

Knowledge based management survey in Romanian companies

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Abstract. This paper presents part of results obtained through field research on knowledge management in Romanian companies. The objective of the research aimed to identify characteristics of knowledge based management in Romanian companies. Starting from this objective, the paper seeks to support the implementation of knowledge based management in local companies as a way to succeed in the growing competition. We believe that documenting the theoretical and practical research can successfully complete the literature and provide essential information in a field that is in relatively early development stage. The statistical universe are local companies – grouped by age, industry, development region, ownership status or size - which implements some or all elements of knowledge based management. Have been used various methods and techniques of analysis: analytical method, comparison, dissociation results, statistical groups, questionnaires, statistical analysis etc. 107 companies were investigated. For seven of them we had to repeat investigation because of inconsistencies in responses. There were no refusals of questionnaires.

Keywords: knowledge based management, Romanian companies, KM system

1. Introduction

Although learning and therefore knowledge were used in the management of human activities since ancient times, knowledge based management has become part of scientific literature in the last part of last century. H.G. Wells, in 1938, although didn't use the term knowledge based management, referred to the so-called "global brain" (World Brain), capable to synthesize and represent the amount of collective knowledge of individuals and organizations (World Brain: The Idea of a Permanent World Encyclopaedia).

In the contemporary economy, learning and knowledge have become key success factors internationally and intangible resources are of vital importance [1]. Competition between existing firms moved in large part, the plan tangible resources (capital, raw materials, land, machinery and equipment, etc.) In terms of intangible resources, in which elements such as knowledge and ability to use (knowledge management) are crucial. Knowledge become the basic resource firms, how they get power, prestige and wealth in the economy and modern society. Generation, acquisition and use of knowledge - to name just a few of the transformation of knowledge - are extremely important for sustainable economic, social and cultural sustainable [2]. This trend applies equally to individuals, organizations, institutions, companies, regions or states. Modern economic environment characterized by volatility, high income to employees and rapid changes in political or international competition. As a result, modern organizations cannot compete without skilled managers and employees. Therefore, methods used by companies to manage and exploit knowledge, processes and technologies specific to their activity, including IT, are extremely important [3].

According to various specialists, no managerial or economic activity has attracted more attention in the last decade as knowledge management. The same specialist notes, however, that while there are many inconsistencies, controversies and points of view radically different:

- Some experts consider it to be a form of information management, but in a demanding name;
- Other specialists approach it as a system to facilitate access to distributed information resources;
- Critics simply disregard it and consider it just a "fashion" temporary management.

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American Center for Quality and Productivity [4] made the first benchmark on knowledge management in 1996. This study found that this term is recognized and visible, it became an area of strength for a number of consulting firms and companies from different industries that were already a variety of activities related to knowledge management.

A more recent study conducted on a sample of 200 executives [5] found that:

- 80 percent of them claimed to have ongoing knowledge management actions; 25 percent of companies had the manager in the organization knowledge (knowledge management chief officer) or learning manager (chief learning officer) - although only half of them were subordinate or a dedicated budget);
- 21 percent of companies had a knowledge management strategy;
- Only 6 percent of the companies analyzed using a holistic approach to enterprise-wide knowledge management (however, 60 percent of the respondents said that within five years will have implemented an integrated system).

Today, knowledge management has become both a science, a branch of management with its own body of concepts, theories, models and best practices and a business [6] (for major international consulting firms like Ernst & Young, Arthur Andersen and Booz-Allen & Hamilton). In addition, a number of professional organizations interested in areas such as benchmarking, risk management, change management etc. explores the relationship between knowledge management and those areas (for instance, APQC - American Productivity and Quality Council and ASIS - American Society of Information).

2. Research

The research focused on features of knowledge management system in Romanian companies.

Among **decisional trends**, the most common by far was the computerization of decision (43.93%), seconded by contextualizing decision processes (24.30%), and the less common is efficiency of multidimensional decision making (4.67%).

