

SHARING TACIT KNOWLEDGE WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS: EVIDENCE FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge is a changing system with interactions among experience, skills, facts, relations, values, thinking processes and meanings. Literature differentiates between the two dimensions of knowledge, explicit and tacit. Explicit knowledge can be expressed in formal and systematic language and can be shared in the form of data. ICT makes this process easy these days. Tacit knowledge is highly personal and hard to discover. Explicit knowledge and intuition, mental models, experience, crafts and skills etc., create it. It is partly or fully subconscious, deeply rooted in action, procedures, routines, commitment, ideas, value and emotions of individuals or groups. It is very difficult to turn into data. Attempts to formalize it usually lead to its damage. Even though tacit knowledge is an important asset that enables us to do practical activities, many organizations underestimate it. This article discusses the basic theoretical background of tacit knowledge, its importance for modern organization and the results of research on tacit knowledge management in organizations in the Czech Republic (Central Europe). The research is qualitative and helps us to monitor development of knowledge management activities in our country. It started in 2004, continues to this day and currently provides the experience of 145 organizations.

JEL: M19

KEYWORDS: knowledge, tacit knowledge, apprenticeship, communities, storytelling

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents results of research on tacit knowledge management and sharing carried out in organizations in the Czech Republic (Central Europe). Having started in 2004, the research provides us with a detailed analysis of knowledge management and management of tacit knowledge sharing in 145 organizations. Knowledge is a major creative force of the knowledge society. Its potential can be fully exploited only if proper knowledge management is introduced. An important task of knowledge management is to optimize the flow, creation and exploitation of knowledge in an organization. Knowledge management must cover both explicit and tacit knowledge in relation to the specific needs of an organization, in relation to its strategic objectives, culture, principles and habits.

Our research shows that organizations in the Czech Republic still do not understand the importance of tacit knowledge and that they don't know how to work with it and how to manage it. Only 19% of reviewed organizations know and use all three tools for tacit knowledge sharing intentionally; apprenticeship (we use the term coaching for this paper; see below), communities of practice and storytelling. Organizations have a great reserve in the application of methodology of individual tools. For example, employees are usually coached by their direct managers (44%); coaches are not rewarded for their effort (58%), organizations do not manage the relationship between the coach and the coached (27%), they do not reward community members for their activity (81%) and they do not use storytelling (70%). The latest literature on knowledge management offers many concepts, systems and recommendations. They can be classified into three large groups: the first group addresses the problems of explicit knowledge, the second group is focused on work with tacit knowledge and the third group tries

to address knowledge management systematically, e.g. combine the work with both tacit and explicit dimensions with the corporate system of management.

Our paper is focused on work with tacit knowledge, and it can be classified into the second group. It provides the reader with an analysis of work with all three tools of tacit knowledge sharing in a very detailed way. As far as we know, such an analysis has never been undertaken before. The major benefit can be seen in the description of mistakes organizations make when using the tools of tacit knowledge sharing. We think that these mistakes are universal and that they are not a specialty of organizations in the Czech Republic. The paper is organized into the following sections. The section, Abstract, explains the topic and purpose of the article. The section, Introduction, makes the introduction to the paper and explains the basic findings of the research. The section, Literature Review, gives the reader the background of important ideas and concepts of knowledge. The section, Data and Methodology, explains the theoretical and methodological background of our research. The section, Results, provides the reader with the results of our research on tacit knowledge sharing in organizations in the Czech Republic. The article is closed by the section, Concluding Comments, that provides a summary of the results of our research, explains the limits of the paper and gives ideas on potential future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section is focused on a brief definition of the important terms and basic concepts in the field of knowledge management. Knowledge itself can be defined and understood in many ways. For example, Veber (2000) defines knowledge as a changing system with interactions among experience, skills, facts, relations, values, thinking processes and meanings. Tobin (1996) understands knowledge as information plus intuition and experience. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) define knowledge as justified true belief. Beckman (1997) writes that knowledge is information plus choice, experience, principles, limitations and learning. Kanter (1999), says knowledge is information with context that provides the basis for actions and decision making. Knowledge can be classified into different groups. Spender (1995, 1996) offers a classification to an individual (owned by an individual) and a collective (owned by a group) knowledge. Spender also identifies different types of knowledge used in organizations: conscious knowledge (explicit knowledge held by the individual), objectified knowledge (explicit knowledge held by the organization), automatic knowledge (preconscious individual knowledge), collective knowledge (context dependent knowledge visible in the practices of the organization).

