

Knowledge Management

- A study of key factors to successful Knowledge Management at Crescore

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Abstract

This thesis aims at studying Crescore; a management consultancy firm and identifying key factors of its Knowledge Management system; a management challenge of increasing interest and importance. We employ a qualitative approach consisting of interviews with a wide range of employees at different hierarchical levels. Our findings identify four factors as the most essential for a successful transfer of knowledge and experience between employees; Management, Structures, KM Activities and Culture. Although each factor is vital in itself, their greatest value has been found to be in their supporting and complementary roles and functions. Management is the underlying factor that allows the remaining factors to co-exist. : *Key factors to successful KM at Crescore*

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to Knowledge Management

Since the beginning of the 1990s there has been a substantial increase in literature and focus on a new important management challenge – Knowledge Management (KM). In today's wide information-concentrated society it is expected that knowledge-intensive firms possess the essential information required to live up to client expectations and to form a competitive advantage. Management consultancies in particular are seen as the archetype of such knowledge-intensive firms since their entire business revolves around knowledge as a core asset and as such they are viewed as pioneers of KM (Werr in press). Research within KM is not only interesting in the aspect of learning how management consultancies transfer knowledge, but it also provides a basis for other market industries that use knowledge as an important asset. Furthermore, knowledge is seen as one of the main driving forces in the restructuring of the consulting industry from small-scale industries towards large, global organizations (Kipping and Scheybani 1994). Knowledge in itself is not viewed as an asset that may bring competitive advantage due to its widely accessible nature, but instead as a strategic asset in the way that KM handles and capitalizes on knowledge in order to form a competitive advantage within the management consulting industry. By accumulating knowledge and experience from client projects, management consulting firms have the potential to increase efficiency in their work (the speed at which consultants acquire information) as well as the quality of their service (more robust and innovative services) (Ofek and Savary 2001).

KM can be handled in many ways depending on organizational size. Most studies that have led to the available research today focus on large multinational organizations like Ernst & Young, Accenture, and McKinsey etc. Thus we find it relevant to contribute to research by studying how KM is handled in a mid-sized management consulting firm.

1.2 Thesis Objective

Our objective with this thesis is to contribute to the current research within knowledge management by performing a case study on Crescore; a Swedish management consulting firm. Our aim is to identify and analyze the key factors most essential for facilitating sharing and seeking knowledge between Crescore's employees.

1.3 Scope of the Study

Our thesis objective to identify and analyze key factors that are the most essential for a successful transfer of knowledge between employees has required a few limitations. First of all, fully understanding all relevant aspects of a company's handling of KM requires a lot of research, and thus time. Given the uniqueness of individual companies and timeframe to achieve our thesis objective, we thus decided to focus on studying *one* company's knowledge management system. Secondly, to achieve our thesis objective we also needed to study a company with a KM system dependent on several factors, rather than relying primarily on a single factor or activity such as a database. Small to mid-size companies tend to include a greater variety of factors and activities, thus making these companies more interesting for our study, which in turn limited our search for potential companies to study further. The majority of conducted studies on KM has been on large multinational companies, thus making it more interesting to choose the road less travelled and instead aim for slightly smaller companies. In conclusion, we chose Crescore; a mid-size management consulting firm with an outspoken claim of having an ambitious KM system (Crescore, 2011) to be an ideal company to study. As Crescore was founded in 2002, we have found no reason to limit the number of years to collect information from. Another question that arises is the extent to which their KM should be studied. The complex nature of KM could make a study indefinite. We have thus chosen to study each factors of Crescore's KM system no more than to the extent we believe would provide us with a sufficient base for making a well-founded analysis of which aspects that are *the most* essential. Furthermore, the number of employees to interview follows the same logic as we decided to continue our interviews until the responses converged to the extent where we could make a well-founded analysis.

1.4 Outline

In the next chapter we describe our method and why we've chosen a certain approach towards our case study. The following chapter will present previous theories that we will use as our theoretical framework. This is followed by a chapter describing material gathered in the organization we've chosen to study. This leads to a chapter where we analyze our findings and describe the key factors that contribute to successful handling of KM. The paper is finished by a conclusion and further discussion of our analysis leading to suggestions for future research.

2. Research Methodology and Approach

2.1 Deductive or Inductive Approach

Holmberg (1987) refers to the two most common approaches for drawing scientific conclusions when studying phenomena such as organizations or human behavior: the Path of Evidence (deduction) and the Path of Exploration (induction). Our study well coincides with these phenomena. Deduction draws its conclusions from applying theories and general principles to isolated events or phenomena. Induction on the contrary originates from empirical findings and applies those to theories and general findings (Ib Andersen 1998).

We have chosen to base our thesis on an explorative case study due to the uniqueness of Crescore's KM system. Our findings are based solely on empirical findings in terms of qualitative interviews with Crescore's employees. Based on these arguments and our research methodology in general, we have found the inductive approach to be the most suitable for our thesis. In addition, the uniqueness of the studied case would make a deductive approach difficult to employ.

2.2 Quantitative vs. Qualitative Method

Our thesis aims at identifying and understanding the key factors most essential for facilitating an exchange of knowledge and experiences between Crescore's employees. We are thus interested in both formal and informal (social) aspects of KM, but also their interplay. Our choice to include both formal and informal, as well as their interplay into account when identifying the most relevant factors of Crescore's KM system influenced our choice between employing a quantitative or a qualitative method in two major ways; It would be hard to obtain relevant information using a quantitative method, and the relatively low number of potential respondents at Crescore would be insufficient. Our research objective requires both a wide perspective and a deep understanding of the company, its structures, methods and activities, and finally, its culture. This understanding is difficult to obtain with a quantitative method which often answers questions such as *what* and *how many*, whereas we needed to understand *why* (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Employing a qualitative method enabled us to ask the interviewees for exemplifications, follow-up questions and clarifications, thus enabling us to catch up important nuances and details. A third alternative where the quantitative method would be used as a complement to the qualitative method was discussed as a possible option. However, the information gathered during our interviews made it clear that our

thesis would not benefit from using a quantitative method as well, and we thus decided to focus on a purely qualitative method.

2.3 Descriptive, Explanatory or Exploratory Purpose

There are different categories of research purposes, including descriptive, explanatory and exploratory. The descriptive objective is, as its name suggests, an approach focusing on describing *what* rather than understanding and interpreting (Borum 1990:42). The approach is often used in behavioral science to describe past events, behaviors and phenomena (Patel and Tebelius 1987). The explanatory approach on the other hand differs from the descriptive by focusing on explaining *why* rather than *what*. The descriptive method would thus lack the explanatory aspect of our findings and the purely explanatory objective lack the identifying aspect. We have chosen the third approach; the explorative, which aims at identifying interesting questions to investigate and is often used to explore relationships and phenomena that are less known, or even unknown. It's common among consultants hired to identify and define problems not apparent to the client (Ib Andersen 1998). We have found this approach to be the most suited as our research purpose is to identify and analyze key factors of Crescore's KM system, which may, or may not, be currently recognized by the employees and management.

2.4 Research Method

As our research purpose requires an explorative approach to Crescore's handling of KM, we have identified the separate case study as the most appropriate research method.

2.4.1 Case Study

A separate case study is an empirical research focusing on a present object in its natural environment and can be based on several different sources of information, including qualitative interviews (Yin 1989). The relatively limited amount of research that has been conducted on small and mid-size companies, as well as the social and cultural aspects of KM gives the thesis an explorative character which leads us to employ a qualitative method in order to be able to contribute to the current research. The complex nature of KM, and the resources required to research and analyze a company's all relevant factors, further supports our decision (Yin 1989). The resources required thus singles out the separate case study as the only feasible option.

2.5 Data Collection

2.5.1 Sample and Data Collection

Our sample consists of seven carefully chosen employees¹ from different positions within Crescore, including the CEO, Co-founders and recent hires. Without this representative diversity it would have been impossible for us to fully understand the organization's culture and which factors that are essential for the transfer of knowledge between employees to function. In order to get as much as possible out of our interviews, and obtain relevant answers for our analysis, we needed not only be well read on the subject and ask the right questions, it was also essential that the interviewees had varying responsibilities, duration of employment and experience.

Karin Pålshammar; responsible for Crescore's knowledge management strategy was informed of the purpose of our thesis and was provided with guidelines of which types of employees we wished to interview. She identified appropriate employees to interview and helped us to arrange the meetings. Our initial aim was to interview ten employees, but as the answers in the interviews converged it became clear that our sample of seven interviewees provided us with the necessary information to conduct a well based analysis.

2.5.2 Interview Design and Analysis

The interviews were held at Crescore's head office in Stockholm and lasted for about one hour each. As we had some knowledge on the subject from literature studies and previous interview experience, we chose to adapt a standard questionnaire/protocol² to fit each interviewee's profile as we were interested in each interviewee's viewpoints and experience. Non-leading questions were formulated without specialist terms and in a way that was easy to understand, and were mostly asked in the same order. The interviews were thus semi-constructed (Ib Andersen, 1998) which offered consistency and improved reliability of the gathered data while keeping the option to slightly tailor each interview and follow up on possible sidetracks. Two recorders were used during the interviews and enabled both of us to focus on the conversation while not risking losing any material. Immediately after each interview we discussed our impressions and typed down what had said during the interviews in detail. The advantages of using a recorder became clear as some things were

¹ Please see detailed description of interviewees under 8.3 Interviewees

² See Appendix 1. for a detailed review of the questionnaire/protocol

better understood after listening to the recordings. It was also a great tool since a lot of focus is taken away from the conversation when part of your focus is on taking notes.

2.5.3 The Interviews

In our first interview we met Karin Pålshammar; responsible for Crescore's knowledge management system, and Ingela Fordner; co-founder and head of HR. Karin told us about what the KM-structure is intended to look like, the information each employee receive and her viewpoints of which aspects are essential for the KM to function at Crescore. Ingela provided us with valuable insight of Crescore as a company, it's field of business, history and overall strategy. The first interview thus provided us with an excellent base for further research and planning of our thesis.

