



GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

MBA 732: Knowledge Management

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Interview: BearingPoint's KM Practices

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Introduction

I interviewed Rajesh Misra from BearingPoint, Inc. Rajesh is a Senior Manager and he is responsible for both sales and delivery of client solutions. Rajesh is a true believer in sharing knowledge. And he has got a great story to tell. He managed to win 4 million dollar business just based on a solution deck that his team has put together based on the experience and lessons learned from other client engagements.

BearingPoint, Inc. is a global consulting company with over 16,000 employees, hundreds of offices in over 80 countries. The Company, formerly KPMG Consulting, Inc., provides business and technology strategy, systems design, architecture, applications implementation, network, systems integration, and managed services to Global 2,000 companies, medium-sized businesses, government agencies and other organizations.

Being a consulting firm, most of its success depends on its human capital and intellectual assets. Some of the business challenges that led to its Knowledge Management initiatives include: dispersed workforce; short attention spans where in staff focused on client needs and deadlines; critical need to capture and share intellectual capital because of global acquisitions and clients expectations.

The business objectives of BearingPoint's Knowledge Management include: maintain an integrated, global sales and delivery support, and knowledge management capability; have an enterprise-wide online portal to share best practices, speed communications and collaboration among its teams; have a single repository of current local examples and global best practices and templates to speed the delivery of proposals and solutions to its clients.

KM Tools

BearingPoint has got a firm-wide Knowledge Management program headed by a Chief Knowledge Officer. The corporate intranet 'Inside BearingPoint' is the backbone of its Knowledge Management infrastructure. 'Inside BearingPoint' provides global access to

knowledge, communications, and infrastructure content. This enterprise portal also hosts three major KM tools of the firm namely Introspect, ProvenCourse, and PMOnline.

Intraspect provides workspaces for teams to work collaboratively online in a secure environment and manage accounts, proposals, engagements, solutions and communities. Intraspect combines features of collaboration and knowledge management, and supports five core services: data sharing and document control; information retrieval; security; subscription services; threaded discussion groups.

ProvenCourse is BearingPoint's Global delivery Framework. It is a collection of best practices, solutions, assets and tools developed based on BearingPoint's vast experience and lessons learned from various client engagements.

PMOnline is BearingPoint's proprietary program management application for delivering BearingPoint Solutions, and for managing internal projects and client engagements. PMOnline Solution Templates, a key feature of the application, provide more consistency, better standardization and reuse, and greater expediency in delivering BearingPoint's competitive solutions. Again PMOnline is also developed based on the collective knowledge of the firm. Teams leveraging this collective knowledge also contribute to the knowledge store to further improve this collective wisdom.

KM Process

BearingPoint has got a Global Knowledge Management team of 40-50 people headed by CKO. Knowledge Managers from this team process all the content submissions. They validate document meta-data, coding and indexing, manage approval process for content recommended as 'best-of-breed' for the Industry or Solutions Portals. Approved content is displayed on the Industry and/or Solutions Portals. They release content company-wide within three business days of submission. Documents are also available instantly via link or category search.

At BearingPoint Knowledge Management is integrated into its overall business. It is everyone's responsibility to contribute content to the enrichment of Knowledge Repository. It is one of the primary goals of every employee and team, and captured in their performance appraisal system.

Also the engagement teams, like Rajesh's team, are expected to have lessons learned sessions at the end of every engagement, and submit the content to the knowledge repository. Every engagement team also submits client success stories and engagement artifacts to the knowledge portal. Engagement teams also maintain their own knowledge base in the Introspect focusing at a practice level. This knowledge base gets refined on a regular basis. Engagement teams draw a lot of information from the Knowledge Portal. They use this information for sales, responding to proposals, delivering solutions to clients.

Rajesh's team has got a separate workspace in the Introspect, where they maintain their practice related knowledge base. This is more of localized information pertaining to the specific technologies or industries this group is aligned to. This team also submits documents to the corporate knowledge base. This team leverages a lot of information from the corporate knowledge base when responding to RFPs. They draw the client success stories, client qualifications and solution frameworks from the knowledge repository.

BearingPoint also focuses on developing repeatable solutions based on their experience and knowledge. Each engagement team has got this responsibility to support at least one of such efforts. After developing a solution or framework, they announce it in the firm-wide communication and deploy the solution on the Intranet. Then other engagement team who find a similar need will leverage the solution and help refine it.

BearingPoint does not offer any financial incentives to promote Knowledge Management. But they enforce the commitment to Knowledge Management through

integrating the KM efforts with goal setting process. Once the teams have it in their goals, they have to meet or exceed it in order to qualify for promotions or incentives.

KM Success

Based on my conversation with Rajesh, I felt the KM program at BearingPoint is very successful. Teams leverage a lot from the Knowledge Management. Although I could not find any measures of ROI, but the sheer volume of knowledge that captured or used provides a great deal of information about its effectiveness. The Global Knowledge Management team alone produces around 400 documents per year, gathers over 10,000 engagement documents per year, supports over 1,5000 proposals per year. Introspect is widely used in the firm, and it is considered to as a great place of knowledge and assets.

From Rajesh's perspective KM assets help win new business, reduce the overall time-to-market, improves standardization, and predictability of results. It also helps learn from lessons learned at other engagements. The KM initiatives also help build upon the common knowledge and Community Of Practice.

Rajesh attributes a lot of his team's success to the Knowledge base they have developed over a period of time. He also appreciates the efforts of KM team.