## SwitchGear Insight #23

# *At the Core of Almost Every Issue Today*

Knowledge Management is a topic so big and tangled that we only talk about it in private. The associated costs can be measured in terms of Repeat Calls, Cost per Call, Error Rates, Employee DisSatisfaction & Customer DisSatisfaction. As one executive recently put it; *"... the real cost is unintentional employee confusion and that customers no longer trust our people or our brand."*

On-line resources and social media have made our customers knowledgeable, savvy, and powerful. Many times a customer will know more about our products and services than our front line employees. Most companies know that customer service is now the great business differentiator, and that knowledgeable and capable employees are a competitive advantage so…

…To help our employees stay ahead of this "knowledge" curve, we post <u>every</u> bite of information we think they'll need to perform better and faster …

<u>BUT this corporate behavior creates many front-line performance issues:</u>
- Employees will tell you that they are "*drinking from a fire hose*" – too much information, too hard to find.
- They would rather ask their neighbour for help than face the overwhelming online system;
- Surveys show that a large % never read the 3-5 business alerts that are sent out daily;
- Many reps admit they often don't know where to find the information they need to do their jobs!

Most organizations have knowledge data bases, however these systems are too often overloaded, out-of-date, confusing, hard to use  … and *have become part of the problem*.

The relevant question is:  **"How do we get the most recent and concise knowledge to our front line -- when they need it -- in a simple format -- using friendly tools -- to enhance the customer experience?"**

To provide customers with quality answers and support, as critical as your technology and processes are we must 1<sup>st</sup> examine our <u>cultural beliefs</u> of how knowledge is consumed. With little "upstream" awareness or visibility to the "downstream" impacts on front-line employees, we constantly innovate, create change, market at internet speed, provide partial information then ask why "they can't keep up" or why "customer satisfaction scores aren't better".

## For Senior Management, here are some core *belief system* issues to consider regarding Knowledge Management:

**"They should know it all":**  Give up the belief that front-line employees should be able to store all the promotions, processes and knowledge to handle any customer request in their heads!  This seems obvious but if we believed the opposite, we would act differently.

**Assume Posting = Understanding + Use:**  On-line technology makes posting information <u>efficient</u>, but not always <u>effective</u>. The support team's job is not complete because we "loaded information" – if the

front-line doesn't understand it, find it easily, <u>and</u> consistently use it to communicate with customers then this is YOUR issue too.  Sitting side-by-side with reps to observe and understand how they need and use information should change this belief.

**Built BY Reps FOR Reps**:  Philosophically, these systems should be built "**BY** *reps* **FOR** *reps*" – they are the natural filter for usability and "common sense" before anything is posted.  Bring them into the process further upstream and listen when they say "I don't understand this". For most organizations, this is a huge cultural shift that places the front-line employees and operations as the internal customer of the Marketing, Technology, and other support teams.

**Need to Know ONLY:**  The best KM processes focus on "answer management" rather than "knowledge management".   Filter content so that "need to know" information is published; this belief alone makes life easier for everyone.

There are culture beliefs you can start working on TODAY. Then as you begin to untangle this issue it helps to examine the processes, technology and tribal routines that help people DEAL WITH the downpour of information. Then you can widen the discussion to tackle REDUCING the complexity and the requirement for the constant downpour.


Your Co-Pilots for Change
Regards Afshan, Bruce & Winston

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