

# Knowledge Management Implementation: An Experience of Perdana Leadership Foundation

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v7-i3/4364>

DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v7-i3/4364

**Published Online:** 28 July 2018

## Abstract

Perdana Leadership Foundation is located in Putrajaya is a private initiative setup dedicated to the Malaysian Prime Ministers. Perdana Library, the main nucleus of the foundation is set up to support Perdana Leadership Foundation's core activities by providing information and references on Malaysia's leadership history for local and international researchers as well as the Malaysian public. Several initiatives to capture knowledge from past leaders have been done in order to sustain it. Activities such as oral history session, digitization and digital Visual Timeline are carried to capturing tools to preserve the knowledge from individuals. This has been achieved by doing collaboration between few organizations that have similar purposes. The encouragement from the top management has led the successful of the KM initiative of the organization.

**Keywords:** Knowledge Management, Knowledge Initiatives, Perdana Library, Perdana Leadership Foundation, Prime Ministers, Information Management

## Introduction

*"The past was analog. The future is digital. Tomorrow's historians will glory in a largely digital historical record, which will transform the way they research, present and even preserve the past"*- Digital History by Daniel J. Cohen.

Perdana Leadership Foundation (PLF) was set up in 2003 with the aim of preserving, developing and disseminating materials by and on Malaysia's past Prime Ministers. Believing that past leadership can yield valuable insights for future development, PLF objective is to increase awareness and appreciation of Malaysia's intellectual heritage by doing research, documenting, disseminate and publicize the intellectual legacies of Malaysia's past Prime Ministers. The foundation operates with support from citizens and organizations that recognize the important role the past plays in shaping the future and who acknowledge how crucial research and learning are in building a strong, unified and successful nation. It is also a unique example of private philanthropy for the public good. Currently, Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad is the Foundation's Honorary President. Knowledge management activities have been implemented in PLF since the early years of the establishment.

### Literature Review

Knowledge could be described as the body of information such as facts, opinion, ideas, theories and models or frameworks (Ngeow, 2003). Knowledge involves people, tools and methods on how it could be managed in such a way it could be accessed or retrieved. Knowledge is important for any people or an organization to make decision. Davenport and Prusak (2000) defined knowledge as a mix of experiences, values, contextual information and expert insight that enable people to evaluate and incorporating new experiences. Knowledge can be obtained from many resources either from tacit or explicit knowledge. Mainly, tacit knowledge came from people's head and not recorded yet in any medium. It can be exist in many forms, for example, skills and experiences. This knowledge need to be dug out by suitable method. While the other one is the explicit knowledge. It is a formal knowledge which has been documented into printed or non-printed medium of publishing. According to Sazili et al. (2005), knowledge management could be defined as a set of process to manage and to build strength of an organization and capabilities to gain make decision to specific goals.

In a case study by Alok, Geta & Renu (2010), they indicate that knowledge management could improve organizational, managerial and also to the financial aspects of an organization. The initiative also helped the organization to manage and institutionalize knowledge management processes and to create organizational culture in order to manage and motivate knowledge workers. By doing this, an organization could plan a strategic planning by using knowledge management method and strategy to achieve what the organization need. For example, In a research done by Levett and Guenov (2000), the automotive industry is applying knowledge management method by using automotive terminology. From this scenario, knowledge management could be used in any industry in making organization makes decision more precise. It same goes to banking and financial sectors, where their contribution to knowledge management concept helps to leverage intellectual assets of an organization (Ahmad and Goulding, 2006). We know that these sectors are the main sectors that working on profits and sure that these sectors need a better knowledge management system in planning a good market strategy. This will lead to better performance both to the organization and manpower.

Most of the organizations in many sectors nowadays feel that knowledge management is highly important to set goal and objective. Muhammad and Juanil (2011) has done a research on knowledge management in the property management by setting a concept and what the industry is going to achieve at the end. We understand that the sector main activity is to build a building and housing, but at the same time the elements of managing intellectual assets are almost important. In the library, there are lots of knowledge and information are being kept inside. According to Naresh and Anwarul (2014), they believed that technology in library is just an enabler but the librarians themselves should set aside a comprehensive set which is need a manual tools to manage knowledge in the library. In other word, knowledge management is not directly involving technology in the process of collecting it.

In an organization which is dealing with information, an innovation factor would be an extra value to the organization itself. To support this statement, Saulais and Ermine (2012) have done a study on innovation and knowledge management. Intellectual capital of an organization would be used to create new things by combining ideas of their

knowledge workers. They will create new invention by using available assets created earlier.

