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IT, E-Commerce, Individual and Team Learning Environment

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Abstract. This paper is about impact of Information Technology on creating learning environment and on e-commerce. Because of innovations on the field of IT, individuals and businesses are affected; however with those changes also need for capacity building and long life learning is appearing. In addition, companies and markets can not be considered as a static concept, but they are changing and evolving every day. Those changes are also bringing innovations in management procedures and in production of goods and services. Implementation of e-commerce is triggering also the implementation of other e-tools that can help companies to manage in better way their resources, customers and finance.

Keywords: IT, E-learning, Capacity Building

1 Utilizing Information Technology in E-commerce

As the result of innovation of information technology life of humans is impacted and those innovations are influencing how people think, work and interact with each other. This influence is seen from games, formal education, health management and the way the business is conducted nowadays. As a result of innovation, also new terminology is in place like terms e-business, e-commerce, e-banking and just in time information. Information technology had created new opportunities for businesses and had shortened the time for conducting business and for gathering information. As the result of use of information technology, in business, world also virtual enterprises are operating and their value is measured with millions of dollars.

Despite the impact on virtual enterprises, information technology had positive impact also on traditional companies. Nerguizian, and Mhiri, and Saad, (2011) states that "The integration of ICT tools to improve the performance of a business operation and to offer better services for its customers and its partners has led to e-business practices. E-business does not apply only to virtual enterprises, which base most of their business on the internet, but also to traditional companies" (p.49).

Many businesses face with challenges and difficulties during the process of implementing and utilizing information technology and some of them fail to become e-commerce companies and this happens because of resistance to change that could come from management and from employees. Resistance from change should be managed by managers and from person that is implementing changes that in literature and in business, practice is known as a change agent. In general those changes have to do with learning and Littlejohn and Milligan, and Margaryan, (2011) are concluding that "Understanding the key actions in each form of workplace learning is a starting point for developing more effective learning pathways by combining learning practices that integrate the four knowledge sharing behaviors of connecting, consuming, creating and contributing knowledge". (p.30). It is important that each employee understand the importance of implementing and utilizing information technology and they should be informed also regarding their benefits from becoming e-commerce company. Many companies pose infrastructure and knowledge to utilize information technology in e-commerce but there is missing willingness from top management to start with implementation. For example in company where author is employed, Post and Telecom of Kosovo (PTK), management didn't approve implementation of Share Point, despite the fact that company already have license for this software, network infrastructure and skilled people that could implement this project. Anantatmula, (2009) discusses that "Knowledge management processes, therefore, should be designed to improve decision-making and productivity internally, and customer satisfaction externally. Further, better decision-making is closely associated with innovation and must incorporate in the design and development of

knowledge management processes”. (p.230). With utilizing information technology business processes can be improved and in a same time they will last less then conducting them in traditional way. In addition, the customer’s nowadays are more exposed to the information technology and they may decide to work with companies that fulfill their expectations regarding the utilization of information technology while conducting business with those companies.

2 Individual and Team Learning Environment

Companies and markets cannot be considered as a static concept, but they are changing and evolving every day. Those changes are also brining innovations in management procedures and in production of goods and services. In order to implement and to cope with changes companies and their employees need to learn, since in time of globalization and aggressive competition the only way to survive is long life learning. Cross and Sproull, (2004) are concluding that based on “Research on information processing, managerial cognition, and social networks demonstrates that people rely on other people for information” (p.446), and those information are within the companies or they are available elsewhere. For this reason, companies should create a learning environment for their employees. The learning environment can be created physically with training / research and development departments that can be in house or can be outsourced to specialized training companies. Another way to create learning environment for individuals and teams within organization can be implementation of e-learning as a concept. Implementation of e-learning is requiring existence of information technology infrastructure, basic knowledge of using IT equipment and willingness to learn unsupervised. However, implementation of e learning could also the first step that could lead a traditional company to become e-commerce company, since employees will be familiar with “e-concept” and in a same time, they will gain the knowledge. Wu and Hisa, (2008) states that “Possessing this knowledge is crucial for managers to successfully adapt from one type of e-commerce innovation to another”. (p.96)

Creating individual and team learning environment should be treated as an investment and not as a cost. Learning environment and gained knowledge will create a benefit for companies but this process should be managed carefully. As an option that could be considered is personal development plan for each employee and this plan can be integrated with performance management system and setting up objectives.

