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RESEARCH PROJECT 2: In it for the long haul: Rising to the challenge of sustaining KM & OD

Knowledge Management (KM) brings with it the promise of delivering competitive advantage and organisational value. However, in order to realise this value in a successful and sustainable way, it is imperative that an organisation's KM in turn is also sustainable.

Organisation Development (OD) too offers strategic advantage through enhancing organisational effectiveness and providing practices to help land change with people. There has been growth in OD in the UK over the past decade or so, but in the US, OD practitioners have been concerned about sustaining OD practice for just as long. Working in highly dynamic, unpredictable and demanding environments, the question emerges, *how might we ensure an organisation's sustained engagement with KM and OD to deliver ongoing strategic value?*

Why is this research needed?

Many organisations struggle to sustain Knowledge Management and Organisational Development efforts over the long term. In a dynamic context, and as people come and go, organisational support, attention and resource allocation for KM & OD activities can wax and wane. This can leave the people involved in KM and OD work feeling vulnerable and the activities looking precarious.

What do KM and OD have in common?

The challenge of sustainability is currently being felt in *both* the KM and OD communities. We've noticed a number of common characteristics and challenges between these two fields, so we'd like to explore both together and to share the learning across the communities. Common characteristics include:

- growth over the past 20 years
- criticism for being a management fad that is prone to fade away due to lack of sustainability
- one particular challenge practitioners face is the lack of a 'one size fits all' model of KM or OD
- in highly dynamic environments a KM/OD strategy relevant in today's context and business needs may not deliver competitive advantage in the future
- overlaps with other management practices such as human resource management, continuous improvement, information technology, communications and organisational learning.

What is involved?

Building on previous Forum research and other academic insight, we will develop share a framework to help you to assess how embedded KM and OD practices are in your organisation. (You may focus on either KM or OD, or both). We will explore what helps to embed KM/OD programmes and the actions of practitioners into organisational practice. We will consider what happens when the context and people change.

Potential benefits for you and your organisation

- New insight on how to develop, increase and sustain the strategic value of KM & OD in your organisation
- Peer learning with other participating organisations may help you to develop new ideas and strategies
- Discussions with academic staff offer an external perspective on this important challenge.

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If you'd like to register your interest, or if you have any questions about this project, please contact sharon.varney@henley.ac.uk +44 (0)7946 581875