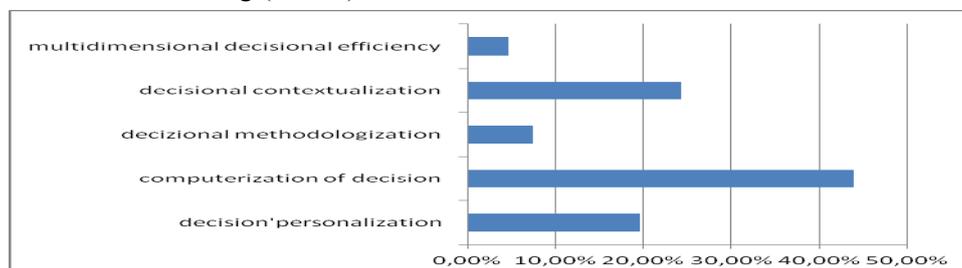


Figure 1. Decisional trends in Romanian knowledge based companies

Source: own research

Regarding **informational system**, Romanian companies that implement knowledge management are focus primarily on the use of computers, email and internet (100%). It is noteworthy that practically there was no company that has implemented knowledge management technologies that do not use IT&C.

Table 1

No.	IT&C technologies used	%
1.	Computers	100
2.	E-mail	100
3.	Internet	100
4.	Company's own website	72
5.	Sales/ purchases online	92
6.	Intranet	83
7.	Not use of any of the above	0

Source: own research

Intention to use of IT & C has been communicating with suppliers or customers (100%), obtaining information on business (95.33%) or facilitate intra-organizational communication (92.52%).

Table 2

No.	Intended use of IT&C	%
1.	To communicate with suppliers or customers	100,00
2.	To facilitate communication within the company	93
3.	For obtaining information about business	95
4.	Transactions and electronic payments	64
5.	Another answer, specify that.	44

Source: own research

Finally, the **most common informational trends** in Romanian companies that use knowledge management have been computerization of work tasks and staff training (47.66%) and informational outsourcing (23.36%), while the least common was dematerialisation and deleveraging of information and knowledge (10.28%).

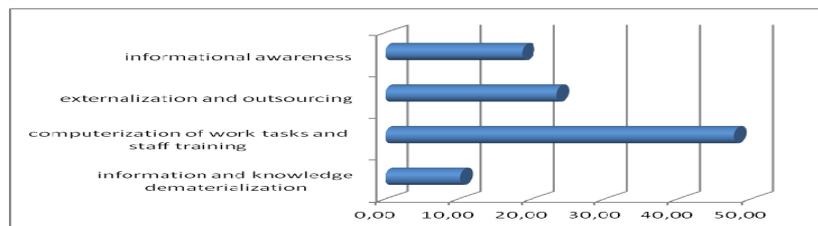


Figure 2. Informational trends in knowledge-based Romanian companies

Source: own research

In terms of organizational subsystem, the main categories of employees based on knowledge was specialist based on knowledge (35.51%) and practitioners of knowledge (52.34%), while the most rare is, which is very unfavorable, knowledge managers category (20.56%).

Table 3

No.	Categories of employees based on knowledge	%
1.	Stewards	27
2.	Brokers	31
3.	Researchers	27
4.	Knowledge Managers	21
5.	Infrastructure specialists	36
6.	Knowledge Specialist	74
7.	Practitioners of knowledge	52
8.	None	0

Source: own research

Also in the category of **knowledge workers**, managers of companies investigated **appreciate** the knowledge and skills they held, learning ability and competence in business (all at 100%), while the recommendations contemplated or graduate school are the least important.

Table 4

NNo.	Elements for assessing knowledge-based employees	%
1.	Experience	72
2.	Knowledge and skills held	100
3.	Recommendations considered	22
4.	Intelligence	83
5.	Sense of responsibility	93
6.	Involvement in company	86
7.	School graduated	61
8.	Learning ability	100
9.	Competence in business	100
10.	Conscientiousness	71

Source: own research

Main trend on **organizational level** in companies that implement knowledge management systems were development of complex relationships with stakeholders (33.64%) and outsourcing (26.17%), whereas the least represented were remodeling organizational system based on the value chain and expanding organizational subdivisions to dual functionality (7.48%).