Based on the information from our first interview and previous research, a questionnaire was made to structure our coming interviews around. Our next four interviews were held with consultants with varying time of employment, responsibilities and hierarchical level. They provided us with an insight of how they use KM in their daily work but also which factors they perceive as essential for them to take part in the KM activities, both formal and informal. Our last interview was held with Mårten Sellgren; CEO at Crescore, and provided us with his perspective of Crescore's KM system and the actions taken on his part to make it all work.

The answers given in the interviews converged even though we tried to avoid ask leading questions, and their answers often confirmed what their colleagues have told us in previous interviews. The wide range of employees interviewed provided us with both the viewpoints of the persons responsible for the KM system, as well as a top-down and a bottom-up perspective of KM at Crescore.

2.6 Research Quality

Although we are confident that the qualitative method is the best suited for our thesis, one should always be aware of possible downsides of the chosen method in order to limit the risks of them affecting the validity of the study negatively. Bryman (2002) and Jacobsen (2002) mention three areas where a qualitative study can be criticized; difficulties replicating a study, problems associated with generalization and lack of transparency. We have chosen these three areas since we believe that they are well suited and highly relevant for our study.

2.6.1 Difficulties Replicating a Study

Qualitative studies have the obvious downside of not being quantified, which could result in answers being colored by preconceived conceptions, mood, stress and being misunderstood. We have tried to avoid this by asking clarifying questions to make sure that we have understood the answer, but also to make sure that the interviewees have understood our question. The interviews have also been transcribed, more or less word by word, after the interview enabling us to follow up afterwards in case one of us has forgotten something or to clarify what was actually meant by the given answer. We have also tried to reduce the risk of interviewees feeling uncomfortable or reserved, by making clear in the beginning of each interview what the purpose was with our thesis, the interview, why he/she was important, that no one would be quoted, and that we would be the only two persons listening to the recordings, which were made with the sole purpose of easing our memory. Whenever given the opportunity, interviews have also been used to confirm information obtained in previous interviews. The actions mentioned in this section have hopefully brought us closer to the truth.

2.6.2 Problems Associated with Generalization

All companies are unique which makes it difficult to apply our findings on others, even companies in the same size and in the same business. However, by clearly stating/explaining our methodology, our empirical findings and analysis, we hope, and believe, that most parts can be applied to other companies to some extent, given that each individual company's characteristics are taken into consideration. Another option that was discussed was to interview multiple companies and compare them. This type of study could probably be applied to more companies, but given the restricted timeframe, resources available and purpose of the thesis, this was not an option. We are confident that it, given these restrictions, would be more valuable to spend all time on understanding one company on a deeper level, instead of two or three companies comprehensively.

2.6.3 Lack of Transparency

The challenge is not to write about a complex topic such as KM, the challenge lies in expressing the complex in an understandable way. A thesis' findings and expressed implications are perceived as more credible if the thesis is transparent. We have thus tried to improve the transparency simply by applying a systematic approach as well as clearly and extensively explaining our way of working in the data collection, as well as our findings.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Types of Knowledge Included in Knowledge Management

There is a commonly popular definition of KM: "Knowledge Management is the discipline to enable individuals, teams, organizations and communities, more collectively and systematically capture, store, share and apply their knowledge, to achieve their objectives"(Knowledge Management Online, 2005). KM is usually handled by forming a structured KM system involving different KM activities. Furthermore, there are generally two types of knowledge to be handled in a KM system – *tacit* and *explicit* knowledge (Werr in press). Tacit knowledge is seen as knowledge that is difficult to transfer to another person by means of writing it down or verbalizing it. On the contrary, explicit knowledge can be easily articulated, codified, and stored in ways that can be readily transmitted to others.

3.2 Different Perspectives of Knowledge

Research defines mainly two opposing epistemological stances regarding the nature of knowledge. These are labeled as “knowledge as possession” vs. “knowledge as socially embedded” (Newell 2005). From the “knowledge as possession” point of view, knowledge is handled as an objectively definable commodity, which is easily spread from one place to another (Werr in press). Thus explicit knowledge is easy to articulate and store for future use. In other words, knowledge is defined as a transferable asset. Dunford (2000) chooses to define this perspective as knowledge that can easily be detached from one subject and made accessible to other organizational members through written or spoken language. The processing, storage and access of explicit knowledge has been facilitated the past years through developments in information and communication technology (ICT) in form of organizational databases. Such databases are most commonly found in large multinational organizations where focus has been on building large “KM systems”. Challenges within this perspective involves what knowledge is to be included in KM systems and how to structure it, as well as how to motivate employees to contribute and use the knowledge within these systems (Griggs 2002).

The “knowledge as socially embedded” view, focuses instead on the tacit and nature of knowledge in social interactions (Werr in press). By contrast from the previous perspective, it is more situations specific, where knowledge comes from experience and is therefore difficult to articulate. The dissemination of knowledge occurs through social interaction in “the doing” or through storytelling within a practice (Lave and Wenger 1991). It is also linked to action – involving new and senior

employees in the continuous work and problem-solving processes. This perspective focuses more on the local social actions and is therefore less concerned about actions of top management to facilitate knowledge transfer and sharing. Czarniawska and Joerges (1996) further validate this perspective and claims that knowledge requires a “knowing subject” that can translate knowledge in specific situations. Rather than storing and handling knowledge in databases, knowledge is accumulated by continual sharing of understandings between groups of people within a specific practice.

3.3 Enablers and Barriers to Knowledge Management

Literature defines two assumptions that need to hold in order for KM to be successful. Firstly, that people are *willing to share* knowledge with others, and secondly, that people are *willing to learn and seek* new knowledge. However, these assumptions may not hold true in practice. KM is not a procedure that can be charged for, making it difficult to value the time taken to formalize information into their respective KM systems. Other difficulties such as time pressure (Henriksen 2005), fear of losing a key asset (a certain person that possesses key information and would be a loss for the company if he/she left) (Morris 2001), as well as concerns regarding misuse of information (Ejenäs and Werr 2005) create further barriers towards knowledge sharing. Robertson (2001) speaks of motivation and incentive systems through formal and informal rewards are enablers to overcome these barriers and are an essential part regarding to the extent that knowledge is shared and in which ways information is used.

Another enabler is the nature of a work process that encourages knowledge sharing. Kaplan and Thomson-Reed (2007) mention the importance that specific KM activities need to be incorporated in the “way people do business” (the business process) and become a part of their natural workflow. Furthermore he argues that business processes enables participation and collaboration in knowledge transfer (seeking *and* sharing) and are thereby social mechanisms for mainly “tacit” knowledge transfer.

Additionally, an organizational culture that promotes knowledge transfer is crucial in order for the two assumptions to hold – that is an employee must *want* to share knowledge with others, as well as *want* to seek information from others without feeling a sense of failure or a fear of seeming incompetent in the specific area. Attitudes and values that are the stem of such a culture are consistently regarded as enablers in the sharing of tacit and explicit information throughout an

organization (Baladi 1999). There is little research today on a knowledge sharing culture as an enabler. Thus it is not evident what makes a “knowledge sharing culture” (Werr in press). Trust between colleagues is recurrently mentioned. Transfer of knowledge through databases as well as between colleagues face-to-face require a certain openness and vulnerability and it is therefore vital for employees to trust one another, knowing that whatever knowledge is being spread will not have any negative consequences (Ejenäs and Werr 2005). This leads to another factor in building of such a culture which is the lenience towards making mistakes (Henriksen 2005). The study will handle a “knowledge sharing culture” as a vital theory for our analysis which is why research concerning how such a culture is formed is necessary to further legitimize and form an understanding as to how culture functions as an enabler for successful KM.

3.4 Approaches to Handling Knowledge

There are primarily two approaches towards handling tacit and explicit knowledge – these are respectively “codification” vs. “personalization”. The “codification” approach focuses on articulating explicit knowledge through databases, which supports the “knowledge as possession” epistemology. The “personalization” approach focuses instead on disseminating tacit knowledge between individuals and thus facilitating interaction between individuals which, in contrast, supports the “knowledge as socially embedded” epistemology (Hanson et al. 1999). Previous research has presented these two approaches as alternative strategies where respective approaches are more appropriate for managing different organizational knowledge. “Knowledge as possession” is more commonly found in organizations that work with standardized and repetitive tasks. Thus, knowledge can easily be articulated and stored through codification in databases. On the contrary “knowledge as socially embedded” is more common in creative, problem-solving organizations where focus lies on generation of new knowledge, rather than the reuse of old knowledge, which requires social interactions between “knowing subjects” (Hansen et al. 1999). However, as of late many researches view these approaches (and inevitably the two epistemologies) as complementary rather than alternative. They argue that both approaches affect organizational productivity in management consulting organizations where codified information increases the efficiency of work, whilst personalized knowledge improves quality of work output (Hansen and Haas 2001). This study will adopt the stance of viewing these perspectives as complementary.

Werr and Stjernberg (2003) describes three basic elements in the consulting knowledge system and interrelations. These three basic knowledge elements are *methods and tools, experience, and cases*.

Methods and tools (different templates, activities, process phases etc.) provide a shared framework by providing a “common language” or terminology to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge accumulated from experience from different projects. Such methods and tools are more commonly found in organizations using “knowledge as possession”. Knowledge from previous projects are standardized and should thus serve as a template for similar projects in the future. The focus here lies in articulating explicit knowledge. On the contrary, experience handles more tacit knowledge and is therefore more commonly found from a “knowledge as socially embedded” perspective. Such knowledge is central to designing and carrying out projects and provides the basis for adapting knowledge to a specific situation. Since experience is tacit, it is difficult to articulate into databases and instead require face-to-face interactions. Finally, cases are examples of practice in specific situations. The focus here is neither on explicit nor on tacit knowledge but instead on the interaction of the two that combined creates knowledge in an organization. Werr and Stjernberg (2003) further argue that the three basic elements are complementary. A common framework from methods and tools facilitate the exchange of experience in face-to-face interactions. At the same time it provides a structured format for documenting cases. The knowledge acquired from methods and tools, and cases are limited to a consultant that lacks experience. Consequently, experience leveraged the productive use of more articulate knowledge such as methods and tools. To conclude, these three basic elements support the above stance of the two epistemologies being complementary that we will make use of in our analysis.

