Knowledge Harvesting in RSA Public Sector: Case Study

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Background

- There is a growing concern within the South African Government
- The knowledge and experienced gathered is lost
- This loss is through resignations, retirements etc.
- Lessons learned at all levels of government, including Parliament
- The lessons learned are not captured and shared
- Leading to reinventing the wheel and repeated mistakes
- Study conducted by DPSA shows evidence of this loss
What is Knowledge Harvesting?

- Knowledge Harvesting is one of the techniques used to preserve institutional memory.
- It is a new activity in the Public Sector.
- The SKHA Model is used.
- This model has been used in combination with multimedia, e.g. audio & video.
- Eg: MRC and National Treasury (IDC).
### Knowledge Continuity Programme

- **The MRC harvested the scientists’ knowledge to:**
  - Share scientific knowledge with univ. students
  - Share research knowledge with communities – Research Translation
  - To preserve scientists’ knowledge as part of institutional memory

- **This process is critical in the light of the aging scientific population**

- **The IDC was plagued by staff turnover within the ODAP**

- **IDC Implemented KCM as part of KM to:**
  - Capture the tacit knowledge of staff members
  - Share, grow knowledge base, institutional memory, knowledge transfer, job profile review
Processes for Knowledge Harvesting

- **Knowledge Structure Identification Process**
  - involves a review of the current job conducted by a senior manager
  - identifies the areas which have critical bearing – Knowledge Harvesting

- Defines scope for Knowledge Harvesting

- The scope determines the breath, depth and the technology to be used.
Knowledge profile development assess job & know by:
- conducting in-depth interviews with staff
- senior manager or the direct supervisor
- develop tool
- short questionnaire which identifies critical knowledge

The knowledge contributed using the tool – thematised

A knowledge Harvesting Questionnaire is developed further by:
- KM Specialist and Senior manager for reliability and validity
Conducting Knowledge Harvesting

- A schedule was developed for staff members. It consisted of:
  - the name of the staff member
  - the person to conduct the interviews

- Questionnaires were distributed to the harvestees & Lab Technician (2 wks before)
Scientific Challenges

- Lessons stay in conscious, subconscious and unconscious mind
  - In-depth lesson is in the unconscious mind

- The ability to harvest the unconscious knowledge
  - This is the knowledge that embraces competencies

- The knowledge which cannot be explicitly explained or transferred easily
  - Even experts do not know that they have it, it is reflected in actions
Technology to Unconscious Learning

- Hypnosis could be the mechanism (Freudian theory)
- Specialised computer aided electrodes or bio-electronics
- Lack of high level precision in eliciting required knowledge
- Knowledge harvesting need to sharpen its mechanisms, techniques and methods to mine this kind of knowledge.
- Space for future research in KM
Implementation Challenges - Government

- Lack of understanding of the concept of KM;
- Lack of understanding of Knowledge Harvesting;
- Balance between knowledge sharing and knowledge hoarding;
- Lack incentives, recognition and reward systems;
- Lack of policies on knowledge harvesting;
- Confidentiality vs Sharing of harvested knowledge;
- Lack of trained personnel to conduct knowledge harvesting;
- Lack of legal framework supporting knowledge harvesting.
Conclusion

- A need for more knowledge labs and more studies
- Improve Knowledge Harvesting tools, technology and mechanisms
- Train more people to engage in Knowledge Harvesting of Institutional Memory
- Adapt Conditions of Services for a conducive environment
- Legal Framework that support Knowledge Harvesting
- Reward and Recognition System to promote K-H
Example of a Knowledge Lab in RSA
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Questions?

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