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How Knowledge Management Strategies Resolving Issues at Small and Mid-markets

Microsoft Norway Microsoft is one of the world's leading IT-companies in software, services, and solutions. The company was established in 1975 by Bill Gates and Paul Allen. Microsoft Norway is a subsidiary that was established in 1990. Microsoft Norway is a part of the Sales, Marketing, Services, IT, & Operations Group (SMSG), which spans all Microsoft products, services, and technologies. Microsoft Norway works with sales and marketing of software, customer support and services within the business divisions Windows Client, Information Worker, Server & Tools, and Microsoft Business Solutions. There is no product or software development in Norway—apart from the Norwegian company FAST, which became a Microsoft subsidiary in 2008. Microsoft Norway works with sales, mainly through their more than 2000 partners. The most important task for Microsoft Norway is to provide their partners with the best prerequisites and up-to-date knowledge in order to sell Microsoft products.

The Norwegian organization consists of four large departments, four smaller departments, and STAB functions. Enterprise Partner Group (EPG) and Small Midmarket Solutions & Partners (SMS&P) are two sales departments working with different customer segments. Business Marketing Operations (BMO) both takes care of promotions, campaigns, information about products and coordinates sales and marketing across the organization. Services are the largest department and employs technical consultants working with partners to install, integrate, and support products for customers. Development Evangelism (DPE), Entertainment and Devices (EDD), Original Equipment Factory (OEM), and Consumer & Online (C&O) are all smaller departments. In addition, there are STAB functions: Human Resources (HR), Public Relations (PR), Finance, and Customer and Partner Experience (CPE). Organizational chart have interviewed three employees from the HR department regarding strategies and tools used for learning and development in Microsoft. Regarding the investigation of how knowledge workers perceive their learning, Interviewed employees working as Microsoft Norge SMSG BMO Business Marketing Organization EPG Enterprise Partner Group STAB HR, PR, Finance, CPE SMS&P small midmarket solutions & partners Services Technical consultants DPE EDD OEM C&O STU Special Technical Unit 12 technical experts in the sales departments and as



product managers in BMO. Sales process Microsoft Norway is a sales organization. To understand the structures of work processes, it is important to know the sales process. As mentioned above, the customer segment is divided in two sales departments according to the size of the customer groups. The Enterprise Partner Group (EPG) targets the 160 largest customers.

Small mid-market solution partners (SMSP) works with partners who in turn sell to small and midsize customers. Within each department, there are five or six customer teams. In EPG, the customer teams work directly with the largest customers. One team has responsibility for one or a few customers. In SMSP the customer teams work mainly with partners. The customer teams consist of an account manager who is responsible for the customer, and an account technical specialist who has control of the customer's IT structure. Connected to the EPG department is the Special Technical Unit (STU), which consists of 12 people. The STU employees work as experts in different products and solutions. They are involved in the sale process by the account manager, and their task is to complement the customer team in the sales process by providing expertise in specific fields. The majority of the informants in this case study is employed in STU. Sales process EPG SMSP 160 largest customers.

Small and mid-size customers Partners STU Microsoft Norge SMSG Employees in Norway Microsoft has about 250 permanent employees and approximately 70 external consultants (hired from a recruiting company) working at the Norwegian office. Around 70% of the employees are men and the average age is 37 years. Higher education is a criterion for employment, preferably at the master degree level. Before hiring, employees are evaluated by personality and ability tests, in addition to being interviewed by the closest manager, mid-manager, Human Resource representative and, when relevant, a technical specialist. Microsoft has a salary model where performance-related pay constitutes a significant part. All employees take part in a bonus system, and when they are hired they receive shares in the company. When starting at Microsoft, employees take part in a local Norwegian introduction course on the available knowledge and New Hire Academy, which is a global program for helping new employees to identify what is important to learn in order to succeed at Microsoft.

Human resource strategies the organization consists of standardized professions, or so called work roles, which are the same worldwide. Examples of work roles are Solution Sales



Specialist, Partner Technology Advisors and Product Manager. Microsoft states that when evaluating a potential employee, the candidate should first be evaluated with regard to a long-term career in the company, and secondly in accordance with the actual profession. This evaluation process implies a knowledge strategy in which people often move between different professions within the company. On the website Microsoft.com one can read a statement from an employee named Ian: It's been new roles, new titles, and new challenges every year or so. I finally stopped putting my title on my business card years ago because it was getting out-of-date so quickly. Role-guide and career plan All employees have a role guide, which is a description of the job--its requirements, goals, and training--in accordance with the employee's work role. In addition, permanent employees have a career plan in which they explicate what their ambitions are in Microsoft, and how they intend to fulfill them.