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) offer classification to two types of knowledge; explicit (transferable to data) and tacit (hidden in the heads of people). Nonaka and Takeuchi see knowledge as created and expanded through the interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is encoded in formal organizational models, rules, documents, drawings, products, services, facilities, systems, and processes and is easily communicated externally (Vail, 1999, Al-Ghassani, Kamara, Anumba, Chimay, Carrillo, 2006). Its conversion takes two forms (Nonaka, Takeuchi, 1995). It can be converted to tacit knowledge through internalization when an individual reads and understands well coded knowledge. It can also be converted to another type of explicit knowledge through combining more than one form of knowledge to generate new knowledge. Although conversion of explicit knowledge is easier than that of tacit knowledge, it still requires several resources such as time, technology, and commitment (Vail 1999, Al-Ghassani, Kamara, Anumba, Chimay, Carrillo 2006).

Tacit knowledge is stored in peoples' brains as mental models, experiences, and skills and is difficult to communicate externally (Vail, 1999). The conversion of tacit knowledge also takes two forms (Nonaka, Takeuchi, 1995). It can be converted to another tacit knowledge through socialization in face-to-face interactions or to explicit knowledge through externalization by codifying an individual's knowledge.

Capturing tacit knowledge and codifying it is one of the biggest challenges of knowledge management (Bair, O'Connor 1998, Al-Ghassani, Kamara, Anumba, Chimay, Carrillo, 2006).

There are several definitions of knowledge management, too. Knowledge management can be defined from two perspectives; a process perspective and an outcome perspective. The process perspective focuses on how to work with knowledge; the outcome perspective stresses the benefits of knowledge management for an organization (Bair, O'Connor 1998, Al-Ghassani, Kamara, Anumba, Chimay, Carrillo, 2006). A combination of both perspectives is also possible.

Newman (1991) and Kazi (1991) see knowledge management as a process of controlling the creation, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge. Snowden (1998) understands knowledge management as the identification, optimization, and active management of intellectual assets, either in the form of explicit knowledge held in artifacts or as tacit knowledge possessed by individuals or communities to hold, share, and grow the tacit knowledge. Kanter (1999) sees knowledge management to be concerned with the way an organization gains a competitive advantage and builds an innovative and successful organization. Tiwana (2000) understands knowledge management as the management of organizational knowledge for creating business value and generating competitive advantage. For Tiwana (2000) knowledge management enables the creation, communication, and application of knowledge of all kinds to achieve business goals. Klasson (1999) defines knowledge management as the ability to create and retain greater value from core business competencies (Al-Ghassani, Kamara, Anumba, Chimay, Carrillo, 2006). All definitions focus on the fact that knowledge is a valuable asset that must be managed, and that knowledge management is important to provide strategies to retain knowledge and to improve performance (Al-Ghassani, Kamara, Anumba, Chimay, Carrillo, 2006).

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The research on knowledge management and management of tacit knowledge in organizations in the Czech Republic started in 2004 and continues to the present day. The intention of the research is to monitor the development of knowledge management activities in our country. Organizations are chosen randomly. They come from different industries, including public administration and government areas. The size of organizations also varies; we have interviewed both big multinational organizations and SME's. The smallest organization only had 7 employees. The only prerequisite for an organization to be covered by the research is the location of its premises in the Czech Republic. The research is qualitative based on a questionnaire. Mostly, the questionnaire consists of closed questions with the option of commentary; some open ended questions are supplied, too. Questionnaires are completed under the supervision of a trained interviewer.

The questionnaire is divided into the following sections. Section 1 covers questions on the character of the interviewed organization – name of the company, description of its major business, annual revenues, number of employees, and the educational profile of its employees. We also ask organizations if they are owned by foreign capital and if they export to markets abroad. Section 2 is focused on questions that analyze the profile of human resources of an organization in more detail; like those on the structure of employees by age and sex. A major part of section 2 consists of questions on important structural prerequisites of knowledge management; knowledge strategy, type of organizational structure, cooperation, relation of the organization to knowledge, and trust. Section 3 asks questions about ICT. Its role is to discover which means the organization uses to support work with explicit knowledge. Section 4 is focused on the style of work in the organization and includes questions on the type of meetings, job descriptions, communication and communication channels. This section helps us to find out whether an environment for the sharing of tacit knowledge exists within the organization or not. Section 5 asks questions about traditional apprenticeship programs. Section 6 enquires how organizations train new

