

Case Study - Knowledge Transfer Roadblocks - Released 4 October 2021

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Okay, welcome back I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn, this is Inside Exec. Today we have a case study and it's a case study about knowledge transfer basically about knowledge sharing. We've talked individually about those topics previously, but we want to bring it into a case study which I know happens in organizations. I've had it happen to me in corporate organizations as well as charity and recreational organizations. So I know it's out there, I know it's an issue for people who feel responsible about the knowledge they've gained in organizations and they want to share it. So what we're looking at is when you are the knowledge owner in a team and you have a new management team come in and you are more than happy and prepared and willing and wanting to share your knowledge and your expertise and your experience, but it is not wanted or actively refused on the basis of organizational politics or personal interaction.

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I'll just give you one example from my experience, I was consulting for an organization that had bought out another organization in the construction industry that had previously been a competitor of theirs and quite active competitors. It's a particular product where there's very active competition. So I was engaged to go into the newly acquired organization by the parent company and just find out what they were doing how they were managing things. The managing director of that organization took a particular dislike to me being there. I think

based on the fact that he was feeling that I was there as a stooge or a spy for the parent organization, when really all I wanted to go through was their processes so that I could feed them into the overall quality system. He used to stand at the door of my office and shout and like literally shout at me for any reason at all, you know, just a bully generally, or if we were in a board meeting and I had finished my presentation, which I did each month and before I even got to the door, his parting comment was thank goodness she's going now.

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He just wasn't interested in the knowledge that I had and he didn't want the organization to take on the knowledge I had because he was in a position of power and he had wanted to maintain that control, I'm sure. And so you didn't hear any of the knowledge that I was trying to pass on to the rest of the group, the rest of the group did, and to their credit individually, they would come to me and find out things that they needed to know. But they were scared of crossing him because he was the managing director. It's a very difficult situation to work around if you are in a team where they are scared or the person who has taken a dislike doesn't want the knowledge that they can't work around. And I was lucky in that situation that they could work around it. We still got the job done. Let's hear what she's got to say about fixing that. Well, I think the first thing is to think about the person who's wanting to impart the knowledge. They're willing and they have the knowledge and they want to share it now.

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Why? Why do you, what does that person feel that the real reason is because they care about the company. They care about the results. They're not there about personalities, they're not there about politics. They're there to get a good result. They're there to share it with other people because they know that will help in that sense. So stick to that. As a reminder, it's not about confronting the new management, it's not about causing trouble. It's not about all of that. The manager in this case sounds like a bully. He sounds like he just doesn't want to know because regardless even if you were giving him a gem or you're not giving him a gem, he's not interested. So, the answer is the rest of the team, the rest of the team will be grateful and interested. They might not on the surface because they don't want to be seen to be going against the new management and all the politics that go with that.

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So doing it in a quiet sense and giving the information to the right people at the right time would be the key. The key also is to sometimes recognize timing is the most important. So you can't do it now because it's going to be rejected. They're not going to see why are you trying to give it to them? So for that person to think all right then this is not the right time. It does mean they're on the wrong track. It does mean they're going to go partially the wrong way and sometimes we just have to accept that for the time being as frustrating as it is and wait for them to catch up. And I found that personally very hard to do because I want to show them that no, no, don't you don't have to waste another two months. Look, look, this will happen if you go there with all the good intent. I have learned that sometimes you can't just tell and give the answer. Sometimes

you've got to wait till the person is in a situation or the team where they want other answers and then when you can slowly and let them ask in a sense and give them little bits at the time, as long as they are open.

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I'm happy to give it all if I was that person also, however you sometimes have to do that. The other thing is to build a relationship with Mr Bully at the same time, not to let them bully you, and obviously I'm not going to go into the bullying because there's a whole lot of HR and solutions and what's acceptable, that's not I'm not covering in this one, but again, to start working with that person, get them to know that whatever they're thinking about you and the role that you're trying to play is not that let them see their actions and sometimes what better way to see it other than the facts and other people speaking for you, other people saying, you know whatever you might think, that's not how I see this person, you know, it was their idea and why have we solved that other problem? You know, it's because of the knowledge they brought to this table from their experience and so on.

