practice share knowledge and therefore the findings of this empirical research may be not applicable generally.

Findings and discussions

In the conversations of virtual communities of practice, these types of knowledge were recognized:

1. Tacit
2. Explicit
3. Implicit
4. Declarative
5. A posteriori

After the shared knowledge types were identified, a coding system was created. Under types of knowledge, characteristic features were coded. Figure 1 presents the coding system created.

Five types of knowledge were recognized while reading the discussions held by the communities. The discussions observed provided the data that consisted of the main themes, that were identified in the process of extracting information relevant to the research.

All three observed communities have shared declarative knowledge: *"I was thinking something simpler, like a chocolate Milka in a heart shape?"* (Community 1), *"I think this is a little too much <...> for one person"* (Community 1), *"<...> maybe not all employees are interested in that?"* (Community 2), *"I think there is no one fits all model."* (Community 2), *"I see your point, however, then it would not make sense <...>"* (Community 3), *"I think it depends on the cause we want to donate <...>"* (Community 3).

As a virtual community of practice is a tool to share tacit knowledge, the

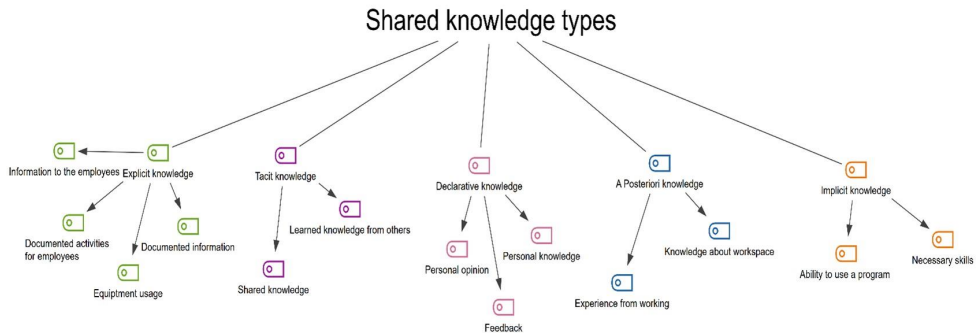


Fig. 1. Map of shared knowledge types

observed communities also expressed this type of knowledge: “<...> in the morning we gathered for some heart-shaped snacks in the kitchen and let everyone know that the quiz will be held at 11 am” (Community 1), “It was all right, <...> they are not as popular though.” (Community 1), “I was informed that at the moment not enough people are registered for this discount <...>” (Community 2), “I talked with employees we thought could be our lectures in internal learning sessions <...>” (Community 2), “So right now we have three ideas on how to spend the points <...>” (Community 3), “<...> we got a request to boost the internal learning of the employees.” (Community 3).

Explicit knowledge was also shared within all observed communities: “I created a poster about the quiz so let’s put it into our intranet” (Community 1), “<...> we should make a post regarding this.” (Community 1, p. 2), “<...> let’s create an event where the employees could join.” (Community 1), “<...> we do have our site where all information is posted.” (Community 2), “we could post some information into our intranet about that <...> and at the same time we

could promote the possibility to use the services of our partners” (Community 2), “Currently had around 3 computers and 4 monitors. The computers we have at the moment we can use them <...>” (Community 3), “After this meeting, we can post that the auction will be held <...>” (Community 3).

A posteriori knowledge type was only observed in Community 1 and 3: “I think something like this could happen in the spring, when more people are coming to the offices” (Community 1), “all of us comes to the office on different times, it will be hard to invite everyone on the same time” (Community 1), “I know that last year all the computers and other gadgets that were older than 5 years could be bought <...>” (Community 3), “<...> something similar happens every new year and people are eager to participate in such events.” (Community 3).

Implicit knowledge type was witnessed in Community 1 and 2: “<...> I know they use this program in different quiz shows.” (Community 1), “<...> I will work on the quiz looks using the platform” (Community 1), “<...> from softer skills person needs to be sharply minded

understanding the logic of the code and of course ambitious.” (Community 2), “<...> we have only a few junior people who know how to automatize the process <...>” (Community 2).

In observed conversations only Community 1 was the one that shared all knowledge types. The shared knowledge types depended on the communities’ interests of topics; however, all communities were open to the opinion of their members during the discussions.

Depending on the topic of the discussion, one person can share a few types of knowledge within a sentence or few. In Figure 2, the relationship between the knowledge types recognized is presented.