employees. This section helps us to discover about knowledge intensity of the work in the organization. We ask not only questions on how the organization trains newcomers but also how the newcomers' knowledge fits the organizational needs and requirements. The next three sections are dedicated to tools used for working with tacit knowledge and tacit knowledge sharing. All three traditional tools for tacit knowledge sharing are examined (Mládková, 2005). Section 6 asks questions on coaching and mentoring. We are interested especially in the average time of coaching activities, the style of relationship between a coach and a coached person, and how the organization rewards coaching activities. Section 7 analyses communities. We are interested in formal and informal communities, both physical and virtual. Organizations are also asked about typical dysfunctions that communities tend to suffer. Section 8 is the last section and asks questions concerning storytelling. The existence of negative and positive stories within an organization is checked. We also ask whether or not stories are used in the company purposefully and where they are usually told.

The questionnaire provides us with detailed information about work with knowledge and knowledge management in interviewed organizations. It helps to identify best practices, mistakes and problems and presents us with a picture about the quality and functionality of the knowledge market in the organization. Some questions are interlinked; answers to them should be compatible. These questions are important as they validate the questionnaire. The reason for any incompatibility of answers to such questions is always strictly enquired and the interviewer is asked to explain the reason in detail. In case of any doubts the questionnaire is rejected. The theoretical background of the research is as follows. Knowledge management literature offers various definitions and concepts of knowledge (see the section, Literature Review). Knowing well the reality of business in our country and keeping in mind the fact that final users of our work are our managers, we decided to use the simplest possible concepts and terminology. We divide knowledge into only two dimensions, explicit and tacit.

We explain the explicit dimension of knowledge as knowledge which can be expressed in formal and systematic language and can be shared in the form of data, scientific formulae, specifications, manuals, etc. It can be processed, transmitted and stored. We support the idea that explicit knowledge is actually information and can be transferred to data. E.g., explicit knowledge can be formalized and stored and distributed as data (Mládková, 2005). These days, data is usually distributed and stored using ICT. It means that when working with explicit knowledge we mostly work with a piece of technology.

The tacit dimension of knowledge is perceived as highly personal and hard to discover and formalize. Explicit knowledge and intuition, mental models, experience, crafts, skills, etc., create it. It is deeply rooted in action, procedures, routines, commitment, ideas, value and emotions. It is always related to a living being or to a group and is difficult to share and communicate (Mládková, 2005). We agree on Polanyi's statement that tacit knowledge is problematic to externalize because the process of externalization damages it (Polanyi, 1966). Managing tacit knowledge means managing people. Both dimensions of knowledge can be identified in any organization. The explicit dimension is usually present in the form of data in a corporate ICT system; the tacit dimension is in the heads of employees (Mládková, 2005). Both dimensions interact in the process of knowledge conversion (Nonaka, Takeuchi, 1995). We are well aware of the fact that knowledge cannot be simply split into two parts and that it is difficult to separate its explicit dimension from the tacit one. We always highlight this fact when explaining what knowledge is to students and managers. From our point of view, the concept of two dimensions has an important practical advantage – it helps us to explain to our students and managers that tacit knowledge cannot be managed in the same way as the explicit one. This mistake is quite common in our traditionally hierarchical environment (Mládková, 2010). This article covers only the part of the research dedicated to tacit knowledge and its management.

RESULTS

There are three ways in which to share tacit knowledge; apprenticeship, storytelling, and communities. Apprenticeship is based on the relationship between the master and the apprentice. The master developed his knowledge and skills over the years in different situations. He tries to articulate (make them explicit) and demonstrate them to the apprentice. The enviable part of the apprenticeship is sharing through the non-verbal personal practical experience of the apprentice, carefully monitored by the master. The apprentice is reshaping the master’s knowledge to his own knowledge. The process is slow and is based on some social obligation (social contract), e.g., both master and apprentice are obliged to co-operate - the apprentice is obliged to learn and the master is obliged to pass on his knowledge. The master’s obligation is important in the later phases of the apprenticeship when he may feel threatened by a bright apprentice. The apprenticeship process is replicated in the coaching and mentoring processes these days. As the words apprenticeship and mentoring may evoke special meanings, we use the word coaching to describe apprenticeship activities in our research. The only exception is traditional apprenticeship programs related to vocational training. These programs are covered by a different part of the questionnaire and are not part of this paper. Coaching as a method of leadership was not examined. Questions concerning coaching were focused on the official coaching activities of organizations.