Leveraging knowledge is another important factor in implementing knowledge management. In supporting more on this factor, Pauline (2002) mentioned that practicing leveraging of knowledge will encourage staff in an organization to share and create knowledge within the organization. This effort must come with reward system. Otherwise, the result will not be as expected. This scenario could lead an organizational learning environment where members of an organization practicing knowledge culture in their works. Kashif et al. (2016) in their research, described the practicing of knowledge sharing should be practiced to create a learning organization by creating effective learning orientation of employees and develop readiness organizational changes. They also mentioned that employees are change agents of the organization. Employees are vital factor in implementing knowledge management.

A value in organization is important to create better decision. Schiuma, Carlucci and Lerro (2012) pointed out on effective exploitation and management of knowledge is basis for an organization's capacity to deliver a successful targeted value. At the same time, the value is creating by using available knowledge in an organization. If the organization already has value by using knowledge available, It is also acting as a coordinating mechanism. In a case study by Darroch (2005), he described that any organization that having capability of its knowledge management, resources in the organization will be utilize effectively to create value and at the same time, increase the level of innovation and can perform better.

The role of leadership in a knowledge management implementation is another factor to be considered. In order to excel, overall resources in an organization must be utilized and managed efficiently and effectively. The leader in the organization should play a role in this matter (Lettieri, Borga and Savoldelli (2004). Sanjay (2008) in his research, depicted that impact of leadership towards the organizational knowledge management initiative could be successful by delegating tasks to employees. This was supported by Analoui, Doloriert and Sambrook (2012) in which the leader is vitally important in engendering knowledge management activity by applying the transformational and transactional leadership styles. These styles should be adopted by the managerial staff in the organization.

### **Discussions and Opinions**

According to the SECI Model by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), there are four methods on how knowledge is being delivered. There are mainly socialization, externalization, combination and internalization. Socialization transform from tacit to tacit. It involves a face-to-face conversation between people. Examples for the activity are the oral history and storytelling. Extrernalization transform from tacit to explicit knowledge. Examples for this type are producing report and video. Combination is dealing with explicit and explicit knowledge. It is merely published information. Examples for this type are information portal and database. Lastly, internalization transforms explicit to tacit knowledge. Examples of this type are reading session and doing revision. In this case study, methods of capturing knowledge discussed below could be associated with the model mentioned above.

At PLF, three methods of managing knowledge has been identified. There are oral history, digitization and digital visual timeline. The first ever oral history project for PLF began in 2007 with their Honorary President, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad which took three hour-long sessions. The interviewers involved in the session were from universities. The interviews has been published in the monograph form entitled *"Jejak Seorang Pemimpin: Sejarah Lisan Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad"* published by MPH Group in 2014. From 2007 until 2016, PLF has conducted several numbers of oral history sessions. Name of some other leaders has been interviewed were Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Tan Sri Arshad Ayub, Tan Sri Rafidah Aziz and a few of former Chief Secretaries to the Government of Malaysia.

The person involved in the oral history initiative is transcriber and administration staff. The transcriber is responsible to transcribe the video into text. There is no special software has been use. He/she just listened to video and type into a computer. This process is applying a externalization method from the SECI model by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995). But for the earlier stage of the initiative that is interview, the organization is applying the socialization method.

We could say that it is a manual effort to transcribe the whole video into texts. Then, there will be a peer-review session whereby he/she will check on the vocabulary and language. After all transcription works has been finished, they will keep the scripts together with the recordings in a server and external hard drives.

As part of PLF's objectives to research, document, disseminate and publicise the intellectual legacies of our Prime Ministers, a digitization project has been initiated for the long-term preservation of digital materials. The initiative has started since 2005. At first, PLF collaborated with the National Archives of Malaysia and the National Library of Malaysia. The main focus was digitizing speeches of the past Prime Ministers of Malaysia. This initiative was part of their contribution to the national collection of digitized historical materials. In 2005, PLF signed-up a Memorandum of Understanding for collaboration in exchanging resources between Universiti Teknologi MARA, Universiti Utara Malaysia, National Library of Malaysia and National Archives of Malaysia.

This collaboration is important in order for PLF to access these organizations valuable resources especially regarding to Malaysian leaders. According to Azahar Mohd Noor, Chief Librarian of PLF (2005), planning and budgeting for digital imaging project components that need to be considered are:

- Selection process
- Preparation of physical location and equipments
- Metadata creation: cataloging, description and indexing
- Preservation or conservation of the physical object
- Production of intermediates
- Digitization
- Quality control of images and metadata
- Technical infrastructure
- On-going maintenance of images and metadata

Besides doing on-going digitization works, the organization also organized some programs related to it such as:

- Perpustakaan Toeti Juairiah (Tan Sri Sanusi Junid)
- Organized Workshop on Oral History & Transcription techniques in 2008
- Organized Workshop on Preventing Organizational Memory Loss in 2010
- Digitizing rare books collections in the library

Several benefits of digitization have been outlined by PLF:

- Enhanced intellectual control through creation of new finding aids, links to bibliographic records and development of indices and other tools.
- Increased and enriched use through the ability to search widely.
- Encouraging new scholarly use through provision of enhanced resources in the form of widespread dissemination of unique collections
- Enhanced use through improved quality of image
- Creation of a “virtual collection” through the flexible integration and synthesis of a variety of formats stored in various locations.