Code *learned knowledge from others* that is coded under tacit knowledge segment, has the strongest relationship with code *feedback*: “<...> thanks for letting us know <...> but I am thinking about the

*movie night and I suggest to not create a survey <...>” (Community 1), “<...> I talked with employees we though could be our lectures in internal learning sessions, so they would be up for it, however, at the moment they do not have time for such activity <...> so I suggest postponing this activity a bit <...>” (Community 2). In a collaborative setting it could suggest that giving feedback is an important way to increase learning between community members and it is granted together with the knowledge acquired from others. Additionally, the smaller bubble next to “*personal opinion*” could also suggest that community members are sharing their own opinion, and this is looked at as an opportunity to share personal perspectives: “<...> I did not know the other items for the auction then yes, I totally agree that the monitor should be the last one to sell.” (Community 3).*

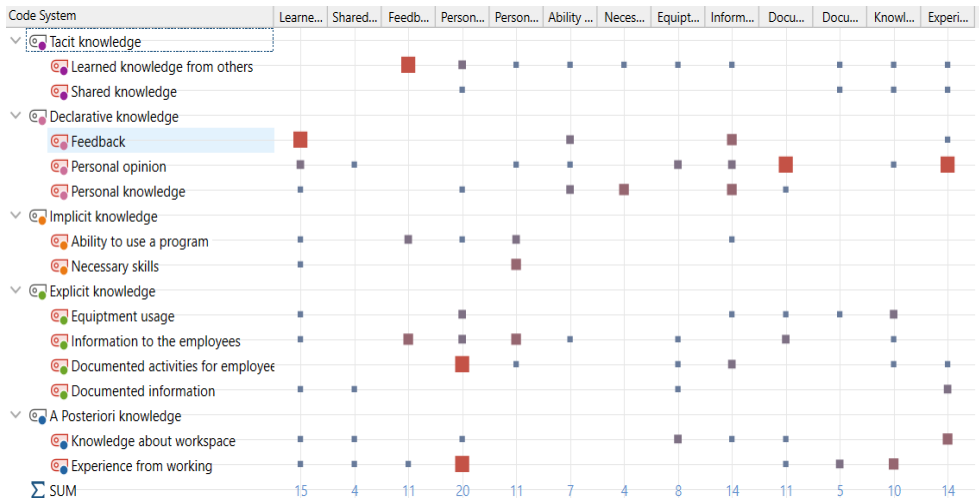


Fig. 2. Relationship between knowledge types¹

¹ The relationship between knowledge types is represented in squares – the bigger the square, the stronger the relationship.

Next to the code “*personal opinion*” it is visible that the main co-occurrences happened with two codes: “*documented activities to the employees*” and “*experience from working*”: “<...> we got a request to boost the internal learning of the employees and I was thinking we could do is a raise in the compensation on the internal learning that are held by the employees or some other hub where people could share their passions and what they do on their free time. <...> something like this happens almost each year <...>” (Community 3).

Knowledge sharing activities in virtual communities of practice took place using different platforms. These platforms are presented in Table 2.

All of the communities are using the solutions provided by Google. Different from two communities, virtual community 1 uses google chat platform for daily communication. While observing these virtual communities of practice during the empirical research it was understood that the company allows communities to take time from their workday once a week and brings them a chance to use this time wisely and discuss with other

members of the community about the topics of their interest. This shows that the company cares about the activities of the communities and sees them as a good tool for improving collaboration between employees and also a platform where the members are able to discuss and share their personal knowledge. However, while observing the virtual communities of practice it was noticed that not all communities are consistent with their activities. From the observed communities, only one of them was consistent with the weekly virtual meetings and additionally had a Google chat where members of the community updated each other daily. The other two communities did not have a chat platform that was known during the research and was not present in all of the virtual meetings. This could lead to a suggestion that not all members of the virtual community are looking at this tool as a platform for collaboration between different employees and also do not view it as a platform where employees are able to share the knowledge they have obtained. The community that stayed consistent in their

Table 2. How knowledge is shared in virtual communities of practice

Community name	Platforms used for communication	How is knowledge shared?	Does community have a moderator?
Community 1	Google Chat; Google Meet; Slack channel.	One document each meeting; Discussion based on the topic.	No, but discussion is held mostly by the same people each time.
Community 2	Google Meet; Slack channel	Documents such as survey results; Discussion based on the topic of meeting.	No, but discussion is held by the same people.
Community 3	Google Meet; Slack channel.	Discussion about the topics of the meeting.	No, but discussion is mostly moderated by one person.