3.5 Theory of Groups Functioning Efficiently

We will also make use of theory that describes how group activities can become creative and efficient. Hargadon and Bechky (2006) define four interrelating activities that play important roles in groups of people to form collective creativity. These four are: *Help seeking*, *Help giving*, *Reflective reframing* and *Reinforcing*. *Help seeking* are activities that occur when an individual recognizes a problematic situation and thus actively seeks help from others. *Help giving* represents individuals that are willing to devote time to help others in their work. *Reflective reframing* represents the behavior of people’s social interactions. Each participating individual respects the comments and actions made from others and therefore in no way tries to make others feel insecure or uneasy. Finally *Reinforcement* refers to those activities that reinforce the organizational values and support to actively engage in *help seeking, help giving, and reflective reframing*. For instance, giving help reinforces help seeking. There

are also more indirect *reinforcement* activities such as salaries and promotions to those that engage actively in knowledge transfer activities.

Dougherty and Takacs (2004) mention the importance of *Team Play* that reflects a “dynamic space” of *heedful interrelating*. Heedful interrelating is the result of three processes: First, individuals construct their own sense of contribution to the activity, and secondly envisage how they can contribute in a joint action that finally interrelates with the visions and values of the organization. In the case of KM it is defining what knowledge can be contributed in a joint action (a group) that interrelates with the organization’s vision of successful knowledge transfer. The authors argue that *Team Play* becomes a combination of team work and *having fun*. Framing activities as play instead of work transforms people’s attitudes, perceptions and motivations towards the means and the process of how activities are carried out (and ultimately a more efficient knowledge transfer), rather than possible consequences. This is because previous research has perceived “work” as constrictive, tedious, difficult and boring, whilst “play” is seen as liberating, refreshing and emotional.

3.6 Our Framework

We will use all theories mentioned above to a certain extent. However, the theories that we’ve noticed as most valuable to our analysis are:

- How enablers such as business process, incentive systems and culture are handled.
- What makes a “knowledge sharing culture”.

Important to note is that the theories chosen are merely aiding supports in order to verify our own model that we’ve generated from our case study. In no way do we seek to manipulate theory for our model to hold, but instead to use different perspectives of theory to validate our model.

4. Empirics

First we will give a short introduction to Crescore and how they value KM. Then we will describe the informal activities that have been used since the beginning of Crescore's life, prior to the development of the KM system. To follow we will describe in detail what is included in the KM system in forms of formal activities. This leads to a description of how the development of a KM system led to a new organizational structure within Crescore. Finally, we will describe how such activities are used in practice and identify factors that facilitate and hinder the use of knowledge.

4.1 Introduction to Crescore

Crescore is a management consulting firm that was founded 2002. Their head office is located in Stockholm, Sweden where they've 32 employees as of today. They also have a smaller office in Oslo, Norway where they've three employees and a representation office in Copenhagen, Denmark where there are currently no employees, thus a total number of 35 employees in the organization combined. Their main focus is to offer branch competence in the finance sector (primarily concerning banks) and they consult primarily operational problems such as improvements of bank processes. They started off by working with one major client: Nordea Bank. Soon they acquired several more clients to reduce the risks associated with only having one major client. Their current client portfolio includes all of Norway's and Sweden's major banks.

Crescore has primarily five different hierarchy levels: Consultants (including junior consultants), senior consultants, managers, senior managers and partners. Their hierarchy pyramid is rather wide in the mid-section since most employees are senior consultants, in contrast to a traditional pyramid where most employees are junior consultants. This is due to that their recruitment has been directly related to the financial crisis. During the crisis there was a large demand for senior consultants, but today the market demands junior consultants as well. Not until 2010 did they recruit their first, and (still) only, junior consultant.

4.2 The Value of Knowledge Management to Crescore

Crescore early recognized the value of KM and identified primarily three features as to why they needed to develop a KM system: Internal Efficiency, Competitive Advantage, and Organizational Learning. Internal Efficiency reflects structured re-use of key project documentation and sales material, the way of working which is improved by best practices and learning from experience. Competitive advantage reflects utilizing the strengths of joint knowledge within the organization to improve customer perception and satisfaction. Finally organizational learning reflects the exchange

of knowledge and learning's with others, discovering what you know and what you don't know and the fact that people come and go which makes it important to capture all knowledge.

This also led to their motto to KM inspiration: "If only Crescore knew... what Crescore knows..." which means that individual knowledge will not become a part of the organization until it is transferred and disseminated.

Crescore's management developed a KM system involving a database to accumulate all knowledge and also created *formal* activities as forums for knowledge sharing and transfers (see 4.4 Formal Knowledge Management Activities). These are known as formal activities since they are formally a part of the KM system and are structured by management. Besides this they also recognized the necessity of developing their organizational structure (see 4.5 KM Leading to a New Organizational Structure). Prior to this development Crescore solely relied on informal activities as a way of transferring knowledge, which are described below. Informal activities differ from formal activities since they are carried out on the employees own initiative, rather than being imposed by management.

4.3 Informal Activities

The relatively low number of employees (up to 10) working at Crescore during the first years of operations until 2006 enabled an efficient transfer of knowledge solely by informal activities. Although informal activities are not imposed by management, they are highly encouraged and cherished. The informal activities haven't changed much over the years and are still in use today. The main selection criterion for which of these methods to employ is the contacted person's expected level of desired knowledge. Below we will describe these informal activities that have been used since the beginning of Crescore's life in detail.

4.3.1 Direct and Deliberate Contact

The most common methods include e-mails, phone calls and to simply knock on a colleague's door or ask someone that happens to pass by the office. Mass emails are used by a few employees as a simple way to find someone that might be able to help, either directly or by referring to someone that can. Emails and phone calls are used when it's likely that the contacted person either has an answer themselves or know someone that does. To knock on someone's door is used in the same situations as phone calls and direct emails, whereas asking someone that happens to pass by is more

similar to mass emails as the choice of which method to use is based on geographic location of the persons involved.

4.3.2 Lunch or Grabbing a Cup of Coffee

Sharing a lunch or grabbing a cup of coffee (i.e. *fika*) is often preceded by an action in the previous category of actions and is described as a nice way to both socialize with colleagues that they may not meet as often during projects, while at the same time offering a quality moment of information sharing. Of course, the purpose-ratio of benefit vs. socialization varies as the main objective to meet isn't always to share knowledge and experience, which in these cases are mostly seen as a positive side effect and not always recognized as such.

4.3.3 Hallway Meetings

Hallway meetings, or as some of the interviewees put it; coffee machine meetings, were also mentioned as a common forum for asking colleagues for their experiences or if they know of anyone that might have valuable information. These meetings are not planned as the constellation of the participants in the interactions is determined by who happens to be around at that particular moment.

4.3.4 Consultants from Other Firms Working on the Same Project

Crescore often works side by side with consultants from other firms on the same projects. Thus, Crescore consultants sometimes interact far more with these consultants than with their actual colleagues. The fact that many projects last over a long period of time strengthens these unique social bonds. Thus, it becomes natural to share knowledge between each other just as often as they would with a Crescore consultant. However, certain company sensitive information is naturally not shared.

4.4 Formal Activities

As mentioned, the KM system was developed 2006, where new forums to enhance and facilitate knowledge transfer were created. We define these forums that are imposed by management as formal activities. However, the development of the KM system was not solely due to the three primary features describing the importance of KM, as mentioned above (see 4.2 The Value of KM to Crescore). Management also found that these forums became necessary to accumulate knowledge due to their growth. As their number of employees increased it was no longer possible to know which employee's that possessed knowledge in different areas. Furthermore they took on more

projects at once and thus recognized the necessity of documenting these learning's for future use. These activities are described in detail below.

4.4.1 Database

Crescore's formal documentation local is within their developed database. This is the only formal activity that relies on individual responsibility from consultants and is regularly updated before, during, and after projects. Here all valuable information is codified and documented to enable structured re-use of knowledge and experience. Employees are expected to follow different stages when processing knowledge from projects. The first stage is *Sales Process* where sales material is documented – more specifically sales presentations, proposals and contracts. This leads to the following *Delivery Process* containing debriefings from Crescore's Sales and Delivery projects. These debriefings are known as Project One Pagers (POPs) which are divided into four types: General & Sales Information, Key Project Documentation, Final Deliverables and Delivery Information. Additional to POPs there is a Project Experience log as well as a Competence Matrix to document. The Project Experience log is simply learning's that should be documented actively during a project's course. The Competence Matrix is a summary of consultant's competences which are personally filled out. Additionally, consultant's Curriculum Vitae's are added which, combined with the Competence Matrix, provides a solid foundation for finding suitable consultants' for future projects. However, it is not a base for selling in specific teams to clients since consultants are usually hired one at a time.

Additional to filling in the documents mentioned above, it is also required to document knowledge attained from knowledge sharing group activities revolving around group meetings where experiences, problems, insights and best practices can be shared within Crescore. These activities are explained more thoroughly below (See 4.4.2 Knowledge Sharing Group Activities).

The knowledge from accumulated documentation are finalized in Crescore's Intranet PROMICON which is Crescore's technical base for knowledge sharing. This system defined best performance customer solutions and best practices that are further fed into offerings and promoted in sales. The projects that do not end up as being part of the best practice are handled as a track record. Employees can easily look back to any project done and the subsequent issues and solutions that followed. Project learning's and acquired knowledge form best performance methodologies and templates that are inserted in PROMICON and are made re-usable globally (within Crescore's organization). Such methodologies and templates are used as guiding tools that describe how a

project should be performed (e.g. different steps to follow to execute a project successfully). However, these methods and tools are only relevant for the execution of projects, not for the handling of knowledge. Projects may be similar, and thus standardized models can be useful, but generally knowledge and lessons learned from each project differs, despite the formats similarity.

“There is no point in standardizing Knowledge Management through use of methods or templates since we encounter new problems and issues in every project that are handled differently.” (Partner at Crescore)

4.4.2 Knowledge Sharing Group Activities

Knowledge attained from knowledge sharing group activities is a part of PROMICON as mentioned above (See 4.4.1 Database). These are continuous activities, and are an outspoken policy that is an important process in the way Crescore functions. We define three activities:

4.4.2.1 Lunch presentations

Lunch presentations are events that are frequently held – every other Friday. These lunches were formed at Crescore’s beginning year 2002, but have not until later years (after the development of the KM system year 2006) focused on knowledge sharing and transfer. All employees are expected to come, unless client projects demand their full time and therefore leave no spare time to attend. Each session is focused on one project that may be an interesting topic concerning an ongoing project or relevant issues that may concern the organization such as new legislation. This is commonly presented using a slideshow to inform and share the knowledge to rest of the group and is held by one consultant at a time. At the end of a presentation the floor is open for discussion where listeners may have further questions or suggestions to the presenter. This in turn leads to quite open and free discussions on other similar topics that may be of value.

