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A model for assessing the coherence of companies' knowledge strategy

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Abstract
This paper proposes a strategic model for assessing the coherence between companies' knowledge strategies and their business strategies as well as in their competitive and organisational contexts. In analysing knowledge management literature, we locate three principal strategies: (1) knowledge development (internal or external), (2) knowledge sharing (codification or personalisation) and (3) knowledge exploitation (internal or external). We then position the three strategies and six related policies in the context-content-process dimensions of Pettigrew's model to create a useful framework for strategic analysis and a model to assess the coherence of companies' knowledge strategy. The model can be used to evaluate how an existing knowledge strategy aligns with a company's characteristics and to formulate and implement a coherent knowledge strategy based on the current competitive environment, organisational context and business strategy.
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Keywords: knowledge strategy; business strategy; strategic model; knowledge development; knowledge sharing; knowledge exploitation

Introduction

Over the last two decades, managers, consultants and scholars have increasingly been turning attention to issues related to knowledge management (KM), demonstrating a particular interest in strategies and corporate policies that could be more effective in preserving and developing the intangible assets that determine and increase companies' competitive advantages.

This stream of studies on KM is inextricably linked to the resource-based theory (or resource-based view) of the firm. According to this theory, a company's growth and performance are influenced by its resources and capabilities (Penrose, 1959; Wernerfelt, 1984). Organisational knowledge, represented by know-how, culture, routines and experiences, is characterised by its inimitability and generates added value for customers and scarcity for competitors (Barney, 1991), thereby creating a competitive advantage. Competitive advantage is not only linked to the presence of a high level of know-how and specific or inimitable knowledge within the company but is also fundamental to the creation of new knowledge that is useful to constantly further the existing competitive advantage (Grant & Spender, 1996; Alavi & Leidner, 2001). For these reasons, KM, defined as management of all processes involving knowledge (Nonaka, 1994; Quintas *et al*, 1997; Waltz, 2003; Watson & Hewett, 2006), has attracted increasing interest in recent years.

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