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The Empirical Study on *Ba* for Knowledge Creation

- Case Study of Company-N Business Communication Headquarters -

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Knowledge management is now attracted in the academic and business fields. Capturing, sharing employees' knowledge and creating new knowledge on an organization become one of the most important business strategies.

Our study focuses on *ba* for the knowledge creation. The concept of *ba* for knowledge creation was proposed by Nonaka and Konno(1998). *Ba* is considered to be a platform or a catalyst for the knowledge creation. According to Nonaka, Toyama and Konno (1999), to create knowledge must a knowledge leader create *ba* based on the knowledge vision and he can intentionally create *ba*, such as physical *ba* like an office, cyber *ba* like an intranet or mental *ba* like a common goal in a group.

The paper completes the empirical research on the relation between the design of office and creation of *ba* for knowledge creation. To succeed the following research objectives, we investigated the advanced office in Business Communications Headquarters (BCH) of NTT-East Corporation, which utilizes the office and intranet functions positively.

Objective 1: To clarify the relation between the BCH office and *ba* for knowledge creation.

Objective 2: To clarify whether *ba* will be created intentionally when an office is designed.

The reason why we selected BCH as our investigation object is that the BCH top manager designed 4 types of the office spaces and the intranet to promote knowledge creation activity of employees. These office spaces have concepts, which are “strategy planning”, “concentration work”, “communication”, and “refreshment” respectively. The intranet can be used in all office spaces by the free address built.

We conducted 3 types of field investigation on BCH employees during September 1999 and January 2000, which are a survey, interview and behavior recording. Our intention of investigation is to get hold of actual behavior of employees who actually utilize the BCH office.

We considered the result of investigation based on the knowledge creation theory and reached the conclusion. That is, our main assertion is as follows.

"The office itself is not *ba*. *Ba* will be created when a person re-defines the designed office actively and in situation through the interaction with it. "

We tried to clarify the relation between the BCH office and *ba* for knowledge creation based on the determinism-position "*ba* will be created intentionally when office is designed", which position is supported by previous studies. However, we reached the above conclusion from our investigation. That is, various types of *ba* were created in each office space, and employees in BCH create *ba* improvisatorially by the interaction with the office.

Our theoretical implication in the paper is that we provided one proposal on creation of *ba* for knowledge creation against previous studies. And our practical implication is that we would like to send the following message to a top or a middle manager.

- (1) Various types of *ba* will be created if your employees utilize your office actively.
- (2) You can design a mechanism by which various types of *ba* will be created.
- (3) You spare no effort to tell an employee a thought of yourself.

Reference

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