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So I think it's not gonna be easy because these things are not logical, they're not factual, they're more emotional, they're more political and it really is a very, very stressful time to go through to the point where you think, well I'm trying to do all the right things so I can't deal with this anymore and walk now. If that's what you decide to do, do it for the right reason, don't let them push you out, pick your time and what you want and

when you want to go or stay, that's your call and shouldn't be pushed by people. But there does come a time. Sometimes that is the right answer. But firstly try and work with like minds other people who can see the politics or a person like I know that if I was trying to do something and I keep getting it wrong, I tried everything and keep getting it wrong, even though I don't want to admit it because of management and go to that person who is willing to give me their experience and knowledge.

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I would go there, I would go there. Even the risk is that I get in on the bad side of management, but my thinking would be, if I get the right result, then that's my recovery, that's more important. And then if they want to, if I'm going to get in trouble for dealing with that person, then I'll face it then for now, I'm trying to do a job. I'm trying to get a result. And the most important thing is my customers, my shareholders and stakeholders and I want to do my part. So I'm not holding up the rest of the team and delaying it. I don't want to play the political game. I'll deal with it if the politics end up getting in my way. I think the things that come out of that for me about emotional intelligence, we've done podcast previously on emotional intelligence and emotional decision making and I encourage you to have a listen to those if you haven't already because this is, it has the potential to be emotional and to make you feel all sorts of things, whether you're the person who won't take the advice from someone else or whether you're the one that's got the knowledge.

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But also these days there is far more opportunity for you to get knowledge recorded somewhere. I have done most recently with one of the organizations where I knew that changeover was going to happen is that I got all of the things that had been part of that knowledge build up recorded and placed in an area where everyone of the new management team could access it. So they didn't have to interact with a person who might have been carrying that knowledge. All that knowledge was there independently so that they can access it without having to worry. And very interestingly in one of Nancy Giordano's podcast that she did with us, she talked about that very activity happening with artificial intelligence and the oil rigs in the Northern Hemisphere and that some of the workers on those oil rigs were just so inherently good at the job just naturally good. You know, it was the sound in the pipe wasn't right.

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So they were trying to transfer that knowledge into artificial intelligence so that there is a continuation of that knowledge and that means that no one has to go and sit with someone who's been a few years and say, well how did you know that that wasn't right? Or this wasn't right. It will be stored somewhere independently. And so maybe not to that extent not getting artificial intelligence involved just yet. But having somewhere where your knowledge is available to everyone. So they don't have to come to you to ask questions and then they can access it whenever they need to or if you are the person who doesn't want to ask someone else about this act because for whatever reason you're uncomfortable with that,

then you've got somewhere you can go for that information now, it's like, what do we do now with google? Google? I don't want to go to the doctor, I'll just check on google first things first and see if someone can tell me what's wrong with me. Then you feel worse but that aside it is the same principle is having the information somewhere.

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The knowledge somewhere that everyone can go to without having to bring in the politics or the personal issues. I totally agree about any decent organization will not allow to have a single person dependency and that's why nobody should have to just go to that person to get the knowledge. So I agree Kim that what you said about documenting it, Having it there for everyone regardless to what's happening in the organization is the most important thing. And also in addition to the reference to Nancy Giordano we had actually a session on knowledge transfer early in the podcasts. So again, it might be worth looking if you're interested in that. What I might do is a little link to the knowledge transfer episode as well because I know with nearly 250 episodes, sometimes it can be hard to find the one that we've talked about, so I'm putting it at the bottom of this post as well.

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But for now, I think we've covered the topic pretty well for you. I'm Kim Baillie she's Fulyana Orsborn, this is Inside. Exec.