UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT
EXAMINATION JUNE 2014

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

MODULE	:	**KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**
CODE	:	**BMK9X05**
DATE	:	**12 JUNE 2014 EXAMINATION**
DURATION	:	**3 HOURS**
TIME	:	**08:30 – 11:30**
TOTAL MARKS	:	**100**
EXAMINER(S)	:	**Dr Z BARNARD**
(EXTERNAL) MODERATOR	:	**Dr M de Kock (Da Vinci: Institute for Technology)**
NUMBER OF PAGES	:	**THREE PAGES**

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES:

- Read the following case study
- Please answer all the questions.
- Question papers must be handed in.
- This is an open book assessment.
- Read the questions carefully and answer only what is asked.
- Number your answers clearly.
- Write neatly and legibly.
- Structure your answers by using appropriate headings and sub-headings.

- The general University of Johannesburg policies, procedures and rules pertaining to written assessments apply to this assessment.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AT THE WORLD BANK

In October 1996, the president of the World Bank, Mr James Wolfensohn, announced that the Bank would become a knowledge bank to make development of knowledge available and accessible to everyone. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., and with offices in about 84 countries, the Bank employs about 8,000 people from all the member countries. Mr Wolfensohn's public announcement occurred at a time when the relevance of the Bank was increasingly under question. Not only did Mr Wolfensohn announce a major change in the way the Bank would work, he managed to agree with the Board on a series of changes for which an increase in budget would be required. Along with becoming the Knowledge Bank, these changes included a new, matrix-style organisation structure, deliberately creating partnerships with other donor and aid agencies, NGOs and clients; changing all IT systems to SAP; and a gradual decentralisation of decision-making and decision-makers to client countries.

In late 1996, there was no hint of knowledge in the Bank's strategy, no strategy for knowledge management or sharing, no money, no technology other than e-mail and Intranet/Internet, perhaps a handful of Communities of Practice (CoP), no measurement of knowledge – and no idea what other organisations were doing to capture and share knowledge. It took four years to get each and every one of these concepts in place.

A managing director in charge of knowledge management was appointed. The knowledge strategy was incorporated in the Strategic Compact. From the outset, employees knew that they were to share development know-how with staff, with clients, with partners. They would share it through IT systems, using the Internet. To assess staff needs, a series of focus groups with staff were held in each sector and staff were asked "What information do you need to do your jobs better?". Staff said they wanted key readings, best practices, who is who in and outside the Bank, and who is doing what and where. Colleagues from IT build the system to meet these needs, the knowledge management system, or KMS, as it became known. Within one year, there were 124 CoPs in various stages of formation. Top management started holding regular meetings with the CoP facilitators both to learn more about what was going on and to help them get their CoPs started. Some formal training needs assessment undertaken with CoP leaders revealed a desire not for team-building training as surmised, but rather a strong desire to learn from one another. The effectiveness of a CoP is dependent on the CoP facilitator, thus making shared leadership more important. The ability to find alternative sources of funding enabled the CoPs to have some independence from the Bank's sector strategy, so a so pursue innovative and novel solutions, which have gradually made their way into the accepted ways of addressing problems.

Soon after Mr Wolfensohn's announcement, a group of people who were interested in knowledge management met to share what they know. Animated conversations took place as ideas developed and knowledge was pooled. Detailed notes were taken and circulated after each meeting. The group became known as "the friends of knowledge management" and met weekly. The "friends" meetings became a formally constituted Knowledge Management Board, which has an advisory role to the Knowledge and Learning Council, a policy-making governance body chaired the managing director in charge of knowledge management.

In the late 1999s, the Knowledge and Learning Council became worried about the blossoming CoPs, and the amount of money being spent on knowledge management. They asked for an external evaluation to determine whether the KM strategy was correct, and whether or not the budget was appropriate. The review panel found that the strategy was appropriate, the Bank was spending less on its knowledge program than many other organisations, and most importantly, that the CoPs were the "heart and soul" of the knowledge program.

QUESTION 1

There are many Communities of Practice (CoP) in the World Bank and it seems if the Bank has a knowledge sharing culture. Do you think employees should be given incentives if they share knowledge? If so, what type of incentives?

[25]

QUESTION 2

Explain how the World Bank can use knowledge as a key source for competitive advantage.

[25]

QUESTION 3

Discuss how intellectual capital can be used to get a competitive advantage in the World Bank.

[25]

QUESTION 4

Knowledge Management is the foundation of value creation – all ideas, innovation and decisions originate from knowledge. Discuss how knowledge management can contribute to innovation and strategic renewal in the World Bank.

[25]

Total: [100]

---o0o---