Before a presentation they “go around the table” to allow each attending consultant to shortly present and update the group on current projects. Specific problems and issues may be brought up during these short summaries and consultants may aid each other to such concerns after the lunch is ended. Consequently, lunch presentations are regarded as their largest knowledge sharing forum due to its frequency and diversity.

“Even if a consultant does not work with the presented topic, it is still important to understand certain terminology and overall news to be able to follow discussions and be able to answer basic questions.” (Manager at Crescore)

Apart from the knowledge transfer aspect, employees feel that the lunches are a nice break from client projects where there's an opportunity to meet and socialize with colleagues. Oftentimes they are situated at respective client offices, and therefore colleagues are seldom, if at all, gathered simultaneously at the Crescore office.

4.4.2.2 Conferences

Smaller conferences are held at Crescore regularly, but are at times held more frequently depending on the need. For instance, a significant change in organizational structure or function may need a conference to convey the importance of such a change.

Besides the infrequent conferences, larger conferences are held four times per year – once every quartile, and are mandatory for all employees. The knowledge transfer aspect is in focus, and oftentimes guest lecturers are invited that are experts within certain areas. However, a secondary focus is making these conferences social events where colleagues interact in social activities. Usual is the use of workshops to enhance the knowledge transfer but primarily to enhance team work and form a team spirit. Additionally, once a year a trip is organized that is simply for leisure's sake – for instance visiting Barcelona, or going on a ski trip.

4.4.2.3 Afterworks

Afterworks are organized frequently, once per month, always on the same date. Consultants will thus know when to look forward to this event. They gather at a bar, and enjoy a few beers. The focus here is scarcely on knowledge transfer, but simply having a pleasant time. Employees have the chance to get to know each other on a more personal level. However, it is common that topics concerning work are discussed, and thus forms a knowledge transfer. It gives employees the opportunity to ask questions that one normally would shy away from to ask in a more formal “professional” activity. Problems at current projects are often brought up; these may be concerned with the process of the project itself, or personal issues within the working team.

4.4.2.4 Social Aspects of the Knowledge Sharing Group Activities

There is an underlying cause for the three knowledge sharing group activities (lunch presentation, conferences, after-work) which is not merely based on the knowledge transfer, but mostly on the social aspect. Employees feel that these events facilitate the process of getting to know colleagues; and that they would scarcely have personal relationships with colleagues if such activities did not exist. Additional to socializing with employees, the purpose is also to simply *have fun* during these

meetings. They are events that employees hopefully look forward to as a refreshing input in consultant's daily project routines.

“You should feel that you've learned something during group events and at the same time feel that working at Crescore is fun!” (Partner at Crescore)

4.5 Knowledge Management Leading to a New Organizational Structure

Crescore's KM system has evolved over time as the company has moved its focus and increased the number of employees. While some KM activities have not been noticeably affected, other aspects of the system have come under increasing strain, and supporting structures have thus been implemented by management to enable the transfer of knowledge to function properly. These structures will be discussed in this section.

As the number of clients increased, Crescore's priority shifted towards becoming better at serving their existing clients and key accounts in particular. As a result, Key Account Management (KAM) teams were created with the main motive to increase sales by better utilizing on existing knowledge and experience of major existing accounts. This meant a shift from organizing employees in expert groups after their individual experience to forming Key Account Management (KAM) teams of employees with experience from the same accounts. Thus, the structure of Crescore's KM system was adapted to fit its new focus.

Prior to the structuring of the KM system, it was fairly easy for the consultants to remember which projects their colleagues had worked on and their level of experience as long as the number of employees were relatively low. Knowing exactly who to contact made it easy to pick up the telephone or send an email whenever assistance or advice was needed. But as the number of colleagues grew larger it became increasingly difficult to overlook the company's accumulated experience as well as the newly hired staff, especially since consultants working with different clients rarely met in person. The causal and informal ways of knowledge sharing that had been sufficient before were now in need of support in terms of improved structures in combination with formal activities. As a result a mandatory training in how to use Crescore's knowledge management system was implemented as well as personal counselors and performance reviews. Education was introduced with the purpose of setting a common standard among the employee's competences and to convey what was expected in terms of Crescore's values and how to use the KM system (See 4.5.3 Education). Counselors were also implemented to serve a supervising purpose. The

performance reviews held by counselors was additionally implemented as a way to plan and evaluate the employee's annual development and performance, including participation in KM activities. (See 4.5.2 Counselors).

4.5.1 KAM Team

The teams are made up of Crescore consultants working with different projects for the same account, often a major Swedish bank. The KAM structure was formed as Crescore entered a new phase where preferences altered from identifying new partners toward prioritizing major existing clients (key accounts), and where assessing and adapting to the needs of these key accounts was essential.

Each KAM-team has a leader and is allowed to work rather independently from the other teams according to what fits them best. Depending on the workload the teams assemble once every third week. Participation is on voluntary basis but is part of each employee's annual evaluation. Most participants thus see the KAM team as an opportunity to develop both themselves and their career. The main task is to create a plan for the year of potential projects to get involved with and how to best market Crescore. Once every second to third month the KAM leaders assemble together with the CEO to discuss their plans and other news regarding the key accounts.

The main purpose is to create sales. The KAM structure enables the collection of all accumulated information of each key account, such as upcoming projects, identified needs and requests, new processes, laws and systems, contact information to key persons and future projections and other relevant facts from e.g. the client's Intranet. The identification of key decision makers and future potential projects is essential for the long term survival, as well as making sure Crescore can provide its client's future needs. Acquiring this information enables each team to form an annual strategy. The structure also enables synergy effects by easier gathering relevant persons for e.g. a breakfast seminar when new rules and regulations are identified which affects all accounts and where strategies for one account can be used for the others.

4.5.2 Counselors

Each consultant has their own counselor who acts as a boss, or executive. However, a counselor's role is not to act as a leader that a consultant must answer to, but instead makes sure that an employee is well integrated in the organization. This includes making sure that newly recruited consultants are quickly learns how the organization functions. Meetings with counselors are a

continuous process during an employee's life at Crescore, and are usually organized after consultant needs. The types of issues that are handled often depend on the relationship between counselors and respective consultants. Some consultants have a more "professional" relationship with their counselor and choose to bring up issues such as promotion, requests for vacation or time off, or are in need of new appliances (computers, cell phones), and personal development opportunities such as education (See 4.5.3 Education). Other consultants have a more personal relationship with their counselor and choose to discuss "softer" values that could include: personal relations with other employees, uncertainty or confusion of how to proceed in projects, and their overall well-being in the organization etc. These persons often look up to their counselor as a mentor.

"A counselor is a combination of coach, mentor and a person that has a lot of influence on setting salaries. Hopefully, it is also a person that an employee can learn a lot from." (Partner at Crescore)

Performance reviews are mandatory with counselors for each consultant despite relationship. These reviews occur semi-annually. During the first meeting strengths and weaknesses are discussed, by analyzing Curriculum Vitae, sales pitch, and other merits. A plan is formalized regarding how to improve weaknesses and making use of strengths, as well as setting goals concerning what a consultant is expected to achieve during the year. An official point in the plan is contribution to KM. The second meeting, towards the end of the year, is a follow up of the formalized plan. Consultants are evaluated according to how well they've met the work demands, and consequently to what extent the consultant has been active in the KM process. Work demands are primarily assessed by viewing work performance (how well they've participated in and executed projects), rather than how many projects they've managed to sell to clients. Activity in KM is assessed by contribution and participation in the knowledge sharing group activities, as well as proficiency of filling in documents in the database.

4.5.3 Education

Education can be defined as an indirect structure affecting KM since consultants will become more competent in various areas and are thus able to enhance their knowledge sharing and contribution. A large part of the education provided is mandatory for all consultants to make sure they share a basic knowledge understanding. For instance, all new employees sit an introduction course to KM. They are educated in the way that Crescore views KM, why it is important, and which activities exist (how to use the database and which documents to fill, as well as how knowledge sharing group

activities function). A vital part of the course is to note the importance of PROMICON since its function is not merely to transfer knowledge but also a way to sell their competence to clients, and inevitably acquire new projects. Newly introduced is a course in “*The Crescore Way*” based on PROMICON and the common issues or problems that occur within Crescore, and ultimately how they are avoided to increase efficiency, as well as Crescore values and organizational culture. Additionally, each consultant is educated in the different areas of the organization such as insurances, treasury management, investment management etc. Consultants get an overall view of how the organization functions before becoming more specialized in respective areas. Other mandatory internal courses are project leadership, presentation and sales education which are essential components in a consultants work process.

Some education is more specialized to individual consultants that depend on knowledge requirements in different projects. Other external education is voluntary and is provided accordingly to consultants needs. It is a consultant’s individual responsibility to request such external education with their counselors during performance review meetings. External education naturally falls under the individual plans that are formalized with the counselor to improve weaknesses and make use of strengths. Benefits are that consultant’s upgrade their Competence Matrix and thus are more viable for future projects.

4.6 Knowledge Management in Practice Today

In the previous sections we discussed formal and informal activities as well as structures that enable the transfer of knowledge between employees at Crescore. In this section we will discuss how they are combined in order to fully utilize the company’s KM system. The knowledge seeking and knowledge sharing is in many aspects two sides of the same coin. The formal activities are generally of a more contributing/sharing character in the KM system whereas the informal activities to a larger extent are used as means to capitalize on the same system by seeking knowledge. To follow we will describe factors that enable and hinder knowledge transfer that we’ve defined from the use of activities in practice.

4.6.1 How Formal and Informal Activities are Combined and Used in Practice

The combination and sequence of the activities that are used when the consultants seek knowledge is affected by several factors such as the relationship between individual colleagues, which type of knowledge that is requested and finally the physical location and context.

