KM The Bouygues Telecom Way

1. Knowledge Management

“Knowledge Management is a business model embracing knowledge as an organizational asset to drive sustainable business advantage. It is a management discipline that promotes an integrated approach to create, identify, evaluate, capture, enhance, share and apply an enterprise’s intellectual capital” writes a consultant.

“Knowledge Management is not a shrink-wrapped functional solution, it is a combination of technology, methodology, and corporate belief in the competitive advantage to be gained from KM” explains another consultant.

The discussion on the concepts of Knowledge Management is very intense between consultants.

Actually, there are many definitions of the Knowledge Management and, may be, it’s due to the lack of operational experiences. So, for a lot of professionals the Knowledge Management is still a concept.

The case underneath presents the approach of the Knowledge Management adopted by a well known French company.

2. The Bouygues Telecom way

With more than six million customers and a network covering 98 per cent of France, Bouygues Telecom, created in 1994 as a subsidiary of the Bouygues global industrial group (turnover : 19 billion euros in 2000), has established itself as one of the most dynamic and innovative players in the French mobile telephony market.

But size can be a challenge - as with most large companies, Bouygues Telecom was struggling to manage the flow of information and know-how across the organisation. At times, departments and individuals were unable to collaborate effectively with employees in many parts of the business.

At the end of 2000, Bouygues Telecom launched an initiative aimed at maximising the value of its business and employee intelligence. More than discussing about the Knowledge Management and the way of implementing it, the idea of Bouygues Telecom is to define and develop short and practical KM projects.

But research into the solutions available at that time proved disappointing. They were difficult to implement, hard to manage and far too expensive.

So the company issued an invitation to tender. Following careful research of the market, Microsoft’s SharePoint Portal Server solution was selected because it is easy to implement and flexible enough to meet the various requirements of the Bouygues Telecom business. Described as a single knowledge
portal, SharePoint Portal Server is based on a document management server which enables organisations to manage all of the workflow processes associated with the publication of documents and to share them in dedicated spaces.

Speed to market was also essential. Bouygues Telecom defined a brief which specified that completion of the first project should not exceed three months.

In order to meet this challenging schedule, Bouygues called on Valtech, a company specialising in management consulting and enterprise IT. Valtech was chosen because the project required the rapid delivery of effective knowledge management solutions and its experience in this field is well established.

In just a few months, the company has implemented four knowledge management systems that are enabling the organisation to leverage and extend its current IT systems and infrastructure.

**SAP best practice**

The pilot project - tested in north-east France - delivers support to one hundred staff using SAP. The aim of the project was to provide online assistance to end-users and ensure that they could share best practise of this solutions.

The knowledge base manages the publication and the classification of documents and provides users with a single knowledge portal. Users can add their own advices and experiences relating to SAP via their browser.

Results were immediate and impressive. Users need immediate and accurate information to get the most out of this relatively complex software and make a real contribution to the bottom line. The knowledge base has helped Bouygues Telecom to leverage and extend the value of its SAP investment.

**Knowledge management in a technical reference system**

Initially designed for maintenance technicians from the same region, the second project involved about thirty people in its pilot phase before being extended to a further 200 staff. It gives technicians online access to a company knowledge base of technical information. Technicians frequently work on site. From their portable computers, they can connect to the technical knowledge base on the portal and access technical files and recommendations made by their colleagues in similar situations. If a file is not 100 per cent relevant, they can improve it and make their expertise available to others.

In a matter of months, Bouygues Telecom has built a comprehensive online library of technical knowledge. Technicians now have rapid, real-time access to the sum total of the company’s expertise. It is also highly versatile. Technicians can search the knowledge base according to various criteria including full text, and their specific areas of interest.

End-user feedback is also extremely positive. Technicians now have all the information they need to make better decisions more rapidly than ever before. Before the portal they spent far too much time searching for right person with the right information – now all they need to do is look on the web. They can resolve networking issues quickly and with minimum fuss helping the company to further increase the overall quality of customer service.
Using knowledge management to innovate information systems

CPS (Computer Planning Strategy) Division is responsible for researching new technology and then ensuring rapid implementation of the solutions that best support the company’s business objectives. It was formed to track and research new technologies and then validate them before they go live in any part of the business.

The knowledge base was used for accelerating the movement of new technology from the CPS management to operational divisions. All technical documents are classified, and each event in the knowledge base can be traced. No time is wasted searching for documents and the CPS can make full use of acquired knowledge to develop innovative new information system strategies.

Keeping track of new technologies

The success of the CPS project has generated interest in additional knowledge management solutions. The CPS team and operational management would like to access a knowledge base on the latest technological developments. Such a tool is to help them collect and validate new information and leverage knowledge.

Like the earlier projects, it will only take a few weeks to complete.

Bouygues Telecom has overcome the main obstacle to knowledge management success – end-user resistance with a light use of change management. By setting up focused, effective projects that deliver impressive and immediate results, Bouygues Telecom has managed to make its knowledge management vision reality.

3. The best approach for implementing Knowledge Management

In the Knowledge Management as in many other subjects there are two kinds of approach: top down and bottom up.

The top down approach of the Knowledge Management is currently defined as an approach with two main objectives: identifying the whole knowledge management needs of a company, defining the knowledge bases for covering these needs and establishing a portfolio of projects for implementing the knowledge bases.

It’s a study in a strategic and general management point of view, not an implementation approach.

On the other way, the bottom up approach of the Knowledge Management is an implementation approach. It’s positioned as an incremental deployment of the Knowledge Management and focalised on unit realisation of knowledge base.

With this approach, the job is registering and qualifying the needs for knowledge bases rose from the ground floor.

To qualify the needs Valtech usually integrate all the aspects of the implementation of a knowledge base: Return on investment, Process, Modelisation, Information System, Human Resources, Change Management and Organisational Learning.
Actually, implementing the top down approach is impossible for a company without any practical experience in Knowledge Management.

If the company doesn’t have any operational knowledge base, the Knowledge Management still stay a concept.

Like Bouygues Telecom did, the best approach for implementing Knowledge Management, can be split in the major following steps:
• Identify needs for a Knowledge Management application
• Qualify the opportunity of realising a knowledge base
• Define the knowledge base
• Implement the knowledge base
• Develop a focused change management
• Obtain a practical success

This approach has to be reproduced until the company has implemented with success a sufficient number of knowledge bases.

At this time, the company can introduce the top down approach.

4. Key Points for implementing Knowledge Management

• Focalise efforts on results not on concepts
• For the beginning of the KM implementation in your company start by the ground floor
• Define value added KM projects
• Identify measurable and non measurable gains to obtain by projects
• Choose a tool easy to implement and use which can readily meet all the company’s professional requirements
• Obtain staff adhesion by a good utilisation of change management
• Design, develop and implement the projects quickly

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