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Abstract

Purchasing is now recognized as a source of competitive advantage. Old arm's-length relationship can no longer meet the challenges of fast changing business environment and generate long-term value. Transaction management has to transform to relationship management. Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) becomes a new frontier of significant operational improvement and cost-saving. SRM related topics have drawn extensive attention of academic researchers, recently the focus shifts from domain-specific SRM components to integrated SRM framework.

This paper follows the integrated concept of SRM, but aims to explore the framework from a new angle: build SRM framework as a knowledge management tool. The framework not only connects separate SRM components by function, but also acts as an integrator of dispersed supplier knowledge (knowledge from suppliers, knowledge about suppliers and knowledge for suppliers), which embeds in these components, in- and outside the purchasing organization.

First, the related concepts in SRM and KM are presented, and supplier management is discussed and integrated in the conceptual framework of knowledge management. To test the propositions and models in the theoretical framework, an action research to develop a knowledge-oriented SRM framework is conducted in close collaboration of a purchasing department in an international beer company. During the process, the current status of supplier management is investigated to determine the components of the framework, namely supplier database, supplier selection, performance evaluation, supplier classification and development. Multi-stakeholders are engaged to participate in designing each component to ensure a close fit and adoption. The whole process generated extensive internal discussion and reflection, and the effect of each component on organizational knowledge management is displayed in a supplier knowledge map.

The research suggests that supplier knowledge distributed within the purchasing organization can be acquired, interpreted, disseminated and utilized through a SRM framework.

Key words	Supplier Relationship Management, Knowledge Management, Purchasing
Further information	