The most common way to start seeking knowledge is to ask a colleague, indifferent to the above mentioned factors. The initial contact can be made both as a means to identify relevant persons for further contacts/activities, and for direct questions concerning projects. The former case is common when the nature of the knowledge needed is more complex and thus require further assistance, or when the required knowledge is of a more quantifiable character likely to be obtainable in e.g. the database or Competence Matrix. However, it's not always possible to ask a colleague face to face as he or she might not be located in the same building. Telephones and email have previously been mentioned as the most common mediums in these cases, while physical/personal contact is often preferred whenever possible. The choice of who to contact also depends on which type of knowledge that one seeks, perceived experience of colleagues, as well as the location and context. Client related questions for example might fall on colleagues working on the same project or members of the same KAM-team, whereas personal questions might be asked to the counselor or a trusted colleague. In general, colleagues with a closer social tie are often preferred when the question doesn't require to be answered by an expert on the subject. As a result, personal matters are often combined with professional matters, and thus become an indirect channel of information search, though it may not be deliberate.

“The people you know well are those you speak to the most, which oftentimes leads to acquiring new information anyway: ‘Ah, so he knows something about this?’ ” (Consultant at Crescore)

Personal meetings such as grabbing a cup of coffee or sharing a lunch are quite common as an enjoyable and social mean to discuss problems and questions one may have and are almost exclusively preceded by one of the informal knowledge management activities mentioned earlier. For “softer” information which is difficult to quantify, the direct personal contact is often the end of the line if it's not followed by a personal lunch or coffee. Although one of the interviewees mentioned the database as her initial search method, the other consultants claimed only to use the database after contacting their colleagues asking for their advice of where to look.

“When assigned a new project I tend to start by asking the other partners if they know anyone that has been involved in a similar project. Before I contact the suggested person I often search the database to see what is already registered and thus what I need to ask and discuss with that person. The discussions often lead to further contacts with other persons, which is good, because specific questions are often easier to obtain in person rather than through the database.

But for me the first step when assigned a new project is always the ‘mouth-to-mouth’- method ”
(Partner at Crescore)

The database is thus used mainly as a second step where personal contact is not sufficient or when the requested information is hard to be obtained in person. However, although the database often follows upon an initial, personal, contact it is rarely used as the last step in the search for information. The initial contact is often used to find the relevant sources in the database, but the information registered in the documents is rarely sufficient and functions rather as guidelines and an idea of who to contact to get additional information, either by repeating the first step of personal contact or sharing a lunch.

“The database fills an important function as it helps finding persons that are competent in specific areas, but those persons need to be contacted in person at the end. There is a lot of information, but I think it’s mainly used when there is a certain purpose of finding specific information.” (Partner at Crescore)

The physical location affects the way information is obtained. Since Crescore’s database only is accessible from the main office, consultants working at the client’s office have to rely more on the client as a source of information, or other Crescore consultants to obtain the relevant information.

“It is essential to know what your colleagues have worked with before in order to know who to contact whenever a question arise. The social aspect of these events is great in this way.”
(Consultant at Crescore)

One of the consultants we interviewed mentioned a situation where he was assigned to work on a business proposal for a project at one of the Crescore’s key accounts which can serve as an illustrating example of how formal activities can interact with informal activities. The consultant remembered that he had met a colleague at a conference who had told him about a similar assignment. The colleague was hence contacted and advised the consultant to contact the bank’s KAM-team since they had gathered a lot of information about that particular bank, and which documents in the database that might be relevant (e.g. old sales material, previous projects and the Competence Matrix). Although the information found in the database and through the KAM-team was very useful, he still needed to ask some clarifying questions and contacted the person he had met at the conference once more to schedule a lunch. The other formal activities such as lunch presentations and after-work’s are often described to fill a similar function as the conference did in

the example above. Although knowledge is rarely sought at these events, they are often described as important forums where knowledge is shared and *absorbed*.

The sharing of knowledge is, as mentioned earlier, the opposite side of the same coin as knowledge seeking and is in many respects self-explaining. Knowledge is mainly shared by taking the time to answering colleague's questions and being available whenever assistance is needed, or requested. An example of a request is when management asks if one can hold a presentation on a relevant subject for the rest of the colleagues during one of the lunch presentations and thus opening up for further questions on the subject. Another essential aspect of knowledge sharing is to perform each KM task that is taught in the initial KM training provided at the start of the employment, including filling in documents such as the POP and the Competence Matrix. Not too surprisingly, each document needs to be filled in if they are to be made available to others. One final aspect of contributing to KM is to participate in all activities whenever possible, even those that at first glance might not be perceived as a KM activity, such as afterworks.

4.6.2 Factors that Facilitate and Hinder Knowledge Transfer

There is a general feeling throughout the organization that people are always willing to share knowledge and provide assistance when asked – a certain air of openness. Consultants are very keen on making their project successful; especially in a smaller organization like Crescore, where each project has a significant value. If a consultant have questions regarding specific projects, the recipient gladly shares knowledge gained from respective projects and never feel withholding information may give them an advantage by forming expertise. Some consultants believe this is due to the sheer size of the company – since the organization is quite small, an individual contributing to KM becomes valuable to the organization, and thus gives employees a sense of importance to participate in activities. Others claim it is due to “softer” values such as people treat each other in a way they expect to be treated: “The Golden Rule”. Therefore people feel they want to give help when asked since they will probably require the same help in the future, and therefore expect to be given that help. Another consultant mentions that there is no prestige within the organization and between employees.

“Coming from a large management consulting organization, I was surprised to notice that no one at Crescore keeps any unique knowledge or information to themselves to form expertise or dependent advantage.” (Senior Consultant at Crescore)

In turn, consultants feel they can ask for help and seek information freely, due to this openness. We found commonly that consultants choose objectively who to ask for help depending on what information they seek. The person asked is most often the person with most competence within the subject, and an employee never feels hindered from asking such persons even though they may not personally know them. Not wanting to ask someone on a different level in the hierarchy does not occur either. Employees have acknowledged the fact that it is impossible to be knowledgeable within all different areas of knowledge (due to different areas of specialization), which in turn has led to that people are not afraid of asking questions to seem incompetent.

“It’s not possible to cover everything, even though you may be knowledgeable within a subject. I’d rather ask directly than wait two months and let it become a problem, just to not seem stupid.” (Consultant at Crescore)

Newly hired consultants may feel a pressure of wanting to seem competent and knowledgeable. This pressure is, however, only set upon themselves rather than from the organization. In fact, there is virtually no pressure from the organization on newly hired consultants since they are not directly responsible for mistakes made during the learning-process. One newly hired consultant mentions how she sometimes feels uncertain about whether or not she is supposed to know something specific, and therefore chooses to look it up in the database instead of asking directly. However, there is no problem in asking questions directly if she’s certain it cannot be assumed that she’s knowledgeable within the area. Conversely, consultants that have been at the organization a longer time do not relate to what level of knowledge is to be expected from new consultants. Therefore they may offer help and describe thoroughly different areas of knowledge to new consultants without being asked.

It is believed within the organization that a significant factor that facilitates the transfer of knowledge is personal characteristics and personal values. During recruitment process it is therefore essential to find people that are not only competent, but also have a personality that suits well with Crescore’s values and culture, and will get along with other colleagues which ultimately eliminates conflicts between personalities. Additionally, it is a person that is willing to work within new areas and dare to attack projects that they may not be able to grasp fully at first.

There are a few factors that hinder effective use of knowledge transfer. The hindering factors are beyond Crescore’s control, and hence there are no hindering factors due to selfish reasons. At times,

the consultants are fully booked at client projects with no spare time for participating in any KM activities, and thus sharing information through these channels. Since the customer is first priority, a consultant may not have time answering questions or giving help to others when time is scarce. Being fully booked means that you spend all your working hours at the client; thus, if you were to engage in knowledge transfer within Crescore, it would be beyond working hours that are paid for. A downside of being located at the client's offices is that the consultants do not have access to the database outside Crescore's head office.

5. Analysis

We've identified the following factors that we will make use of in our analysis: Management, Structures, KM Activities and Culture (See Figure 1). First we will discuss how the formal and informal activities (See 4.3 Informal Knowledge Management Activities and 4.4 Formal Knowledge Management activities) function together and their contribution to KM, and how they're affected by the Management and structures. Then we will discuss how culture enables KM, and how culture is affected by the management and structures. Finally we will analyze how KM activities and culture affect each other to form a model of interrelations between the different aspects.

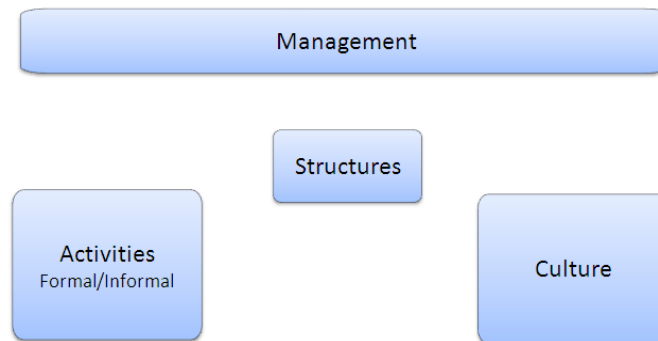


Figure 1. Different factors included in Crescore's KM

5.1 Knowledge Management Activities

5.1.1 Formal Activities as a Foundation for the Informal Activities

During the early years of Crescore the number of employees remained low and thus it was fairly easy to remember which projects that had been performed, which consultants that had been involved and what their individual specialized competence was. The organizational growth in addition to the vast amount of hours spent with the client, rather than at Crescore's office, made it harder to get to know each colleague. Hence, informal activities became less efficient as it got more difficult to spontaneously meet a colleague at the office or randomly drop a question to someone, as well as efficiently searching the database (since the database is only accessible from the office). The weakening social ties could also have the potential downside that it would become less attractive to spend time helping a colleague one had never met and thus had no relationship with.

