

Knowledge Loss Risk Assessment for Departing Employees: An Exploratory Study

Authors : Muhammad Saleem Ullah Khan Sumbal, Eric Tsui, Ricky Cheong, Eric See To

Abstract : Organizations are posed to a threat of valuable knowledge loss when employees leave either due to retirement, resignation, job change or because of disabilities e.g. death, etc. Due to changing economic conditions, globalization, and aging workforce, organizations are facing challenges regarding retention of valuable knowledge. On the one hand, large number of employees are going to retire in the organizations whereas on the other hand, younger generation does not want to work in a company for a long time and there is an increasing trend of frequent job change among the new generation. Because of these factors, organizations need to make sure that they capture the knowledge of employee before (s)he walks out of the door. The first step in this process is to know what type of knowledge employee possesses and whether this knowledge is important for the organization. Researchers reveal in the literature that despite the serious consequences of knowledge loss in terms of organizational productivity and competitive advantage, there has not been much work done in the area of knowledge loss assessment of departing employees. An important step in the knowledge retention process is to determine the critical 'at risk' knowledge. Thus, knowledge loss risk assessment is a process by which organizations can gauge the importance of knowledge of the departing employee. The purpose of this study is to explore this topic of knowledge loss risk assessment by conducting a qualitative study in oil and gas sector. By engaging in dialogues with managers and executives of the organizations through in-depth interviews and adopting a grounded methodology approach, the research will explore; i) Are there any measures adopted by organizations to assess the risk of knowledge loss from departing employees? ii) Which factors are crucial for knowledge loss assessment in the organizations? iii) How can we prioritize the employees for knowledge retention according to their criticality? Grounded theory approach is used when there is not much knowledge available in the area under research and thus new knowledge is generated about the topic through an in-depth exploration of the topic by using methods such as interviews and using a systematic approach to analyze the data. The outcome of the study will generate a model for the risk of knowledge loss through factors such as the likelihood of knowledge loss, the consequence/impact of knowledge loss and quality of the knowledge loss of departing employees. Initial results show that knowledge loss assessment is quite crucial for the organizations and it helps in determining what types of knowledge employees possess e.g. organizations knowledge, subject matter expertise or relationships knowledge. Based on that, it can be assessed which employee is more important for the organizations and how to prioritize the knowledge retention process for departing employees.

Keywords : knowledge loss, risk assessment, departing employees, Hong Kong organizations

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