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Takeaway knowledge

Knowledge Management in Healthcare

Edited by Lorri Zipperer

Gower; New edition edition (28 Feb. 2014), 248 pages, ISBN 978-1409438830. £70.00. Hardcover.

Reviewed by **Gavin Ireland FISTC**.



“A very good book, which with a few minor improvements could have been a great book.”

This book brings together existing research in Knowledge Management, existing research in Healthcare, and the authors' new research in Healthcare Knowledge Management to provide both interesting insights and practical guidance.

It begins by defining the parameters of the study, from the 'blunt-blunt' end (organisations that set policy, develop and enforce regulations, and craft reimbursement and practice guidelines), through the 'blunt' end (the organisation level that crafts and enforces policies, programmes and rules) to the 'sharp' end (the level where direct patient care takes place).

It then takes us through what the authors learned during their study of Healthcare Knowledge workers and what they know about knowledge sharing and what they understand of tacit knowledge.

The book finishes with metrics, practicalities and future directions for Healthcare knowledge management. The final chapters offer practical advice for implementation, maintenance and innovation, and points out some of the common pitfalls.

Evaluation

Being very much a practitioner in the field, and despite the fact that the contents lays the book out very well, in the early chapters I still found myself wondering if and when the authors would get to something I could make use of in my day to day work. Maybe the editor/authors could learn a little from the world of fiction, to keep the reader interested by using signposting to occasionally remind the practitioner-reader of what will come later?

The use of earlier works in both healthcare and general knowledge management are well placed and attributed and have been well used to make sure that the authors build upon it, rather than re-learning it from scratch. There are a lot of recognisable sources quoted from the thought-leaders in the industry. The new research by the authors, whilst directly healthcare related and for the benefit of healthcare readers, would, from my own experience, be transferable to any industry which I've worked in.

Throughout the book, the use of 'info-boxes' to call out specific case studies, examples, or further related research makes it easy to stay focused on the subject at hand, but also easier to remember later, as it seemed to give my memory a focal point to hang onto.

Each chapter ends in a 'key takeaways' section which, whilst not enough on its own, after reading the chapter provides a succinct reminder of the key points.

The final part of the book delves into measuring knowledge management effectiveness, the difficulties in doing so, and the reasons why it is important. It also gives a series of suggestions to support the launch of knowledge management initiatives in hospitals, including general advice from outside of healthcare. I found this section particularly useful, despite not working in that industry.

The book finishes with the authors' views of how well managed knowledge can be used to spark and feed innovation and improvisation, which we all know happens anyway, but in the knowledge management nirvana would happen more often and with better results.

The book ends with a list of questions about what could be achieved in the future and brief positive answers, which whilst encouraging, frankly seem a long way off.

Who would benefit from this book?

Whilst primarily aimed at healthcare professionals with an interest

or responsibility for Knowledge Management, this book would definitely be of interest to anyone seeking to learn more about Knowledge Management in general.

Conclusion

This book contains a lot of practical Knowledge Management techniques and the research, or references to the research, to back it up.

For practitioners, be patient through the early chapters that lay the foundations upon which the techniques and case studies are built. In the later chapters, the practical advice and examples are well worth the wait. For those non-healthcare practitioners, the techniques and case studies are easily related to any other field, as is common with most Knowledge Management studies.

For academics, this book brings together a lot of general Knowledge Management research, some specific to the field of healthcare, and case studies to provide interesting conclusions and help for all from the theoretical at the 'blunt-blunt' end to practical at the 'sharp' end. For non-healthcare academics, this could potentially provide a useful guide to similar research in another field. **C**

Rating: ★★★★★☆

About the editor:

Lorri Zipperer, Cybrarian is the principal at Zipperer Project Management, in Albuquerque, USA. Lorri has been in the information field for over two decades, more than half of which have been focused on health care.

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