These aspects made it increasingly difficult to obtain information in terms of colleague's accumulated knowledge and experience. It was thus no longer efficient to transfer knowledge solely by informal activities. Explicit knowledge has to some extent always been stored in documents in Crescore's database and increased in importance as the amount of accumulated knowledge grew and

became more difficult to overlook. Adapting the database to the company's growth included adding documents such as the POPs and Competence Matrix, labeled as "methods and tools" by Werr and Stjernberg (2003), provided templates and a common language to facilitate the dissemination and articulation of accumulated knowledge. The epistemological stance labeling knowledge as "knowledge as possession" view knowledge as easily articulated, storable and transferrable and thus confirms this view by highlighting the importance of the storage of explicit knowledge in Crescore's database during the course of Crescore's growth (Werr in press).

The efficiency of sharing tacit knowledge by informal activities decreased as the company grew. The solution was to implement formal knowledge sharing group activities in addition to the informal activities which would function as a foundation and facilitator of further use of informal activities. Handling tacit knowledge, which is closely related to the "knowledge as socially embedded" epistemology, is often difficult to articulate as it tends to be situation specific and originates from experience (Lave and Wenger 1991), and is thus primarily shared through social interactions (Werr in press). The dissemination of socially embedded (tacit) knowledge and experiences occur primarily "in the doing" and through storytelling (Lave and Wenger 1991), and thus requires face-to face interactions (Werr and Stjernberg 2003). These theories thus support our findings that the knowledge sharing group activities (that are solely face-to-face interactions) became increasingly vital for Crescore's KM system.

The formal knowledge sharing group activities has proved to have a major positive effect on the KM system as a foundation and a facilitator of knowledge sharing by bringing the employees closer on a social level. Events such as conferences, lunch presentations and after-work's are essential in two major respects: they are first of all important forums for sharing knowledge, but they also fill an important function as they allow employees to socialize and get to know each other in a relaxed and enjoyable setting. These findings concur with the personalization approach that focuses on the dissemination of tacit knowledge between individuals and thus facilitating interaction between individuals, which supports the "knowledge as socially embedded" epistemology (Hanson et al. 1999). Closer social ties and solidarity has shown to enable and improve the informal knowledge seeking activities since it is easier to stay updated on who knows what, but also to actually pick up the phone, write an email, to share a lunch or simply to ask a question in person. It is also far easier, and likely, to spend time on helping a person one knows and likes.

Our findings thus also concur with the codification approach which focuses on articulating explicit knowledge through databases. Werr and Stjernberg (2003) refer to this interplay of “methods and tools” and “experiences” (tacit and explicit knowledge) as cases where it is the interaction of the two combined that creates knowledge in an organization. The formal activities thus function as the foundation in the KM system as they are essential to facilitate the sharing of knowledge through the informal activities. We have found that the activities at Crescore can be illustrated as a pyramid where the formal activities are located in the base of the pyramid and the informal activities at the top (See Figure 2).



Figure 2. Formal activities as a foundation for the informal activities.

Viewing the formal and informal activities in the shape of a pyramid emphasize that these two categories are not to be seen as separate, but rather as interrelated and complementary. These activities are the heart of the KM system and are dependent on the other for functioning properly. Recent research also sees “knowledge as possession”, “knowledge as socially embedded” and respectively codification and personalization as complementary rather than alternative, which concur with our finding of the interrelation between the formal and informal activities. Hansen and Haas (2001) argue, as us, that both approaches affect the organizational productivity (at Crescore) where the codified information increases the efficiency of work, whilst the personalized knowledge improves quality of work output. The successful combination has thus been found to be greater than its two separate entities. The following example highlights our finding: Improving the quality of the database with the Competence Matrix (codification) allows the management to form teams for projects where consultants with different expertise and competence work together and thus share knowledge “in the doing” (personalization) which would be difficult to articulate otherwise. Although labeling elements of knowledge differently, Werr and Sternberg’s (2003) research also confirms our findings with their model of how methods & tools, cases and experiences are to be

seen as complementary rather than separate. The methods and tools provide a structured format for documenting cases and facilitate the exchange of experience in face-to-face interaction. In this setting, the experiences leverage the productive use of more articulate knowledge such as methods and tools. This stance, where the elements are to be seen as complementary by improving efficiency and quality thus conclude, not only with our findings, but also the research mentioned above e.g. Hansen and Haas (2001).

5.1.2 The Influence of Management and Structures on Knowledge Management Activities

The Management, and structures implemented by the management, has had a profound effect on Crescore's Knowledge Management system. Management supervision of its outcomes and continuously adapting which activities that should be performed, how often and to which extent, has formed a dynamic system of KM activities supported by well-designed structures.

The mandatory introduction course to KM communicates Crescore's values by letting each new employee know from the start what standard that is expected in terms of participation in various activities, which documents to fill in, etc., but also why this is important. This has been found to shape a common state where active participation is both cherished and taken for granted. Hence, the quality of the documented knowledge is improved as well as the efficiency of obtaining information as everyone is familiar with the tools and methods available.

The KAM-team structure influence activities by providing a framework for the dissemination of knowledge and experience originating from a specific client, resulting in increased quality as well as improved efficiency in the assessment of information regarding prioritized clients. The implementation of the KAM structure is only one of many examples of how the dynamics has shaped the KM activities. The sharing of knowledge by informal activities has been improved with the KAM structure as it is easier to find an appropriate person to ask, as well as finding relevant information, thus improving both efficiency and quality. Hence, these formal meetings have been improved as only persons related to the specific client takes part. Employees not affected by the information don't have to attend which in turn enables more efficient sharing of information on a higher level as the information doesn't have to be adapted and simplified to those that are not familiar with the client.

The use of counselors and performance reviews are two structures which are efficiently used as means to *reinforce* knowledge sharing (Hargadon and Bechky 2006). Each employee's performance

and participation is evaluated and included as a factor influencing the employee's promotion and salary. We have identified these structures as strong incentives, alongside social factors, for participating in activities such as taking the time to answering emails, participating in after-work's or volunteering to hold a presentation of a relevant subject at a lunch presentation, thus increasing efficiency and quality further. These structures are also contributing to continuity and dynamics as they have both a compelling function as well as taking employee's ideas and suggestions into consideration.

In conclusion, management has a great impact on the formal and informal activities directly by choosing which activities that should be used, but also indirectly by implementing structures supporting the sharing of knowledge through these activities. We have found the efficient use of these management "tools" to have a substantial impact on these activities and how they are performed as they contribute to a dynamic system of sharing of knowledge. We illustrate the direction of how management, structures and KM activities are affected below (See Figure 3).

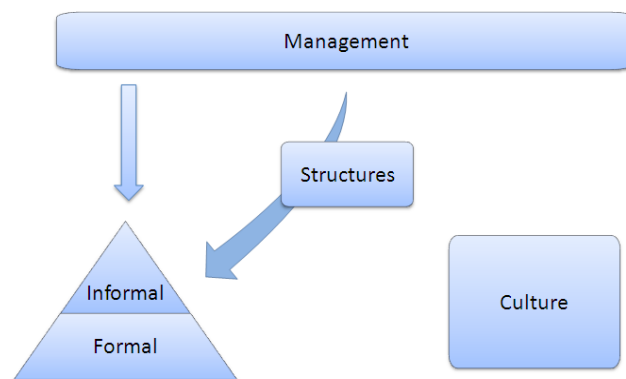


Figure 3. Management and Structures affecting KM Activities

5.2 Culture

5.2.1 A Culture Enabling Knowledge Management

(Baladi 1999) claims that a knowledge sharing culture is recurrently mentioned as an enabler. We've noticed that people are willing to give help and share knowledge and in turn people don't feel hindered to seek knowledge; there is openness between colleagues. Therefore, it is evident that there is a strong culture.

Prior to the structuring of the KM system 2006, Crescore has been using informal activities as a way of knowledge transfer. The structuring of the KM system in 2006 was solely a result of the organization growing, thus it was impossible to know who was knowledgeable in different areas. So, it was not structured due to previous inefficient transfer of knowledge through informal activities. Therefore we conclude that a knowledge sharing culture has existed since the beginning of Crescore, prior to the KM system, to make the informal activities work efficiently. The challenge has been to keep, and strengthen the knowledge sharing culture and not become impersonal whilst growing.

So how has Crescore been able to maintain and develop a knowledge sharing culture following as they grew? We believe that several enablers come into play. Ejenäs and Werr (2005) mention factors such as trust and a leniency towards making mistakes. Knowledge transfer between colleagues interacting face-to-face requires an openness and vulnerability (sharing knowledge by directing colleagues in ways that projects are supposed to be performed may lead to that person being held accountable in case of problems) and thus a bond of trust. Trust between colleagues is evident at Crescore, since they see no repercussions in seeking and sharing knowledge, which is an indication of a strong organizational culture. There is also a leniency towards making mistakes, especially towards those that are new to the organization. They are not held accountable during a learn-up process; especially in areas where it cannot be required for the consultant to possess the knowledge and competence to manage a project, problem or issue on their own.

5.2.2 The Influence of Management and Structures on Culture

Other enablers that contribute to the knowledge sharing culture are an effect of the influence from management and the structures formed. A significant factor contributing to the strengthening of the culture is the management making sure to recruit the right type of people to form efficient mixes of competences and at the same time make sure their personality characteristics and values are in accordance to Crescore's values and culture. This requires finding people that are *willing* to learn and have the competence to, not only execute projects successfully, but also to be able and *willing* to share learning's and knowledge from projects proficiently. Thus withholding information to a personal advantage should not be within a consultant's personal nature. As the organization grows it is necessary to diversify competence and therefore recruit specialists within different areas. Due to specializations it is globally known that people are not competent in all areas, which eases the process of seeking help and thus contributes to a culture of openness.

None of the interviewees' saw any potential in withholding information and knowledge to form an expertise and to form a dependency from the organization. As a result, all knowledge is transferred and thus there is no fear of losing a key asset possessing key information as argued by Morris (2001). We believe a determining factor to this is the performance reviews that are held semi-annually. Robertson (2001) describes the importance of motivation and incentive systems in forms of formal and informal rewards as an enabler to efficient knowledge transfer. The performance reviews with counselors lead to salary discussion and promotions, and since it directly evaluates work performance and contribution in knowledge transfer, it acts as a formal incentive system towards actively partaking in KM. Thus the structure of performance reviews directly influences the way that people handle knowledge. This can arguably be seen as a *reinforcement* activity where it promotes the participating in the KM activities, as mentioned by Hargadon and Bechky (2006). Another factor contributing to the elimination of expertise and dependency is the "way people do business" at Crescore, as mentioned by Kaplan and Thomson-Reed (2007), which has incorporated KM as an active process in the natural workflow. The consultants are not assessed after sales orientation but instead on work performance. Work performance is enhanced by proficiently using the knowledge that is available (by seeking and sharing knowledge actively) which contributes to an open work atmosphere and the strengthening of a knowledge sharing culture. The business process is smartly designed, since being assessed on project sales would instead promote withholding information.

