Cycle Time

Knowledge worker productivity

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In this installment of cycle time, I intend to continue exploring *knowledge worker productivity* with an emphasis on the two essential questions that Peter Drucker, noted management theorist and guru, developed more than 10 years ago to define the productivity of knowledge workers.

As noted by Drucker, a knowledge worker does not produce physical goods, nor does he or she render a service as traditionally defined in economic theory.

A knowledge worker produces information that other knowledge workers use in the performance of their jobs. In 1999, Peter Drucker offered a theoretical model for measuring the productivity of knowledge workers.

The given figure extends Drucker's theory, depicting the two underlying questions that frame the performance of a knowledge worker's job.

- *Who owes me what types of interactions, information, and/or experiences, fulfilled how?*
- *I owe to whom what types of interactions, information, and/or experiences, fulfilled how?*

We can measure the productivity of knowledge workers by tracking two processes. First, how quickly can any worker frame a request for information (interactions or experiences) and get an accurate response. Second, how quickly can this worker understand a request and provide an accurate answer.

ACTOR'S SELF-IDENTITY

The *self-identity* dimension of a knowledge worker productivity model characterizes how the individual as a knowledge worker sees himself or herself.

A *performance-support model* answers the question, 'What physical, social and psychological resources does a particular knowledge worker need?'

It also specifies a knowledge worker's environment, such as open floor plans with cubicles versus closed offices, the presence or absence of customers, and the capabilities of a technology infrastructure.

Learning encompasses a broad range of factors, including *cognitive and connotive skills*, access to *communities of practice or expertise*, and how one learns best (talking and listening, reading and thinking, or watching and doing). These factors also include *learning motives* (helping, playing, producing or understanding) and *format preferences* (visual, auditory or kinesthetic).

Value-fulfillment process represents how individuals go about realizing their dreams and ambitions. This model includes a definition of core values and goals, desired and avoided trust networks (within which to apply their values and pursue their goals), actions and behaviors, and meanings or interpretation of the results produced by their actions, including environmental responses to their direct actions.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTRACT

The *socioeconomic contract* characterizes both formal and informal forms of power granted by authority in an organizational structure (such as job title), and the esteem and trust conferred by co-workers (prestige in a trust network).

SOCIAL IDENTITY

The roles in an *economic theater* reflect a range of behaviors expected from a consumer or business professional – etiquette and protocols.

Data fixtures relate to a range of influences one can profile with discrete pieces of data.

Individual data may describe a knowledge worker's age, sex, IQ or education.

Shared data may describe a demographic cohort (*Gen Y, Baby Boomer*), a First- or Third-World orientation, social class, race or ethnicity.

Institutional data characterize knowledge workers in terms of their employment within a public- or private-industry sector, a particular industry, their firm's business model, its current position in a corporate lifecycle, and its dominant business processes and workflows.

STAKEHOLDER PREFERENDA (D)

Stakeholder preferenda describe the various categories and sub-types of interactions, information and experiences that a particular knowledge worker finds attractive or useful.

The term *preferenda* comes from biology and connotes all classes of substances or environmental qualities that attract motile organisms (heliotropic sunflowers that follow the path of the sun, animals that hunt for food and water and so on).

Stakeholders in the context of a knowledge-worker productivity model include customers, journalists, analysts, trade partners, competitors, employees and their families, and local communities – any individual or group that may seek out and consume information about the firm or its products. The figure depicts three broad classes of preferenda related to stakeholders and, in particular, the preferenda of knowledge workers (Figure 1).

Interaction preferenda describe the most- and least-preferred ways of interacting with another person, group or thing. As it relates to IT applications, the *human interface interaction model* defines how to engineer information, search engines, user-interface controls and data presentations for particular classes of knowledge workers.

Social networking expands one dimension of interaction preferenda: *triadic communication,* involving a first person, second person and a networked group of third persons. LinkedIn groups and Facebook walls demonstrate this idea of triadic communication.

Information preferenda describe the various types of information that particular knowledge workers consume or use. Information requirements can lead to the development of an *information consumption model* that specifies the information equivalent of daily-nutrition food requirements.

Experience preferenda describe how knowledge workers organize their view of the world (or how consumers organize levels of their brandspace), packaging it for others to experience. Storytelling conveys context, scope, relationship and meanings – how best to engage and understand discrete pieces of information or particular interactions. A storytelling model specifies which genres, motifs, plots and tropes a knowledge worker uses to construct various types of stories.

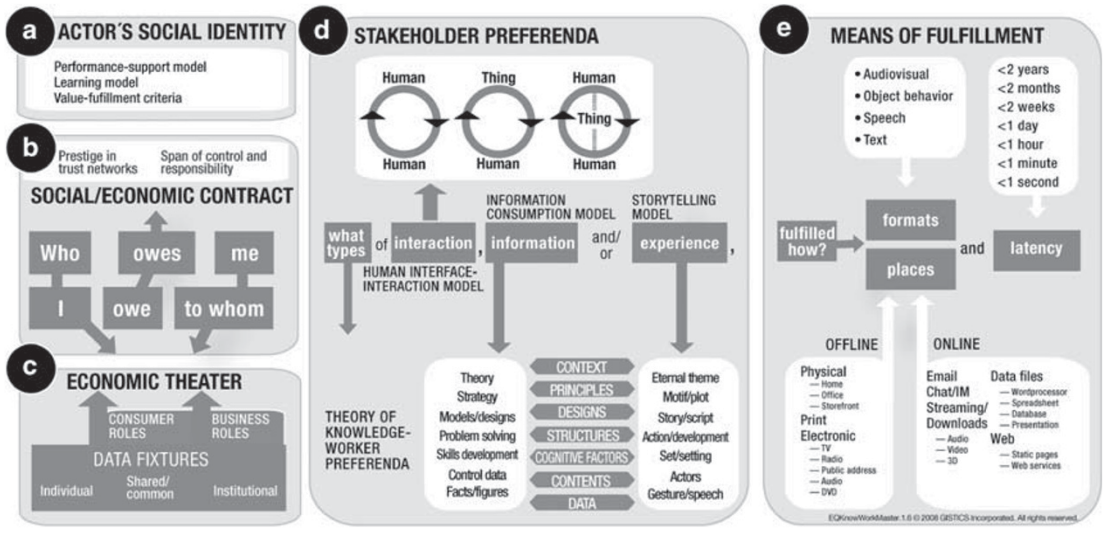

Figure 1: EQKnowWorkMaster.1.6.

MEANS OF FULFILLMENT (E)

The productivity of knowledge workers often breaks down because of poor means of fulfilling a request for information, interactions or experiences.

The figure depicts three key dimensions of fulfillment.

Formats of fulfillment describe the design and layout of media or physical objects, including a product itself.

Places of fulfillment describe both traditional offline and newer online venues. Not shown but implied in online venues is the effect of the display. User-experience professionals state that the size of the display screens of access devices (such as a large desktop monitor, the mid-sized LCD display of a laptop and the smaller display of an iPhone or Blackberry) exerts a significant effect on the user experience.

Latency of fulfillment describes how fast a knowledge worker waits for a useful answer (information, interaction or experience).

A more startling finding in the research of organizational behavior reveals that few, if any, knowledge workers specify their expectation or desire for latency.

SUMMARY

This model provides a remarkably cogent, still relevant framework for all software applications and, DAM service applications, in particular.