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BA AND KNOWLEDGE: A PROCESS FOR LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATIONS FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Joseph Compomizzi, Florida Atlantic University, compomiz@fau.edu
Shana M. D'Aurora, Steubenville City Schools, sdaurora@scsohio.org

ABSTRACT

In the current economy of increasing global competition, for profit and nonprofit organizations are attempting to use knowledge as a criteria measure to gain competitive advantage, and advances in information systems and communications are aiding these efforts. Knowledge is becoming a critical success factor for organizational performance and funding especially in the non-profit sector. Knowledge, concerns understanding, but has a breadth and depth that extends beyond understanding. Understanding is a source of information itself, but often remains an untapped asset. The creating of new knowledge is done by "tapping the tacit and often highly subjective insights, intuitions, and hunches of individual employees and making those insights available for testing and use by the company as a whole" (Nonaka, 2008). This paper examines Nonaka's Theory of Ba as applied to communications and knowledge acquisition by leadership in a non-profit organization in order to accomplish strategic planning.

Keywords: Ba, Knowledge Management, Explicit Knowledge, Tacit Knowledge, Knowledge Buyer, Knowledge Seller, Knowledge Broker, Non-profit Organizations, Non-profit Strategic Plan

INTRODUCTION

The continuous advancement of civilization is a testament to its ability to learn and share knowledge. Advances in information systems and communication systems and technologies have aided companies' abilities to store and transfer knowledge. Advances such as these are driven by globalization, and growing international competition. Organizations have realized that creation, transfer, and management of knowledge are critical success factors in today's global economy.

The purpose of this research is to determine how Nonaka's theory of Ba may be applied to gaining information and knowledge for strategic planning considering the concepts of buyer, seller, broker, value, cost benefit and commodity which Davenport and Prusak describe in Working Knowledge (n.d.). Research was conducted using a qualitative method of observation and artifact collection for a single case study. The religious institution studied was a 501-C3 non-profit organization having three other 501-C3 agencies associated with it.

The study of knowledge management has been an area of much attention in businesses and organizations over the past two decades. It can also be examined through a number of dimensions, which if better understood, knowledge management would yield even more benefit for these businesses and organizations. To be clear, knowledge must be differentiated from information. Information is "data that makes a difference" (Skovira, p. 4). Information is a collection, or better said, the organization of raw data or meaningless facts into something relevant or purposeful (Davenport and Prusak, 1997). Data only has meaning and value, then, as it is applied to a phenomenon or situation.

Experts and leaders within most fields possess essential knowledge that is largely tacit and unconscious in nature. They often do not "know what they know" and cannot share their tacit knowledge with others (Polanyi, 1966). When leaders move to another position or depart an organization altogether, the loss of their essential "know-how" is often quite costly, especially for non-profit organizations. A small fraction of an organization's knowledge is captured as explicit knowledge in the form of guidelines, policies, handbooks, forms, databases, etc., which are formalized into processes and procedures for duplication. Ownership of explicit organizational knowledge lies with the organization. The organization has the authorization to use its explicit knowledge to improve its productivity and profits, or sustainability. As tacit knowledge is the personal knowledge by an individual, an organization has less control over tacit knowledge.

Even though tacit knowledge "rests" within an individual, it is also entirely relational and embedded in people's responses to different contexts and conditions (Polanyi, 1966). Tacit knowing is therefore dynamic, always emerging and receding in relation to people, places, ideas and experiences. Nonaka and Takeuchi posit that tacit knowledge emerges through "ba" or "the place of knowledge-making" that is created through the connections that exist between people, ideas, and physical/virtual spaces (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995).

Since tacit knowledge is seen as critical to the success of groups and organizations (Drucker, 1991), recent scholarly work has focused on how organizations can create conditions that enable knowledge creation, i.e. "the process of making available and amplifying knowledge created by individuals [...] and connecting it to an organization's knowledge system" (Nonaka et al. , 2006, pp. 1179-1193).

One purpose of knowledge management is to tap into tacit knowledge, and make it explicit and accessible in order to attain improved business results. Possessing knowledge about a situation or an event should enable people to make better decisions or act more rationally (Martin, 2000).

Knowledge Management

Knowledge, concerns understanding, but has a breadth and depth which extends beyond understanding. Understanding is related to information. It is “understanding the things in the world” (Skovira, p. 4). This conveys the integration of information or raw data and applying it meaningfully or concretely in the resolve or promotion of a specific situation or phenomenon. In this sense, understanding is rather linear. To be knowledge, though, understanding must be stretched into terms of context. To be knowledge, understanding is extended beyond the linear to the dimension of the relational. This requires a mental process of osmosis…of absorption and diffusion through a frame of experience, values, practices, language, situational factors, and evaluation to the end-point of application or execution.