Source: prepared by the authors.

activities was able to share more knowledge between the members and the types of knowledge shared were more interconnected with each other it leads to the thought that the members from a such community are able to get a more positive experience and also broadens their knowledge during each virtual meeting of the community.

While observing the activities of the virtual community of practice, it was witnessed that the knowledge sharing is mostly based on the discussions of the community members. However, the expressed personal knowledge usually stayed between the discussion and was not documented in written form. Even though virtual communities of practice are doing what they are supposed to and bring the possibility for the employees to collaborate and share their personal knowledge, for international business it does not bring a lot of advantage if the knowledge stays within the members of the employees. Some documented information reaches employees not participating in the activities of the community via the companies' intranet, however, it is a small amount compared to the knowledge shared during the discussions. These findings lead to a suggestion that the company does a good job while trying to implement the virtual communities of practice into their knowledge management strategy, however, the communities themselves may lack the understanding of what their purpose is.

Overall, it is congratulated that international business applies more unique resolutions to their knowledge management strategy, however, the members of the virtual community of practice may lack some understanding of the purpose

of their community and this leads to tacit knowledge staying within the members of the community and the company is will not be able to use this knowledge in the future.

Recommendations for international business

Based on the research findings, the chapter provides what goals for the company to ensure the successful activities of the virtual communities of practice and recommendations on how to reach them.

Companies should encourage virtual communities of practice to document shared knowledge. For the company to ensure that knowledge is shared and will stay within the company, there is a need to encourage members of the communities to document the shared knowledge. This could be done by encouraging members to document the shared best practices, and what lessons were learned during their activities. Additionally, the company could provide guidelines or templates that would show the members of the community how to document this information. The company also could provide a platform where this shared and documented knowledge is stored, and it would be available to all employees in the company even ones who are not participating in the virtual communities of practice.

Companies should create a knowledge-sharing culture. This can be accomplished by recognizing and rewarding individuals who share their knowledge, as well as by providing the appropriate resources and encouraging involvement. Companies should also support diversity and inclusivity, as well as monitor and assess

knowledge sharing and urge individuals to document shared knowledge. Companies can cultivate a culture of knowledge sharing by creating a collaborative environment in which people feel empowered to share their knowledge, resulting in increased organizational performance and competitiveness.

Companies should keep track of knowledge sharing activities in virtual communities of practice. This involves tracking the frequency and quality of shared knowledge and evaluating its influence on company performance. Companies can understand which topics and areas generate the most interest and dedicate resources to addressing knowledge gaps by keeping track of and evaluating knowledge sharing. Additionally, businesses can identify and address any barriers to knowledge sharing that may arise during the process, such as a lack of participation, insufficient documentation, or technical issues. Companies can ensure that they are utilizing the potential of their collective knowledge and remaining competitive in the marketplace by regularly monitoring and analyzing knowledge sharing through virtual communities of practice.

Conclusions and future research directions

Knowledge sharing in international companies can be based on different strategies. These strategies allow the company to adopt the best suitable knowledge-sharing tools that will ensure sustainable knowledge-sharing. As one such tool, companies can create virtual communities of practice. As the activities

of these communities are based on the collaboration of the employees, during the discussions, members are able to exchange more personal knowledge than via emails due to being surrounded by like-minded people. Additionally, based on the SECI model (Nonaka, Takeuchi, Umemoto, 1996), members of the community are able to transfer tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge and it allows the company to retrieve this information in the future. Theoretical solutions provided an understanding that virtual communities of practice may be a great knowledge-sharing tool where different types of knowledge can be exchanged in a comfortable zone for the employees.

A qualitative research method was chosen to understand what types of knowledge are shared within the virtual communities of practice. Netnography was chosen as it allows the researcher to observe communities without disrupting the comfort zone communities have created. Observation method allow the researcher to collect data in real-time and allow to see the broader view on how knowledge is shared in virtual communities of practice.

The empirical research was performed in an international IT enterprise. The virtual communities of practice in the company are separated by the topics of interest and each week they have a dedicated time when all members are meeting to discuss new issues, tasks, or goals of the community. Overall, the main shared knowledge types were tacit, explicit, declarative, and a posteriori knowledge. This led to the suggestion that the virtual communities of practice in international IT enterprise are sharing

the personal knowledge they have obtained in their professional and personal life however, for the community it does not bring a lot of new organizational knowledge as the information shared within the members are not documented.