Table 1: Coaching

	Σ	%
Organization provides coaching	91	63
Organization also coaches employees who are not managers	67	74
Coach is chosen by his work results	14	15
Coach is chosen by experience	12	13
Coach is a direct manager of coached	40	44
Coach is an external subject	13	14
Coach is chosen in accordance with specific needs of coached	19	21
Coach receives financial reward	24	26
Coach receives different than financial reward	4	4
Coach receives no reward, coaching is part of his duties	53	58
Organization manages relationships between coach and coached	5	5
Organization intervenes only when coach and coached have problems	42	46
Organization does not interfere in the relationship between coach and coached	25	27

Table 1 provides answers to questions on coaching. We were interested if our organizations coach their employees and if they also coach employees who are not managers. We also asked who serves in the role of a coach, five options were offered: the one who has good work results, the one who has the necessary experience (we expect that people with good work results and experience possess the necessary tacit knowledge), direct manager of coached, external subject, and coach is chosen in accordance with the specific needs of the coached person. Another set of questions informs about how organizations reward coaches. Four options were offered: coach receives financial reward, coach receives different than financial reward, coach receives no reward, coaching is part of his duties. The last set of questions enquired if organizations manage the relationship between coaches and coached. Three options were offered: the organization manages the relationship between the coach and coached, the organization helps when the relationship between coach and coached experiences problems and the organization does not interfere in the relationship between the coach and coached. Percentages in the first line of the table are calculated with a total of 145 organizations. The rest of the percentages in the table are calculated with the number of organizations that reported caching, which is 91. All percentages in table 1 are rounded up.

The results of research on coaching are as follows; 63% of interviewed organizations provide coaching for their employees, 74% of organizations that provide coaching even coach employees who are not managers. Coaches are usually direct managers of coached employees – 44%. The proportion of coaches chosen by different parameters is much smaller: coaches chosen due to their work results - 15%, coaches chosen due to their experience - 13%, external coaches - 14%, and coaches chosen in accordance with the needs of the coached person - 21%. Coaching is usually understood as a part of the coach’s duties - 58%; 26% of coaches receive financial reward (usually external coaches) and 4% of coaches are rewarded in a different way.

Research shows that coaching is a popular method of tacit knowledge sharing in our organizations. On the other hand, organizations do not properly manage coaching processes. It is questionable if direct

managers should also fulfill the role of coaches (questions on coaching were focused on official coaching initiatives; coaching as a method of leadership was not studied), if they have enough time, knowledge and willingness to be good coaches. The findings that organizations do not reward their coaches and that they influence the relationship between the coach and the coached only when problems appear also indicate inefficiencies. Communities are groups of people who have some common interests (domains) and share knowledge, experiences, tools and best practices to solve problems.

Human relationships in a community are friendly and supportive. Community members depend on each other's knowledge, skills and expertise. Communities may be created purposefully (formal) or emerge naturally from volunteers (informal). They may be physical or virtual. Communities can be efficient only when good connection and communication exists between people. People join communities to fulfill their emotional, intellectual and other needs. Communities help their members to share tacit knowledge, develop new expertise, increase influence, make contact with people with similar interests and build new relationships. They are isles of stability in an instable and chaotic world. Organizations profit from communities (of course apart from the dysfunctional ones). Communities develop and share new knowledge, increase capacity for innovation, help to solve difficult problems and serve also as an element of positive motivation. Again, keeping in mind the specifics of our region (knowledge management is not as common as it is for example in the USA) we decided to use the general term community as the term including various types of communities.

Table 2: Communities

	Σ	%
Organization has communities	96	66
Organization has informal communities	59	41
Organization has formal communities	37	26
Organization has virtual communities	23	16
Communities are only in separated departments	39	41
Communities are also between departments	65	68
Communities contribute to innovativeness	44	46
Communities improve quality and delivery times	43	45
Communities improve cooperation inside and outside organization	61	64
Communities help to avoid expensive mistakes	42	44
Organization provides help to most communities (formal and informal)	47	49
Organization provides communities with financial help	22	23
Organization provides communities with help concerning knowledge	38	40
Organization helps communities to search for and build important contacts	11	11
Organization helps communities in cooperation with other teams and communities	16	17
Organization helps communities to find new valuable members	14	15
Organization helps communities with communication	25	26
Organization does not help communities at all	39	41
Organization rewards members of communities	18	19
Organization measures performance of communities	15	16
Communities in our organization suffer with elitism	23	24
Communities in our organization create knowledge monopolies	38	40
Communities in our organization hesitate to cooperate with other subjects	49	51
Communities in our organization have strong entrance barriers	15	16