3 Impact of E-commerce in Creating and Operating Team Learning Environment

Implementation of e-commerce is triggering also the implementation of other e-tools that can help companies to manage in better way their resources, customers and finance, the most recommended system for this purpose is enterprise resource planning (ERP) and customer relationship management (CRM) that is strategy for managing interaction of customers with companies. Tsai and Hung, (2008) states that: “Since a company implementing ERP system will experience a learning process, it is interesting to examine the relationships between ERP performance and the relevant organizational learning factors”. (p.348). As the relevant organizational learning factors is corporate culture, age and level of education of employees. Based on authors’ personal experience, those factors may jeopardize initiation of implementation of ERP and CRM with the excuse of management and employees that this is the way how we are doing things and that there is no need to introduce new strategies and systems since the existing one is functioning. Another researchers Yang and Mason, and Chaudhury, (2001) discusses that: “In particular, learning occurs when changes occur in the “mental models” (e.g., schemata, paradigms, perspectives, beliefs, viewpoints) of individuals or organizations. These changes enable changes in behavior”. (p.112). In order to implement changes and to improve business processes, utilizing information technology in e-commerce seems to be mandatory, but shareholders and top management should identify change agents and they should create a learning environment within the companies. Learning is an important factor since when the companies are moving to e-commerce they will need to deal with new markets that involves new customers and different customer perceptions that is influenced by customer’s culture and beliefs. Companies that are engaging in e-commerce need to learn also regarding the logistics since e-commerce will create a virtual presence of companies

everywhere in the world. Kaziliunas, (2011) states that: “Firstly, continuous improvement directly contributes to performance, while organizational learning does not contribute directly, and well-established learning capability contributes to continuous improvement, and continuous improvement, in return, supports the current organizational learning”. (p.88).

4 Conclusion

Businesses and customers are influenced by the innovation in the field of information technology. Actual information technology enables just in time communication between companies, their partners and between their customers. Nowadays terms e-commerce and e-business are common not only for businesses but also for customers. In fact customers are requesting from companies to introduce e-commerce. Information technology had created new opportunities for businesses and had shortened the time for conducting business and for gathering information. As the result of use of information technology, in business, world also virtual enterprises are operating and their value is measured with millions of dollars.

Despite the impact on virtual enterprises, information technology had positive impact also on traditional companies, however many businesses faces with challenges and difficulties during the process of implementing and utilizing information technology and some of them fail to become e-commerce companies and this happens because of resistance to change that could come from management and from employees. Many companies poses infrastructure and knowledge to utilize information technology in e-commerce but there is missing willingness from top management to start with implementation.

Companies and markets cannot be considered as a static concept, but they are changing and evolving every day and in order to implement and to cope with changes companies and their employees need to learn. For this reason, companies should create a learning environment for their employees. The learning environment can be created physically with training / research and development departments that can be in house or can be outsourced to specialized training companies. Another way to create learning environment for individuals and teams within organization can be implementation of e-learning as a concept.

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By utilizing information technology in e-commerce companies can use the same infrastructure to implement e-learning and to share information between departments within the company. The same infrastructure could be used to improve existing managerial and business processes like human resources and finances.

Individuals and teams within the companies can learn in formal way through trainings and they can learn by doing. If training environment is provided by management the results will be seen faster and in a same time the return on investment will be higher.

During the process of implementing e-commerce, companies will delegate specific tasks to different teams within the company and those teams will share existing and gained knowledge during this process. During the implementation on of e-commerce teams and individuals will face with lack of knowledge regarding e-safety, logistics and new markets and this will trigger the learning process for individuals and for teams.

It is possible that also competition between teams and individuals will appear during this process but in the end the company would benefit by having teams that possess high experience and knowledge that can be used during the implementation of other e-concept systems that may appear in a future.

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