A final factor affecting the culture is the education that is offered. We believe that the internal courses that are mandatory to each employee indirectly affect culture. The internal courses (see 4.5.3 Education) provide a basis for how work is supposed to be performed within the organization. Especially noteworthy is the course introducing KM. As mentioned earlier, not only are aspects concerning *how* to contribute to KM is brought up but also *why* it is important. Crescore values such as openness and culture are conveyed, which gives the employee an underlying understanding as to *why* it is necessary for a person to actively document in the database as well as participating in the knowledge sharing group activities. Thus they receive a common understanding regarding the importance of a knowledge sharing culture.

To conclude, we've identified several underlying enablers such as management (in forms of recruiting the right people), structures (in forms of performance reviews with counselors and education) and organizational leniency (allowing mistakes) directly and indirectly affect and strengthen the knowledge sharing culture. The key result from the knowledge sharing culture is

getting the employees to be *willing* to participate in knowledge transfer. We illustrate the direction of how management, structures and culture are influenced below (See Figure 4). Furthermore Werr (in press) mentions that it is not evident what components contribute to a knowledge sharing culture. We conclude that a knowledge sharing culture can not be forced by management's direct imposition. The management can merely provide underlying enablers that reinforces the knowledge sharing culture. Hence, culture is quite intangible and difficult to quantify. As a result we illustrate the culture as a cloud that is difficult to grasp.

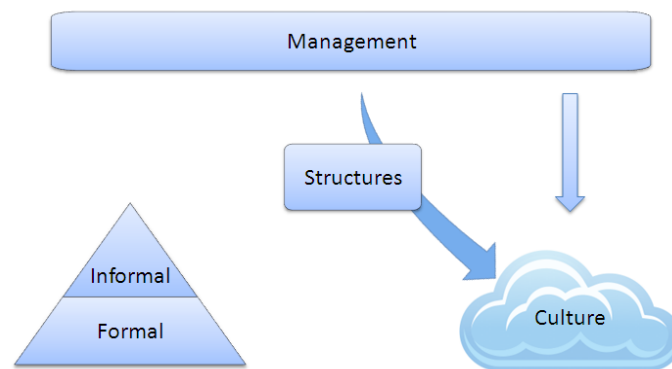


Figure 4. Management and Structures affecting Culture

5.3 The Interplay between Knowledge Management Activities and Culture

We've discovered that the KM activities affect culture and in turn culture affects the knowledge management activities. First we will describe how each aspect affects the other leading to a synergy affect of both.

5.3.1 Knowledge Management Activities Influencing Culture

The formal activities, along with the informal activities strengthen the culture in several ways. It is mainly due how the knowledge sharing group activities have been structured. As mentioned, the focus is not primarily on the knowledge transfer during these sessions but instead on the social aspect of getting to know colleagues as well as *having fun*. Recall the value of *Team Play* mentioned by Dougherty and Takacs (2004). Roles are given (who is to present what topic in lunch presentations) which is followed by loosely controlled discussions. A clear objective is thus given, yet there are no formal rules that must be followed, which leads to a positive and creative atmosphere. The group activities become a combination of team work and having fun - Team Play. These activities are framed as *play* rather than work which reframe people's attitudes and motivations during the participation of knowledge sharing group activities. Interviewees have mentioned that without the

knowledge sharing group activities they would not know each other nearly as well since there are otherwise very few opportunities to develop personal relationships. The informal activities also contribute to social bonding to a certain extent, but recall that the informal activities would not occur regularly, and thus provide a forum for social bonding, without formal activities (See 5.1.1 Formal Activities as a Foundation for the Informal Activities) This, in combination with *Team Play* has ultimately led to a team spirit and social bond where each individual employee feels they play an important role in the knowledge transfer process between colleagues. As a result, participating in KM activities becomes *fun* which strengthens the knowledge sharing culture since consultants become more *willing* to share knowledge.

The argument of efficient knowledge transfer between groups during group activities can be supported by the four sets of interrelating activities mentioned by Hargadon and Bechky (2006). During discussions in lunch presentations employees *reflectively reframes* meaning that each individual respectfully attends to and builds upon the comments given by those presenting knowledge topics in lunch presentations or conferences. As consultants know that comments are always given respectfully, there is no fear of being scrutinized when sharing knowledge. This in combination of actively seeking and sharing knowledge leads to a *reinforcement* of the organizational values and a strengthening of a knowledge sharing culture.

Important to note is that the formal activities were not as essential when Crescore was relatively small due to fewer employees which led to a natural closeness. Hence, we claim that the knowledge sharing culture within Crescore would not be as strong today (due to their growth) without the use of formal activities. To conclude we've found several ways in how KM activities affect and influence Culture (See Figure 5).

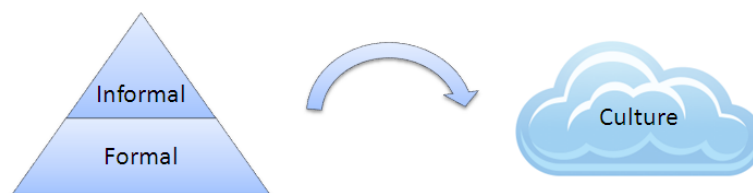


Figure 5. KM Activities influencing Culture

5.3.2 Culture Influencing Knowledge Management Activities

Just as KM activities influence culture, we believe the same is true vice versa – culture influences KM activities. Informal activities such as spontaneous hallway meetings and mass mails would not occur with a sense of openness and trust. Equally, we believe that culture has an effect on the formal activities. The formal tools available facilitate the finding of information, but for knowledge to be documented and handled in a proper way is a cultural question. As Baladi (1999) mentions, the employee must be *willing* to partake and share knowledge as well as be *willing* to seek knowledge when needed. Even though there are methods and templates to be used such as the documents in the database as well as the knowledge sharing group activities, knowledge will not be codified and personalized without a knowledge sharing culture. Once again, we refer to Hansen and Haas (2001) theory of efficiency and quality. Firstly, a knowledge sharing culture increases the quality of discussion and thus the dissemination of personalized knowledge within the knowledge sharing group activities since people gladly participate and are *willing* to be part of the knowledge transfer. Surely, the codified information in the database increases the efficiency of knowledge transfer since it is a forum where information is gathered and thus easily accessible. The culture also affects the quality of the database since documents such as POPs and the Competence Matrix would probably not be effectively filled without *wanting to* (since employees are not paid for this). We would also like to argue that the culture increases efficiency in the way the formal and informal activities are handled in practice. For instance, the process of searching in the database for information regarding earlier projects to asking the person engaged in that specific project face-to-face is facilitated by the culture in the sense that there are no barriers between the first and second step. Since people never feel restricted in either seeking or sharing knowledge to any person in the organization, they are able to acquire the knowledge required in the fastest, most efficient way possible.

To conclude, the culture has contributed to the efficiency and quality of KM activities and plays a vital role in the way that these activities are handled by employees are handled by employees. We illustrate culture influencing KM activities below (See Figure 6).

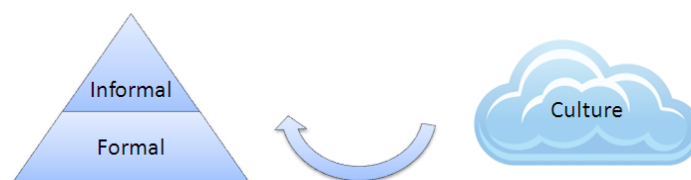


Figure 6. Culture influencing KM activities.

5.3.3 The Synergy Effect

As a result of the above, we see that the KM activities and culture influence each other. These factors form a cycle, where each of the two constantly affect, influence and strengthen the other, forming a synergy effect. By synergy effect, we mean that the two aspects would not be as strong acting independently as they are when functioning together.

We can illustrate the synergy with an example describing the different steps of the cycle. In the first step we see that the social nature and having fun in knowledge sharing group activities leads to a social bond and trust, thus strengthening the openness and vulnerability within the culture. This strengthening of the culture in turn leads to a second step of better efficiency and quality of the KM activities (informal and formal). As a result consultants feel that the knowledge sharing group activities are rewarding since they learn something valuable which ultimately promotes *wanting* to learn and inevitably *willing* to share knowledge.

Even though the synergy effect can be illustrated in a step by step cycle, we believe that most steps occur simultaneously. It is an ongoing process where culture becomes the fuel that KM activities feed off, and in turn the activities become the fire that strengthens the culture (See Figure 7). This formalizes the final step in our model to how KM is handled successfully at Crescore.

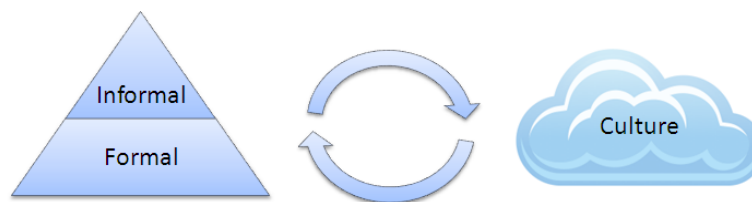


Figure 7. The Synergy Effect between KM activities and Culture

6. Conclusion

In this thesis we've studied the Knowledge Management system at Crescore; a management consulting firm. By interviewing employees we've identified and analyzed key factors that are most essential for a successful transfer of knowledge and experience. The key factors that we identified were: Management, Structure, KM Activities and Culture. Within KM Activities there are formal and informal activities. Combining these four aspects formed our model that illustrates how the KM system and its including factors function within Crescore (See Figure 8), which we've supported with previous KM theories.