Table 2 provides data on communities. The first set of questions examined the existence and type of communities. Percentages in the first four lines of the table, e.g. percentages concerning the existence of communities in the organization, informal, formal and virtual communities are calculated from a total of 145 organizations. The rest of the percentages in the table are calculated with the number of organizations that reported communities, which is 96. Apart from questions regarding the existence and type of community, we asked questions such as in which parts of the organization communities work, if they are separated in departments or cooperate across department borders. We were also interested if communities contribute to innovativeness (innovation?), quality, cooperation and if they help to avoid mistakes. Another question was focused on if and how organizations help their communities, reward community members and measure the performance of communities. The last set of questions examined the dysfunctions of communities. All percentages in table 1 are rounded up.

Results of the research on communities are as follows; 66% of interviewed organizations reported communities, 41% of interviewed organizations reported informal communities, 26% of interviewed organizations reported formal communities and 16% of interviewed organizations reported virtual communities. The fact that only 26% out of all organizations reported that they have formal communities

indicates that our organizations do not know what a community is and how important it may be for the organization. On the other hand, answers to questions on where in organizations communities operate indicate that communities are not limited only to separate departments - 41%. They are functional across departmental borders - 68%, which improves the sharing of tacit knowledge on the corporate level. When asked about the benefits of communities, 64% of organizations that reported communities think that communities improve cooperation, 46% see their benefits in contribution to innovations, 45% in improvement of quality and delivery times, 44% in avoiding mistakes. When asked if organizations help and support communities, 49% of organizations answered that they support their communities (we did not differentiate between formal and informal communities in this question), 41% reported that they do not support them all. The type of support varies: 40% of organizations provide their communities with help concerning knowledge, 26% help communities with communication, 23% provide financial help, 17% help to connect the work of communities with the work of other communities and teams in the organization, 15% help to find new community members and 11% help communities to build important contacts. Only 16% of organizations measure performance of their communities and only 19% reward community members. Again, this result indicates that organizations do not work with communities as they should and that those few organizations that build formal communities (39% out of those who reported communities) make serious mistakes in their management (lack of performance control, nearly no rewards to members, under-financing).

Mismanagement of communities may be contra-productive. The results show that communities suffer with typical dysfunctions. 51% of communities do not want to cooperate with other subjects in the organization and 40% of communities create so called knowledge monopolies. It means that they understand knowledge as a competitive advantage and do not share it with other parts of the organization. Knowledge monopolies inhibit knowledge markets of organizations and lead to ineffectiveness in work with knowledge. 24% of communities suffer with elitism; their members think that they are special and better than other employees and groups. On the other hand, only 16% of communities build strong entrance barriers that do not allow new members to participate in their activities; it means that communities in our organizations do not protect themselves against new members.

The third tool for tacit knowledge sharing is storytelling. A story is a complex system of symbols. Stories give sense to things and events and represent norms, experiences and explanations of reality. Basic values of people and groups are projected into them. We use stories to create personal and group identities, change social practices and to share values. Our private stories determine what we accept, how we see the world and influence our response to incentives. People use stories naturally many times a day without being aware of their special meaning. A story is a virtual experience that enables the listener or reader to create his own tacit knowledge in reality, simulated by the story. A story can be used for tacit knowledge sharing between two or more people. It has the ability to pick up links and relationships that cannot be externalized (Mládková, 2005).

Results of the research show that people naturally communicate mostly in their workplace (41%) and in places where they naturally meet (32%). This indicates that the majority of tacit knowledge is shared in this environment. Only 3% of organizations build special spaces for communication and tacit knowledge sharing. 70% of organizations report that their employees tell especially negative stories. Positive stories prevail in only 30% of organizations. By Denning (2004) and Kelemen et al (2010) negative stories are stories about danger, problems, solved or unsolved, defeat. Positive stories are stories about victories, and fulfilled desires and wishes. Negative stories enable people to learn. They describe mistakes, moments of ignorance, and difficulties people had to overcome. Negative stories help us to learn new knowledge and understand and change the reality. Positive stories help people create and share visions and objectives. They can be identified where something new is happening; they help to create new organizations, states, families, teams, communities. Positive stories help people to understand the

standpoints of others. Both types of stories are present in any organization. The type of stories that prevail in an organization tells a lot about its health. Negative stories indicate that the organization is in some trouble and tries to cope with them. Positive stories indicate positive changes in an organization.

