

Introducing Personal Knowledge Management (PKM) to a Corporate Audience



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The emails went out in mid-December: “I’m looking to put together a set of participants for a pilot professional-development workshop we’re putting on in January. Your name came up as a strong learner and an influential person.”

Who’s going to turn that down?

As a global leader in the quick-service restaurant industry, Domino’s Pizza has a concentration of jobs requiring a broad base of connections to people and information. The people in these jobs probably used traditional learning to help them attain key roles in supply chain, operations, marketing, or information services. However, an overlooked key to their success, and their future growth, is a type of learning in which they may not have even known they were engaged.

As defined by Harold Jarche, principal of Jarche Consulting, personal knowledge management (PKM) is “a set of processes, individually constructed, to help each of us make sense of our world and work more effectively.”

Through transforming this set of processes from instinct and gut feeling to an intentional, tangible practice for its learners, the company wanted to help them find new ways to develop their capabilities and increase their productivity.

Eric Parsons, Domino's Vice President of Talent Management and PeopleFirst Support, says, "For many people, being effective at these skills is essential. We want learners who are active and engaged in their own development."

Pilot

Domino's engaged Jarche to collaborate on a hybrid online and face-to-face learning experience to introduce a cross-functional group to the concept of PKM and put some concepts into practice.

The experience began with the participants downloading a worksheet that helped map out the makeup of their personal network. By seeing how key contacts were grouped, according to factors such as gender, age, and geography, each individual could identify strengths and opportunities to diversify their network. The participants discussed their findings on a discussion board in the week leading up to the face-to-face session.

At the session, Jarche led discussions on his trademarked "seek-sense-share" model and performed live demos on how to best use feed readers and Twitter for professional development. Many of the participants brought laptops and mobile devices to try out new tools.

Following the session, a participant set up a wiki on the company intranet to continue the discussion, where participants could post their takeaways and action steps.

Faster, better, cheaper

The potential of PKM in corporate learning is vast. The McKinsey Global Institute defines interaction workers as those with "occupations requiring complex interactions with other people, independent judgment, and access to information." McKinsey's analysis of research by International Data Corporation indicates substantial potential productivity gains for interaction workers through streamlining the ability to search for, and gather, information.

For Domino's, the learning experience clarified how productivity gains can happen on an individual basis. People experimented with finding vendors, getting instant answers to questions from a broad network and organizing articles, blog posts, and news sources by topic in a feed reader.

Results

Using the post-class discussion forum, participants shared their thoughts and started several discussions about how to use existing company channels to connect teams. Several participants cited the RSS tools overview as a practical solution they could immediately implement. Others posted links and resources related to the workshop. Managers in the group shared the ideas with their teams in staff meetings.

What they learned

The process of the pilot revealed several insights that will help Domino's bring PKM to more people.

First, learners want some guidance about the changing boundaries of professional development. Traditional models of learning involve taking a chunk of time to step out of the workplace. PKM makes learning a real-time activity within the flow of work. The company needs to clarify what people are allowed and expected to do in terms of learning during the workday.

Second, information services, particularly information security, needs to be a partner in the effort. The director of information security consulted throughout the effort and attended the workshop, where he was able to offer some valuable insights.

Finally, as learning practitioners, we're awash in information about social tools and technology-enabled learning. It can be easy to overlook how unfamiliar busy professionals are with some of these technologies—especially in a work context. We need to take the time to help familiarize them with new tools, using practical, realistic examples.

Next steps

The next step for Domino's in bringing PKM to the organization will focus on identifying more people who fit the profile of interaction workers. The company will be modifying the learning experience, based on the pilot, to create a sustainable program to reach further into the organization.

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