According to Davenport and Prusak (2000), Information moves around organizations through hard and soft networks. A hard network has a visible and definite infrastructure that is computers and webportal. That is why PLF has constructed a digital Visual Timeline. It is an online knowledge portal that contains the lives of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, Tun Hussein Onn, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. The timeline is unique in that it offers viewers the ability to see where the Prime Ministers’ lives intersected with each other’s and how key historical events affected the trajectory of their lives and their journey to leadership. The timeline is accessible for free at <http://www.perdana.org.my/PMs-of-Malaysia/visual-timeline>.

Biographies of Malaysian past Prime Ministers are gathered and turn into a interactive manner. It is a digital timeline of our leaders. According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), PLF is applying a comination method whereby the organization is using information available in the library and transfrom it into a digital timeline. The timeline will answers questions such as:

- What were their childhood like?
- Who were their parents?
- How did they get involved in politics?
- Where did they work before they became politicians?
- What were the obstacles they faced
- What events shaped their decisions?

Prime Minister’s biographies are providing answers to above questions. The timeline is in the process of inputing data and information and it will be update from time to time in order to provide useful information for public.

#### **Discussions**

From the case study, it found out those three methods on managing knowledge by PLF has given added value to its collection and the organization as a whole. From this we could applying the knowledge management process for each of this methods:

- **Create**

This is the early stage of doing knowledge management in an organization. The organization itself must create a job and assigned workforce to manage the knowledge. This is the time where timeline being setup and identifying persons and acquring tools or machine to capture

tose knowledge available. Identifying a location also take into consideration before the initiative started. In this case, PLF found out that most knowledge could be obtained from National Archives and the national library.

- **Capture**

The oral history initiative is doing on the interview a person to get his/her knowledge. A set of questions prepared to get the answers. Special person need to interview the leader by asking appropriate answers. It then is recorded in a video or just audio recording. On the side, visual timeline is a digital timeline which data must be there to be organized in a system. All texts and photographs were gathered to be organized in such a way. For digitization, it involves some process such as selecting and scanning by using scanner as input device. Documents that have been majority digitized are from the national Archives of Malaysia and National Library of Malaysia.

- **Organize**

After all informations has been captured, it is time organize all information so that it will be in proper and structured condition. For oral history initiative, the person in charge will check the condition of the recordings and at the same time, the recording both in video and audio will be burn into DVD and external hard drive. The label would be imposed for each recording to differentiate from one to other recordings. In digitization process, there is several stages to be done in managing information and turn it into knowledge. This includes the binary and cropping, codifying a metadata and do optical character recognition process before it can be accessed through the library search engine.

- **Distribute**

For distributing oral history interviews, PLF has published some of the session, for example, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Tun Dr Siti Hasmah into monographs entitled "*Jejak Seorang Pemimpin*". Other form for public access is publishing an excerpt of recording on a website and social media platform. For visual timeline, the main platform will be the Perdana Leadership Foundation's official website. Digitization need to be catalogued. This is to ensure all information could be accessed through the library search engine on the web.

- **Apply**

Most of the contents in the PLF are related to Malaysian leaders, history, national development and politics. Most of the users came from academic institutions and school students. Some researchers from organization also came to the foundation to search for information. Some universities came to Perdana Leadership Foundation on academic visit to learn about digitization. The element of knowledge is apply here because PLF is willing to share knowledge with other organization or group.

- **Manage/Storage**

In PLF, most of the information and records are being kept in server. The study found out that the organization has two units of servers located in the building. At the same time, they also are having storage outside by renting a outside server from a company in Cyberjaya. The information was being backup and transfer to the site on weekly basis.



## Conclusion

In conclusion, in PLF's CEO Forum 2011, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has mentioned about knowledge:

*"Knowledge is the best defence. If you stop acquiring new knowledge, it will be very difficult to solve problems. That is where transformation and change comes in. We must be well equipped and have the capacity to defend ourselves. In this era of a knowledge and finance economy, one must be well versed in the field in order to compete and survive".*

From the above speech, the importance of knowledge has been voice out by the Prime Minister of Malaysia. He realizes and believes knowledge is a new commodity that is powerful and could be valuable asset of an organization. The organization should implement the culture of embracing knowledge in order to add value to its. The case study has shown how knowledge could enhance the quality of information kept by an organization. Knowledge also could provide a competitive advantage if the organization itself knows how to create, manage and disseminate organizational knowledge to be accessed by others. It should be a shared responsibility between management and employees.

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