This process takes knowledge, a static noun, and moves it to a category of action, of a verb…to knowing. To explain, “data, information, and knowledge aren’t easy to separate in practice; at best you can construct a continuum of the three” (Davenport and Prusak, 1997). To give light to this statement, a deeper examination of knowledge as a practice is required. The literature on knowledge management points to two basic types of knowledge: explicit and tacit. “Explicit knowledge can be expressed in words and numbers and shared in the form of data, scientific formulae, specifications, manuals and the like” (Nonaka and Konno, 1998). Explicit knowledge is codified. As codified it is communicative in language specific to a situation, to a thing, or to a phenomenon.

Knowledge can come in many forms and is revealed through transmission. The messages can be simple words, signs, or symbols that convey a message to the receiver. Scholars have debated the amount of information we can transmit in tacit knowledge, unless there is an intensive period of understudy. Polanyi contends, “We know more than we can tell” in the process of messaging. The from-to, a sender to a receiver structure, which is limited to indwelling perceptions, is an accumulation of the formalized understandings in the present tense (Polanyi & Sen, 2009, pp. x–xviii). Explicit knowledge comes from the architecture of shaping tacit experiences into interiorized meanings. The meanings themselves, through the transmissions process, accumulate a redundancy, or sometimes a missing “kinesics” value (Bateson, 1972, pp. 418–419). The receiver’s epistemological values can laden the message with a pleather of cultural and structural noise.

Tacit knowledge is more difficult to understand. Unlike explicit knowledge, tacit knowledge is not easily visible or expressible. As Polanyi puts it, “we can know more than we can tell” (Nonaka, 1994). Tacit knowing as defined by Ikujiro Nonaka; “deeply rooted in action and in an individual’s commitment to a specific context- a craft or profession, a particular technology or product market, or the activities of a work group or team. Nonaka also explains tacit knowing as “consisting partly of technical skills- the kind of informal, hard to pin down skills captured in the term “know-how” (Nonaka, 2008). Explicit knowing as defined by Nonaka; the end point of innovation is the explicit knowing. When companies begin production that is the end point of the transition of the beginning stages of tacit knowing into the formal and systematic explicit knowing, explicit knowing is easily communicated and shared (Nonaka, 2008).

However, while it may be less visible, it is not necessarily less observable. While it may not be as easily expressible, it is not necessarily less describable. Tacit knowledge involves “knowledge in the head.” It incorporates what Nonaka terms “technical” elements. This technical knowledge refers to “concrete know-how, crafts and skills that apply” to something specific (Nonaka, 1994). While this knowledge is in the mind and determines how a person may complete a job task or function or define parameters and goals, their actions in the completion of the task or function is observable especially when meeting the needs of an organization or the population it serves. It may be translated in to routines, procedures, timelines, and flowcharts resulting in explicit expression for organizational understanding and benefit. In this sense, knowledge as the noun moves into the category of knowing, the verb.

The cognitive element of tacit knowledge presents more challenge when it comes to observation and description. The cognitive element refers to the mental models from which people work. The cognitive element of tacit knowledge may include beliefs, viewpoints, perspectives, ideals, values, or schemata that are engrained in people. The cognitive element of tacit knowledge assists a person with interpreting a situation, a thing or phenomenon and formulating a response to it. Together the technical and cognitive elements of tacit knowledge determine “an individual’s images of reality and visions for the future, that is to say, what is and what ought to be” (Nonaka, 1994). Tacit knowledge, described this way knows, for an individual then decides appropriate actions, language and response to the context presented.

Tacit knowledge also includes the dimension of commitment in terms of intention, autonomy and fluctuation. Commitment refers to a mix of how a person makes sense of a situation, thing or phenomenon given their mental models, beliefs, values, and ideals. Commitment also refers to how a person acts based on their self-motivation and on deep emotion and considers fluctuation as an element in which existing patterns or routines, beliefs, or behaviors may be altered or new ones introduced as contexts change and new knowledge is gained and applied. Again, this demonstrates the move from tacit knowledge to tacitly knowing how to respond to the presented context from the framework of mental models beliefs, emotions, values and ideals.