The career path options are in general to focus on an area of expertise, or move across functions or businesses to experience the breadth of different positions. On Microsoft's website, Careers (Microsoft.com) there is a clear focus on career development and the multiple possibilities the company offers. Our career model is a framework and set of tools that gives you a consistent way to manage your career, identify opportunities for progress, and document your results. The model will help you understand how to take control of your career and provide context for the vast resources we offer to help you succeed. As part of your development, you'll have the option to engage in some 2,000 training programs taught by instructors from leading educational institutions and offered online, virtually, or in classrooms around the globe. You can't beat the level of investment we place on career development. (Microsoft.com, 2010a). In August of every year, the employee and the manager work out a development plan for the employee, Career plan for an employee at Microsoft Norway Development plan. The development plan includes goals and commitments that the employee shall achieve in both sale and profits and in training and personal development. The plan is meant as a tool for both the employee and the manager to be able to measure performance. During the year, employees have an appraisal meeting with their manager once a month. This is for communication, information, and feedback on the development plan. Talent Management Cycle The talent management cycle shows how the development plan is followed up during the year. The MS Poll is a survey/study examining employee's relations with their managers, teams and units, how they feel about their work role and development, customer



relations, and balance between work life and personal life. The results of this case study form the foundation for actions and changes in the organization. Manager feedback is the employees' opportunity to give systematic feedback to their manager on how the manager-employee relation is working out. It gives an overview of the three tools--role-guide, career plan, and development plan. It categorizes the purpose of the tools, what they contain, and how they are associated to learning strategies: Tools for knowledge management Purpose Content Training Role guide Identify the employees role in the organizational structure Segment (SMSG) Profession (Sales and Technical Sales) Discipline( Solution Sales) Career Stage (Manager) Region (Norway) Customer segment (EPG), Online courses required for the work role. Online courses recommended for the work role. In a long-term perspective, Career plan Develop employee's career. Employee's ambitions Development options possible job opportunities explicate how to reach the ambitions and to gain experience and knowledge for new job opportunities. Development plan Control and measurements of work performance Work commitments and goals. Subjects for personal training and development. Training and development in current work role Learning in Microsoft Learning/training initiatives for employees in Microsoft can be divided into three dimensions: 1. Courses and training specialized for the work-role. These are mainly online courses/e-learning, but also can be external courses and conferences. Face-to-face learning on the job. Learning by experience, interaction with colleagues, Friday lunch presentations. Learning by seeking information when needed. SharePoint libraries with product presentations, auto-groups, wikis, blogs. Courses There are more than 2000 courses and training programs to maintain employee competence levels and ensure that all employees are up to date regarding products and development in Microsoft.

The various types of courses are:

- e-learning, where one first watches an information/instruction video and then takes a test
- live video meeting/conferences where an instructor gives a lecture and employees all over the world follow on video/communicator
- podcasts and videos of presentations and courses for streaming and download
- traditional classroom learning with internal or external lectures

All role guides contain courses that are required for the employee in a specific profession. In addition, there are several courses recommended for the profession. These courses are typically web-based e-learning and deal with themes such as products, updates and new features, customer relations, and ethics. The required courses are always present in the employees training plan, which is a part of the role guide. The courses should be completed by



a certain date and are arranged in levels 100, 200, 300, or 400 according to how advanced they are within their theme. If the employee is familiar with the content in the course, it is possible to take a test-out, which is a knowledge test to see if it is necessary to take the course. Below is a screenshot from an employee's training plan. (This employee is not a permanent employee, but hired from a recruiting company. That is why it says on the right hand sides that the course is not associated to competencies (development plan) and career stage (plan). Those plans involve only permanent employees) screenshot from an employee's training plan All employees have the opportunity to attend one conference a year that is suited to their professions or products. The conference can be internal, only including Microsoft employees, or external, including customers as well. At the conference, there are different sessions in learning and information. Many of these are recorded and available on videos and podcasts on Microsoft web for the rest of Microsoft staff. Breakfast meeting Every Friday, employees and managers meet for breakfast and receive the latest information about business, activities, products, and customers. The occasion is used for knowledge sharing and learning that concerns the whole organization. Once a month, the breakfast meeting is followed by a learning session where different Microsoft products are examined; for example, how to work more efficiently with available/stored knowledge and can share it further to generate more knowledge.

#### Reference:

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