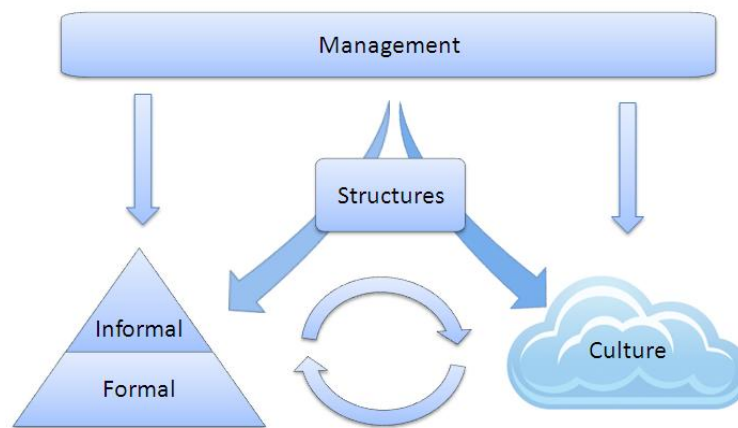


Figure 8. Key factors to successful KM at Crescore

There are several directions in which the four factors affect each other. Management has influenced formal activities by structuring the format of these activities to function in a certain way. Management is also the source for the creation of different structures such as KAM teams, Counselors and Education. The structures include several enablers that promote knowledge transfer. We found that the enablers influence both KM activities and culture by promoting knowledge transfer participation through the business process (knowledge transfer is a part of the natural workflow) and incentive systems. Management also promotes a knowledge sharing culture through organizational leniency and recruiting the right mix of people. Hence, management is the underlying factor that allow the remaining three to exist.

We discovered that the formal activities facilitated the use of informal activities and are consequently the foundation for the informal structures to function efficiently. Furthermore, the KM activities

influenced the culture due to the way these activities were structured (by focusing on social bonding and *having fun*).

Enablers from management, structures and the use of KM activities make the knowledge sharing culture at Crescore. The culture has influenced the KM activities (both formally structured and informal) by increasing efficiency and quality of their use. The tools available (KM activities) facilitate the finding of information, but for knowledge to be documented and handled in a proper way is a cultural question. Hence, culture can be defined as the vital enabler to successful knowledge transfer that consists of several underlying enablers.

Finally, we found that KM activities and culture formed a synergy effect where each factor influenced and inevitably enhanced the other. The ways in which they influence each other is arguably a simultaneous process. Thus we believe that neither factor would function to the same extent without the other factor supporting it.

7. Discussion

In this section we will discuss possible implications of our findings on Crescore, and how it can be useful for other companies as well as our contribution to previous research. This will lead to a discussion of future research on the topic.

We've found that management activities, structure and culture are the key factors for Crescore's successful KM handling. There has been an apparent culture since the start-up of Crescore, and their challenge has been to maintain and strengthen this culture during their growth. This has been done by the structuring of a KM system. We would like to argue that the most vital factor for its success is the culture promoting knowledge sharing. This has been proved by discussing that the efficient use of KM activities are a result of the culture, thus the KM activities would not provide the same effect independently without such a culture. This leads us to question the previous theory of enablers that facilitate the use of KM by overcoming barriers. The theory has handled culture as an equal enabler along with business processes, incentive systems and other enablers. However, we argue that these structural enablers are merely an underlying foundation that ultimately strengthens the most essential enabler that is culture. Thus we believe previous research has undervalued the importance of the culture as an enabler.

Previous research tends to focus on either formal or informal KM activities and to some extent their interplay by claiming they are complementary. Other research also mentions that a knowledge sharing culture enables and facilitates use of KM, but there is little study describing *how* KM activities are influenced and enhanced by the use of concrete examples as we've done in this study. Additionally, previous research does discuss how KM activities, in turn, influence and enhance the culture; thus taking into account the synergy effect that is created between the two factors.

Furthermore we would like to contribute to the theory of what makes a knowledge sharing culture. As we've mentioned, there is little theory on this topic and it is difficult to determine factors that promote this knowledge sharing culture. We've found the recruitment of the right type of people to be an essential factor contributing to the culture. This, not only to have a mix of different competences, but primarily to have the right mix of personalities that coincide well with Crescore's values and culture. By recruiting people that are willing to take on new projects and keen on learning contributes to the elimination of barriers such as withholding information to form an expertise and create an organizational dependency on key people. We also argue that the knowledge sharing group activities can be seen as another essential factor that makes a knowledge sharing culture. Besides

knowledge transfer during these activities, there is also a significant focus on social bonding and *having fun* which contributes to people be *willing* to participate in the knowledge transfer.

As Crescore will evolve and grow further we believe it will be most vital to maintain the knowledge sharing culture. Growth will inevitably lead to diversification of competences as they acquire more clients and projects and thus encounter new issues and problems associated with these projects. This in turn will lead to more diversified teams. Thus it is of essence that people are *willing* to share knowledge as consultants become more and more specialized in different areas to perform successfully within new projects.

It is evident that the KM system at Crescore functions very efficiently since there are no real barriers that hinder the knowledge transfer flow. Employees always manage to acquire the essential information needed. Hence, we would like to argue that the model can be viewed as a template for successfully handling KM in terms of growth for new firms that are in the start-up phase. By early recognizing the importance of culture to the success of KM they can work on forming a knowledge sharing culture at an early stage. As firms grow and enter a phase where KM systems are developed, the culture will in many ways facilitate the use of the KM system. In contrast, we don't believe that this model can be used as a template for firms that already have evolved into mid-sized companies. The complexity of a company's culture is both difficult to understand, and to change. If a knowledge sharing culture is not developed since the start-up phase it will be most difficult to evolve this culture after having a certain number of employees. We believe this to be primarily due to the mix of people at the organization. Perhaps personalities that coincide with a knowledge sharing culture were not taken into account during recruitment, and thus it is difficult to motivate employees to be *willing* to share and participate in knowledge transfer and KM activities with underlying enablers alone (such as business process and incentive systems).

It is also well worth noting a few possible limitations of our findings. We can question the authenticity of answers given in interviews as some questions may be regarded as too personal to answer objectively. Primarily we refer to questions such as benefits of withholding information to form expertise. Consultants may see personal negative repercussions in answering truthfully if withholding knowledge has indeed occurred. However, not one of the employees gave any hint that this would be the case.

To validate our findings further it could be beneficial to partake in formal activities as an observer and observe firsthand how formal and informal activities function in practice.

7.1 Future research

The model we've formed is primarily applicable to new start-up firms reaching an organizational size that is equivalent to Crescore. However, we do not know to what extent this model will hold as firms evolve and grow further to becoming large multinational organizations such as Ernst & Young and McKinsey. It would therefore be interesting to research larger organizations and evaluate their key factors that contribute to successful KM. As an organization grows in employees and clients it is not certain that the organizational culture is the primary factor for successful KM handling. There may be other incentive systems that play a more significant role. Such research can provide a template to handling KM successfully for firms of Crescore's size that evolve and grow further.

Crescore's organization is essentially limited to the office in Stockholm since they've only 3 other employees abroad. A difference between a company like Crescore and larger multinational organizations is that the larger organizations have many offices in different countries. If a knowledge sharing culture is a vital factor in these organizations as well, it would be interesting to see how they've managed to create an organizational culture between different offices that coincide with the organizations global values and goals

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8.3 Interviewees

Aldensand, Jenny. Manager and KAM-team leader for Swedbank at Crescore, 14/3 – 2011 (P. Adamsson & P. Åkesson, Interviewers)

Eliasson, Sofie. Junior consultant at Crescore, 15/3 – 2011 (P. Adamsson & P. Åkesson, Interviewers)

Fordner, Ingela. Partner and Human Resources manager at Crescore, 1/3 – 2011 (P. Adamsson & P. Åkesson, Interviewers)

Krabbe Rosén, Sophie. Consultant at Crescore, 15/3 – 2011 (P. Adamsson & P. Åkesson, Interviewers)

Pålshammar, Karin. Knowledge manager (responsible for Crescore's KM system) at Crescore, 1/3 – 2011 (P. Adamsson & P. Åkesson, Interviewers)

Sellgren, Mårten. CEO and Partner at Crescore, 18/3 - 2011 (P. Adamsson & P. Åkesson, Interviewers)

Sundberg, Erik. Senior consultant at Crescore, 14/3 – 2011 (P. Adamsson & P. Åkesson, Interviewers)

9. Appendix 1. Interview questionnaire/protocol

9.1 Interview guide – Knowledge manager

- Does Crescore have a developed KM system? Why was the system developed?
- What does KM mean to you and Crescore? Why is KM valuable to Crescore?
- How was the KM system developed over time?
- Which advantages/disadvantages do you see with KM?
- How do you view knowledge? Tacit/Explicit?
- Which methods and tools do you use to handle tacit/explicit knowledge?
- Are templates used in your KM system?
- Do you have specific activities for your KM system? How are these activities structured?
- What is the reason for holding KM activities on a regular basis?
- How are employees motivated at Crescore?
- How are newly hired employees educated?
- Is there a form of mentorship?

9.2 Interview guide – Consultants and Managers

- What does KM mean to you?
- How do you contribute to the database? Which documents do you fill in?
- Do you participate in other KM activities?
- How often do you answer questions directly to colleagues during off hours? At work?
- When was the last time you sought information? How did you go about? Why did you search for information?
- Do you ever feel hindered to seeking information in a certain way? Examples?
- Are there specific persons you prefer to ask first? Why?
- When was the last time you shared information? What made you share information?
- Have you ever felt restricted to share information? Why?
- Have you ever felt that others do not share information you seek? Examples?
- Can you see any drawbacks/advantages of not sharing information?
- How do you personally try to promote knowledge sharing?

9.3 Interview guide – Partners

- Can you tell us a bit about Crescore's background? How many employees?
- What does the hierarchy look like?
- Which client's do Crescore have?
- What are the most common problems that client's need help with?
- What does your work process look like?
- Why is KM valuable at Crescore? Any parameter that is specific for Crescore?
- What is management's roll in KM? How do you try to promote KM?
- Do you consider the organization to have entrepreneurial characteristics?
- What is management's role in the structuring of activities? Why were the activities structured in a certain way?
- Which reasons/downsides do you see for holding KM activities on a regular basis?
- Are there other sources of motivation or incentives for knowledge sharing?
- Why do you think employees want to participate in knowledge transfer?