Through all this, then, knowledge is a process of absorption and diffusion and is best described as the verb, “knowing.” It is both explicit and tacit as it runs the continuum from data to information to knowledge to even new knowledge creation as the discussion on commitment illustrates. As data is presented in facts and language regarding something, someone, an event or phenomenon, a person takes in this information from the context in which it is presented. From the context, tacit knowledge is applied to the information and processed in the mind of the individual. This results in externalization or diffusion of the knowledge in action, in language or some other tangible expression that can be observed and described explicitly. In this sense, knowledge is more than meaningless data or static information. It is taking data and information in the action of knowing what to do with it.

In Davenport’s Working Knowledge article, he begins to uncover the important aspects of knowledge management and working knowledge. In keeping with Nonaka’s explanation of tacit and explicit knowing, Davenport explains one of the reasons that knowledge is valuable is because it is closer than data or information to action (Davenport, 2000). Also as Davenport explains knowledge “can and should be evaluated by the decisions or actions to which it leads” (Davenport, 2000). Davenport’s explanation of knowledge keeps in line with Nonaka’s details of tacit knowing to explicit knowing and the transition between the two by one’s actions. Davenport and Nonaka describe knowledge and knowing as a transition between mental modes and cognitive dimensions to the action of articulating information and processes so that individuals may carry out and perform this knowing or action.

In Polanyi’s description of tacit knowledge or tacit knowing in The Tacit Dimension, Polanyi uses the example of electric shock syllabus and waves as a way to show the connection between tacit and explicit knowing. As Polanyi observes in experiments, “the basic structure of tacit knowing, it always involves two things, or two kinds of things (Polanyi, 1966). For Polanyi and the experiment, the subject was able to connect their tacit knowing of being shocked to the tacit knowing that the shock syllabus would cause a shock feeling to come over them. The subject was able to connect the two instances and make the connection between their own tacit knowing and connect that knowing to the feeling of being shocked. Further in Polanyi’s readings he summarizes the following actions as; “the functional relation between the two terms of tacit knowing: we know the first term only be relying on our awareness of it for attending to the second” (Polanyi, 1966).

RESEARCH

Modern advances in information processing technology, joined with widely available access to high-speed networks, provide organizations with unparalleled opportunities to formalize the collection, protection and use of knowledge. A reason for focusing knowledge management efforts on a set of clear objectives is that successful knowledge management projects start small and are tested systematically. The ideal is to test the process and cultural changes—not merely the software—on a small scale and then refine and apply the techniques to other opportunities across the organization. A common cultural hurdle to increasing the sharing of knowledge is that organizations primarily reward individual performance, and hence, individual knowledge foregoing benefit for the greater good of the institution. More specifically, with non-profit organizations, the service pool is a valuable source of knowledge which primarily consists of contributors, volunteer workers, and service receivers. Creating a collaborative culture may require redesigning organizational values and implementing incentives to encourage participation in establishing and meeting organizational goals. Further, effective organizations anticipate that contributions to a knowledge management project, is an investment in organizational learning and ultimately in organizational efficiency.

The research question is: As a model of knowledge creation, how can Nonaka's theory of Ba be applied to facilitate leadership communications in the non-profit sector and specifically with a non-profit religious organization? The purpose of this research is to determine how Nonaka's theory of Ba may be applied to gaining information and knowledge for strategic planning considering the concepts of buyer, seller, broker, value, cost benefit and commodity which Davenport and Prusak describe in Working Knowledge (n.d.).

Congruent with Nonaka's theory of knowledge creation, a new model of leadership and communication process is being introduced to non-profit religious organizations. The creating of new knowledge is done by "tapping the tacit and often highly subjective insights, intuitions, and hunches of individual employees and making those insights available for testing and use by the company as a whole" (Nonaka, 2008). Nonaka then further details that the successful transition of tacit knowing to explicit knowing as the personal commitment of the company's employees as well as the employee's personal identity within the company. Due to the Western culture employees tend to develop the mental models as described by Nonaka that "profoundly shape how we perceive the world around us" (Nonaka, 2008). Regarding the non-profit sector, these concepts do not only apply to employees, but also to client and membership base due to the high number of volunteers. This new model, often unconsciously foundational, is emerging in pastoral documents and executive directives, thus providing great opportunity for religious non-profit organizations to engage in strategic planning aimed at revitalization and more responsive pastoral care.