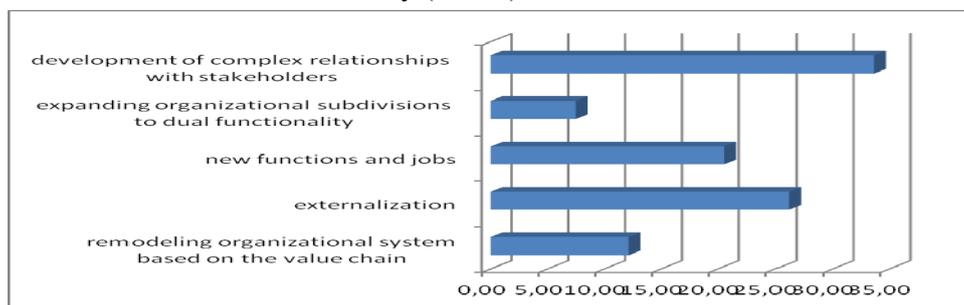


Figure 3. Organizational trends in knowledge based Romanian organizations
Source: own research

The **main knowledge management tools** used by Romanian managers are benchmarking (26.17%), expert seeker (17.76%) and technical knowledge collection (13.08%), while social network analysis (2.80%) K profile (2.80%) or Skandia navigator (1.87%) are least used.

Table 5

No.	Knowledge management tools	%
1.	Knowledge audit	7
2.	Social network analysis	3
3.	Knowledge matrix	10
4.	Benchmarking	26
5.	Expert seeker	18
6.	Technical knowledge collection	13
7.	Transduser	11
8.	K profile	3
9.	Megaconversation	2
10.	Skandia Navigator	3
11.	Other, please specify which.	4

Source: own research

Among **methodological - managerial trends**, increasing computerization of management tools (22.43%) and increasing sophistication of methodological- managerial elements (17.76%) are found in most Romanian companies managers responses, while methodological and managerial ascendancy of elements with a strong motivational content (3.74%), internationalization, management methods and techniques (2.80%) use of management tools (1.87%) are less frequent.

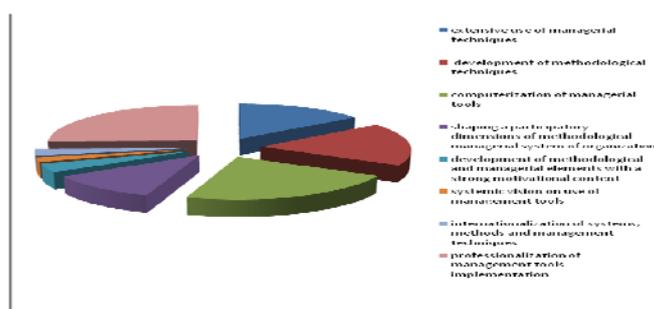


Figure 4. Methodological- managerial trends in knowledge based Romanian organizations
Source: own research

3. Conclusions

- Of the decisional trends, the most common by far was the computerization decision (43.93%), seconded by contextualizing decision processes (24.30%), and the least common is efficiency of multi-dimensional decision-making (4.67%).
- The most common trends in Romanian companies that use information knowledge management work tasks have been computerized and staff training (47.66%) and outsourcing (23.36%), while the less common was dematerialisation and deleveraging of information and knowledge (10.28%).
- The main categories of employees based on knowledge was experts based on knowledge (35.51%) and practitioners of knowledge (52.34%), while the most rare is category managers based on knowledge (20.56%).
- All staff in the knowledge category, managers of firms investigated appreciate the knowledge and skills they held, learning ability and competence in business (all at 100%), while the recommendations contemplated or graduate school are the least important.
- The main trends in companies that implement organizational knowledge management systems were to develop complex relationships with stakeholders (33.64%) and outsourcing (26.17%), whereas the least represented were organizational reengineering based on the value chain and expanding organizational subdivisions dual functionality (7.48%).
- The main management tools used by Romanian managers are benchmarking (26.17%), technical "expert seeker" (17.76%) and technical knowledge collection (13.08%), while social network analysis (2.80 %), profile K (2.80%) or Skandia navigator (1.87%) are least used.
- Among methodological- managerial trends, increasing computerization of management tools (22.43%) and increasing sophistication of methodological and managerial elements (17.76%) are found in most Romanian companies' managers responses, while methodological elements with a strong motivational content (3.74%), internationalization, management methods and techniques (2.80%) and print a systemic vision sharp design and use of management tools (1.87%) are less frequent.

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