Several recommendations for future research can be made based on the findings of the empirical research on virtual communities of practice in an international business. First, future research could look into how knowledge sharing practices differ across industries or sectors within virtual communities of practice. This would provide insight into the distinct problems and opportunities for information sharing that exist in various situations. Furthermore, future research could look into how virtual communities of practice can be integrated into an

organization's overall knowledge management strategy. This would aid in determining the most efficient methods of leveraging virtual communities of practice as part of a larger organizational learning and knowledge sharing framework. Future study could also concentrate on the role of technology in enabling knowledge exchange within virtual communities of practice. This would aid in determining the most effective technical tools and platforms for facilitating knowledge sharing in virtual communities of practice. Overall, these research recommendations can contribute to a better understanding of information sharing patterns in virtual communities of practice and can help businesses design more successful knowledge management strategies.

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VIRTUALIOS PRAKTIKOS BENDRUOMENĖS KAIP DALIJIMOSI ŽINIOMIS ĮRANKIS: REKOMENDACIJOS TARPTAUTINIAM VERSLUI

S a n t r a u k a

Žinių dalijimasis – viena svarbiausių koncepcijų dabartiniame pasaulyje. Gebėjimas mokytis leido žmogui išgyventi, tačiau buvo būtina pasidalyti išmokta informacija, kad būtų užtikrintas bendruomenės augimas.

Tačiau dalytis žiniomis svarbu ir profesiniame gyvenime. Tarptautinės įmonės pradeda suprasti, kaip svarbu užtikrinti dalijimąsi žiniomis, kad būtų pasiekti išsikelti tikslai. 2020 m. pasaulį sukrėtusi COVID-19 pandemija privertė įmones apmąstyti žinių dalijimosi strategijas bei pritaikyti jas darbuotojams, dirbantiems nuotoliniu. Dėl šių priežasčių įmonės ėmė taikyti daugiau virtualių žinių dalijimosi įrankių.

Vienas tokių įrankių – virtualios praktikos bendruomenės. Į šias bendruomenes susijungia žmonės, turintys tokių pačių interesų ir linkę dalytis informacija. Dėl pasaulį uždariusios pandemijos virtualios praktikos bendruomenės tarptautiniame versle pripažintos kaip svarbi detalė žinių dalijimosi procese, tačiau pastebima spraga tarp tarptautinių įmonių, kurios šį įrankį taiko savo strategijose.

Šiame straipsnyje bandoma suprasti žinių dalijimosi būdus virtualiose praktikos bendruomenėse, kad būtų galima dar plačiau juos taikyti tarptautinio verslo žinių dalijimosi strategijose. Duomenys šiam straipsniui buvo renkami tarptautinėje įmonėje, dirbančioje Šiaurės Europos regione. Virtualių praktikos bendruomenių stebėjimas leido surinkti duomenis tyrimui. Duomenys

buvo analizuojami naudojantis MaxQDA platforma, kuri leido suprasti, kokios rūšies žinios buvo dalytasi virtualios praktikos bendruomenėse bei pasiūlė galimus sprendimus, skirtus stiprinti žinių dalijimąsi virtualiose praktikos bendruomenėse.

Žinių dalijimasis virtualiose praktikos bendruomenėse remiasi atviromis diskusijomis per virtualius susitikimus bei privačiais pokalbiais, kurie sujungia visus bendruomenės narius. Bendruomenių nariai atvirai dalijasi asmenine patirtimi, darbo vietoje įgytomis žiniomis ar asmenine nuomone apie konkrečias temas. Tačiau šiose bendruomenėse trūksta naujų organizacinių žinių kūrimo, kadangi virtualių praktikos bendruomenių nariai nefiksuoja savo diskusijų.

Tarptautinėms įmonėms rekomenduojama skatinti virtualias praktikos bendruomenes dokumentuoti žinias, kuriomis buvo pasidalyta per susitikimą. Tai padėtų įmonėms plėsti organizacijos žinias bei užtikrintų jų prieinamumą ateityje. Įmonės taip pat turėtų sukurti kultūrą, kurioje skatinama dalytis žiniomis. Tarptautinės įmonės turėtų stebėti bei vertinti žinių dalijimąsi virtualiose praktikos bendruomenėse, kad užtikrintų, jog bendruomenių nariai naudingai praleidžia susitikimo laiką bei plečia savo ir kitų žinias. Taigi papildomas įmonės įsitraukimas padėtų nariams suprasti virtualių praktikos bendruomenių tikslą bei sukurtų galimybę kurti naujas organizacines žinias.