One such document is the organization's constitution. Constitutions serve as guiding principle in the definition of the organization's identity and operations. For example, Lumen Gentium, or the Constitution on the Church (Roman Catholic) emphasizes the dignity and necessity of all members in the work of the Church universal. To this end, bishops also promulgate pastoral letters which are one way this constitution of the universal Church may be translated and applied to local organizations and institutions. For example in 2008, a pastoral letter to the Catholic organizations, institutions and members of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, PA outlined five areas vital to life of each parish: liturgy, catechesis, evangelization, stewardship and formation. Other common themes are worship, education, community, service, and sacrament outlined in other dioceses in the United States. Together, teachings from the Constitution on the Church and the common themes of executive directives are arising in publications of operating manuals which guide leadership through a collaborative, communicative process of organizational evaluation and strategic plan formulation. One such manual is Revisioning the Parish Pastoral Council: A Workbook by Gubish, Jenny, and McGannon (2001).

Processes like those outlined by Gubish, Jenny, and McGannon (2001) require institutions, local leaders, professional staff, and organizational councils, to examine itself systematically, theologically, and from a ministerial standpoint according to the pre-determined themes set forth by executive leadership. This process of evaluation and planning incorporates scientific analysis, reflection, and examination of resources through methodical and documented processes often termed "pastoral planning." This pastoral planning process, involves what Nonaka and

Konno (Spring, 1998) explain as tacit knowledge becoming explicit knowledge through the process of socialization. Externalization comes ultimately in the form of a strategic pastoral plan.

A formalized process of evaluation and planning for religious non-profit organizations creates the space, or "Ba," for religious organizations to dialogue, study, decide and plan. Together documents such as constitutions, pastoral letters, and operating manuals such as Revisioning the Parish Pastoral Council: A Workbook (Gubish, Jenny, and McGannon, 2001) serve as parameters for knowledge creation and shared wisdom, or as Nonaka and Konno dubbed, "socialization."

As discussed, while senior level organizational leadership endorses the theory of Ba, it is mid-level leaders, and pastors or executives of social service agencies in the instance of religious organizations, who activate and facilitate Ba by identifying knowledge generation team members (Nonaka, 1994). These team members, or advisory councils, do not represent any specific interest. Importantly, though, they must be representative of the institution at large. Professional staff members, on the other hand, do possess area expertise. Together with the local or mid-level leader, these councils and staff members confer and confirm organizational direction, formulate and state the institutional mission, and develop the organization's strategic plan which, in turn, dictates funding development activities and budget appropriation. This collaboration between council, staff, local leader, and organization at large, becomes Ba: "a shared space for emerging relationships" (Tacla, 2001) and information generation. In this light regarding religious non-profit organizations, Nonaka's Theory of Ba provides the space for the human dynamic to intersect, apply principles of operation, the practices of faith, and the opportunity and platform for knowledge creation with the result being a tangible strategic pastoral plan.

Hand-in-hand with Nonaka's Theory of Ba and its' resulting strategic plan for religious non-profit organization, roles emerge and become just as important in this process of communication, knowledge generation, evaluation, and planning. To understand these roles in the process of knowledge creation and communication, the research of Davenport and Pruzak best apply. In their article, Working Knowledge (n.d.), Davenport and Pruzak explain the roles of buyer, seller, broker, and commodity that are easily applied to Nonaka's theory of Ba and leadership and communication in religious non-profit organizations.

Methodology

First, research was conducted using a qualitative method of observation and artifact collection for a single case study. The religious institution studied was a 501-C3 non-profit organization with three other 501-C3 agencies associated with it. Next, considering the roles of knowledge buyer, seller, and broker outlined by Davenport and Prusack (n.d.) and the process outlined by Gubish, Jenny, and McGannon (2001), knowledge buyers are defined as "people trying to resolve an issue whose complexity and uncertainty precludes an easy answer" (Davenport and Prusack, n.d., p. 28). This also describes the communications interchange between the councils and staff and the local leader as they are presented with the task of formulating a strategic and financial plan. These buyers seek knowledge regarding organizational, membership, and client needs. Keeping in mind that councils do not represent any specific organizational interest, this information regarding organizational, membership, and client must be obtained in a systematic way in order to formulate an operating direction tacitly presented in a multi-year strategic and financial plan resulting in services offered. This services defined by the strategic plan and supported by the financial plan, then become the organization's collection of commodity.