Only 30% of organizations reported that their managers use stories intentionally in managing their subordinates. It is a pity, because a proper story can overcome mental barriers people build against new knowledge, improve communication between people, raise their creativity and help them to find common values and solve conflicts. Stories have the ability to open the imagination of people and increase their innovative potential. A story can work as a catalyst for changes (Mládková, 2005). When put together, results of research show that only 28 (19%) organizations use all three tools for tacit knowledge sharing intentionally.

Table 3: Storytelling

	Σ	%
People informally communicate in the workplace	60	41
People informally communicate in places where they naturally meet	46	32
People informally communicate in a specially created space and environment	5	3
People informally communicate in other places	15	10
Employees of the organization tell first and foremost negative stories	101	70
Employees of the organization tell first and foremost positive stories	44	30
Managers use stories in the management of an organization	43	30

Table 3 provides data on storytelling. The questionnaire on storytelling examined in which environment people in organizations communicate and share stories, whether they tell negative or positive stories and if managers use storytelling intentionally to manage their subordinates. As for the place of communication, respondents were given a few options: the workplace, places where people naturally meet such as kitchens and restaurants, special places intentionally created by organizations or somewhere else. All percentages in table 1 are rounded up.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The research on knowledge management and tacit knowledge sharing indicates that organizations in the Czech Republic have big reserves in working with tacit knowledge. The research started in 2004 and continues to this day; 145 organizations were interviewed. The research shows that coaching is the most common intentionally used tool of tacit knowledge sharing. Coaching in the meaning of the research includes also mentoring and similar apprenticeship activities. 63% of organizations provide their employees with coaching. Unfortunately coaching is not managed properly. Employees are usually coached by their direct managers (44%); coaches are not rewarded for their effort. Organizations do not manage the relationship between the coach and the coached (27%).

Communities were identified in 66% of organizations but 41% of them were informal communities that evolved naturally. Only 26% of organizations reported intentionally created formal communities. It is very positive that 68% of communities are cross-border communities. On the other hand, only 16% of organizations measure the performance of communities and only 19% reward community members. Communities suffer with typical dysfunctions: 51% of communities do not want to cooperate with other subjects in the organization, 40% of communities create knowledge monopolies, and 24% of communities suffer with elitism. Our communities are relatively open for newcomers, only 16% of them build strong entrance barriers. Storytelling is a tool of high potential but only 30% of organizations reported that their managers use storytelling for management of their subordinates consciously. In 70% of organizations, a negative type of story is prevailing. Positive stories prevail in 30% of organizations. Employees share their tacit knowledge mostly in the workplace (41%) and in places where they naturally meet (32). 3% of organizations have a special room for communication and knowledge sharing.

As pointed out above, only 28 (19%) organizations use all three tools for tacit knowledge sharing intentionally. Results of the research indicate that organizations in the Czech Republic still do not understand the importance of tacit knowledge and do not know how to work with it and how to manage it. Those who try to manage their tacit knowledge make unnecessary mistakes because they are not aware of the basics: what is tacit knowledge, why it is important, which tools can be used for tacit knowledge management and sharing and how to use them. The fact that Czech organizations do not use one of their major assets as they could may have cultural roots. Our society is historically hierarchical and managers of our organizations may have problems accepting that an important asset is hidden in the heads of their subordinates and they cannot control it directly. With this approach, unfortunately they miss using an important success factor of our time.

The author is aware of some limitations of this paper. The most important fact that should be mentioned is the inconsistency of the data collected. Reviewed organizations do not belong to one group and were not interviewed in one period. We interviewed all different types of organizations, from very small to large multinationals. The research has been continuing since 2004 with the number of interviewed organizations varying year on year and external economic conditions changed. The inconsistency of the data is the reason why the author of the article decided not to undertake any statistical analysis. It would bring biased results. We think that research on tacit knowledge is important because tacit knowledge is the dimension that enables us to do practical activities and makes the difference between doing things well or otherwise. We see many options for future research. For example, research on how people build their tacit knowledge or how they work with it would be very beneficial for both theory and practice.

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AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank all respondents for their help and patience. She would also want to express thanks to reviewers and proofreaders of this article.

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