Intrinsic to this formulation, is data mapping. Davenport and Prusak explain knowledge mapping as: "a knowledge map can be an actual map, knowledge 'Yellow Pages,' or a cleverly constructed database that points to knowledge but doesn't contain it. It can serve as an inventory. Its principal purpose is to show people in the organization where to go when they need expertise (A Synopsis of Working Knowledge: How Organizations Manage What They Know, n.d., p.6)." Given this understanding, knowledge sellers, then, in this case were the organization's membership at large who could identify needs and the institution's departmental staff who did possess area expertise in education, worship, social services, finance, and operations. The knowledge broker, in this case, was the pastoral associate who was responsible for facilitating the entire process of knowledge sharing and obtaining disclosed by the different area experts and membership at large.

Understanding the roles, then, for this case study, provides one-half of the equation for knowledge acquisition. A process of knowledge generation, or the knowledge map, must also be designed. For this, Nonaka's Theory of Ba was employed with the parameters of knowledge discourse being set as the Constitution on the Church, the pastoral letter detailing five areas for organizational vitality, and the directions provided through the writing of Gubish, Jenny, and McGannon. This knowledge generation process, as illustrated in Table 1, employed the following sequence:

Table 1: Process Sequence

Timeframe	Task
August	• Education of councils on the essential elements of the Constitution on the Church and the five areas of organizational vitality
September-October	• Education of councils on mission statements, strategic plans, and collaborative decision making
November	• At-large education of membership at large on the essential elements of the Constitution on the Church, mission statements, strategic plans, and collaborative decision making
December	• Collection of parish memories and stories from membership at large via timeline for mission statement construction
January-April	• Education of membership at large on the five areas of organizational vitality • Education of membership at large on the purpose and activity of existing ministries and groups • Collection of performance and needs for each of the five areas of organizational vitality in relationship to existing ministries and groups • Collection of needs for which a ministry or group did not exist in relation to the five areas of organizational vitality
May	• Coding of memory/story responses
June	• Formulation of Mission Statement Ad Hoc committee • Writing and unveiling of organizational mission statement
July-August	• Coding of performance and needs responses
September-October	• Defining of Goals and Objectives and formulation of five year strategic plan

Analysis

As Nonaka makes clear, tacit knowledge is the "know-how" often deeply rooted in the actions and commitment of an individual through their activities, craft or profession. Knowledge then was available in the forms of membership, organizational leadership, and professional staff. These three comprised the knowledge base of what was needed by the organization, how things operated within the organization, and what was needed from the organization. Table 1 illustrates, Ba, the process of taking tacit knowledge and making it explicit, was initiated under the direction of the local leader, in this instance the local pastor. It first entailed education of council members on the Constitution of the Church in order for them to gain understanding of role of the membership as defined in the document. As well, this day long education included education on five areas of organizational vitality included in a pastoral letter. The educative process ended with communications exchange as a timeline beginning with the inception of the organization to the current date was introduced. It was a brown paper presentation that extended nearly 100 feet. On this timeline, council members were provided the opportunity to record memories and stories from their personal history and engagement with the organization. This also introduced them to the concept that would also be employed for knowledge creation from the membership at large and the professional staff.

From September through October, organizational leadership and council members were then educated on the purpose of mission statements, mission statement writing processes, strategic planning, and collaborative decision-making. Following the education of leadership and council members, the organization's general membership was educated on the essential elements of the Constitution on the Church, mission statements, strategic plans, and collaborative decision-making. This was accomplished by talks during worship, presentations during ministry and committee meetings, organization wide distribution of hardcopy FAQ's and articles, and through the organization's website. As explained by council members, the purpose of this broad-based education was to prepare the community at large with enough knowledge in order to actively participate in information generation exercises that would take place from December through April.

In December the organization's timeline was posted in the primary meeting space of the institution. Approximately 2,800 people occupied this space weekly. Pencils and post-it notes were readily available in multiple colors for membership and staff to record memories, comments and stories and affix them near the date on the timeline closest to their occurrence. Different color post-it notes were used to generate interest in the exercise and to promote excitement and participation in it. The result of this timeline exercise yielded approximately 278 comments which were entered and coded via an excel spreadsheet, and deducted by council members. They were also collected as artifacts for this study. The primary repeating themes included: Open Doors, Faith, Alive-Life, Family-Fellowship-Home, Prayer-Worship, Enrichment-Education, and Strong Leadership. These themes were then forward to an ad-hoc committee composed from members at large who held professional expertise in writing, publishing, English, and organizational development. The ad-hoc committee was also presented with the task of formulating a mission statement with the pretext set that the themes were from the knowledge of the membership at large as to how they described the purpose and identity of the organization. This task was completed and accepted by the council, pastor, and organization's membership in June with publication occurring later that month in weekly bulletins, posters, banners, and on the organization's website. It was also taught about and explained to existing ministries and committees and to the membership at large during worship events

Likewise, as Table 1 illustrates, From January through April, the organization also embarked on the education of its membership at large and staff on the five areas of vitality outlined in a pastoral letter. A different area was explained each week with all existing ministries and committees associated with that area being displayed on foam boards around the central meeting space as was done previously with the timeline. After learning how the area of vitality was defined each week, three questions were posed to the membership at large in regards to the ministries and committees associated with that particular area: "What have I received from this ministry or committee?", "What have I given to this ministry or committee?", and "What is needed regarding this area of vitality?" Again, pencils and post-it notes were readily supplied to accommodate the weekly membership volume with the instructions to answer the questions and post it on the appropriate foam board. 386 responses were collected and assigned codes for each area of vitality in an excel spreadsheet for ease of sorting and report generation. These responses affirmed which operations worked well; suggested improvements to existing organizational, ministry, and committee processes and procedures; and identified new services that were needed and wanted by the membership at large.

This information was then provided to the councils, pastor, and staff and analyzed. The result was the formulation of a five year strategic plan. Using the principles of Ba, the plan was divided into five sections based on the areas of vitality outlined in the pastoral letter. Within each area, goals were written and objectives devised through a collaborative effort of consensus as outlined in Revisioning the Parish Pastoral Council: A Workbook (Gubish, Jenny, and McGannon, 2001) and with specific respect to key elements outlined in the Constitution on the Church. Table 2 provides a high level examination of the strategic plan.

CONCLUSIONS

As stated his information was then provided to the councils, pastor, and staff who studied and discussed it in regular weekly meetings. The result was the formulation of a five year strategic plan, a primary management planning tool for operations direction, fiscal planning, membership enrichment, and service provision. Using the principles of Ba, the plan was divided into five sections based on the areas of vitality outlined in the pastoral letter. Within each area, goals were written and objectives devised through a collaborative effort of consensus as outlined in Revisioning the Parish Pastoral Council: A Workbook (Gubish, Jenny, and McGannon, 2001) and with specific respect to key elements outlined in the Constitution on the Church. Table 2 provides a high level illustration of the strategic plan.

Table 2: High Level Presentation of Strategic Plan

Area of Vitality	Number of Goals	Number of Associated Objectives
Worship and Prayer	5	14
Identity	5	19
Finance and Stewardship	2	10
Education	1	6
Outreach and Service	4	7

While goals remained constant, the objectives were prioritized through a process of discourse and consensus. Based on this prioritization process, each objective was then assigned a completion date over the five year span and a knowledge manager who is defined as an objective leader having some experience or expertise in the field of the objective. Additionally, because of the knowledge gained through this process of leadership and communication, council members, staff, and the pastor decided that it should be applied to each existing ministry and organization and any new entity established by the strategic plan. A second ad hoc committee was formed from the membership at large who had expertise and knowledge in organizational development, training and development, education, and writing. This ad hoc committee's purpose, as outlined in the strategic plan in the area of Identity, was to develop an organization wide training program rooted in the process of Ba and using the roles established by Davenport and Prusak. The outcome was entitled the "Ministry and Organization Renewal Facilitation" process or MORF and an accompanying MORF manual. This handbook offers a number of components and tools to assist ministries and committees in the development of mission statements based on their purpose of existence, its relation to the organizational mission statement, and any operating principles specific to that ministry or committee or any objectives assigned to it from the five year strategic plan. Likewise, MORF also brings ministries and committees through a smaller scale process of communication and self-examination with the ultimate outcome of a yearly strategic plan of goals and objectives.

In this case, Nonaka's theory of Ba proved to be an effective means of knowledge generation for a religious non-profit organization within the parameters or context of the Constitution on the Church, pastoral letters, and a process knowledge gathering, analysis, and consensus outlined by Gubish, Jenny, and McGannon. Coupled with Nonaka, respect of Davenport and Prusak's definitions of knowledge seller, buyer, broker, and commodity was also incorporated. In this multi-year caste study, it was observed that knowledge sellers or membership at large and professional staff provided data on organizational identity, effective processes, and needs. Knowledge buyers assumed the provided data and formulated it through a systematic process of data gathering, analysis, interpretation, and collaborative decision making into information. This information ultimately manifested in the forms of a mission statement and five year strategic plan. The application of Ba facilitated this process thus providing a complex 501-C3 organization with direction, planning, and operational knowledge as well as, processes which have helped it more effectively serve its population.

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