KNOWLEDGE COMMUNITIES AS A WAY OF APPLYING THE CLIENT KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT CONCEPT – THE CASE OF IT SECTOR IN POLAND

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Abstract: *The idea of marketing knowledge management and knowledge communities occurred as a consequence of the process of transformation of traditional business relations into collaboration of industry, services and their partners, due to the fact that information has become a production's resources, especially in net-product sectors (for example IT sector). The intellectual value (information, knowledge, innovation) is created by enterprises, their co-competitors (co-operators, competitors) and customers to satisfy target markets. The global, innovative firms have been using new tools to create relations based on knowledge-changing, because global customers are more exacting and they take decisions more knowingly. The article will contain the example of the best practices in marketing knowledge management of IT-leaders (IBM, Intel, Microsoft, HP) in the global market.*

Field: knowledge management, knowledge communities

INTRODUCTION

The source of competitive advantage for the contemporary companies are resources and competences at their disposal, determining their attractiveness in global relations with other subjects. Hence the prerequisite for success is deliberate and engaged co-implementation of a long-term strategy of creating value for the client, for which creating and managing knowledge is necessary. This is enabled by inter-company relations (including network ones; Dosi 1982, pp. 147-162; Christensen 2010, p. 77), which in total create additional value in comparison to the value of the sum of individual actions. Synergy is a factor generating mutual attractiveness among the cooperating subjects, and as such it constitutes inter-organizational network, both sub-sectoral and inter-sectoral, just like it can be observed of IT products market, being the subject of interest of the authors. Hence the relations with partners, specialists, research teams, scientific center, and the client gain a new, network dimension, with the latter being the creator and consumer of a particular bundle of benefits (prosumer), as well as an active network participant. The client, having specified his/her individual needs, becomes a

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consultant in the process of value creation, provided that his/her competences are adequately stimulated. This may result in loyal behavior, but at the same time enhances the client's bargaining power. The development of technological awareness of the target customer creates new reservoirs of innovativeness. A way to acquire and stimulate this element of knowledge ecosystem is a number of initiatives and actions undertaken by the investigated companies from the IT sector within so called client knowledge communities, which constitutes an interesting subject for research and scientific enquiries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1/Client Knowledge Management– Identification of Research Category

Knowledge management is a business process, thanks to which companies create and apply its institutional or collective knowledge (Sarvary, 1999). It is a process through which they generate wealth from knowledge and intellectual capital (Bukowitz, Wiliams 2000). Knowledge management constitutes a compilation of processes such as creating, accumulating, organizing, disseminating, applying and exploitating knowledge in the course of organization's functioning (Skyrme 1999). According to Ernst and Young knowledge management is a system designed to assist companies in acquiring, analysis, and applying knowledge in order to make quicker, smarter and better decisions leading to achieving competitive advantage. ProcewaterhouseCoopers perceive knowledge as an art of processing information and other intellectual assets into sustainable value for the clients and organization's employees (Błaszczuk, Brdulak, Guzik, Pawluczuk 2004, p.19). Knowledge management involves methods, instruments and tools, which as a whole contribute to the main processes with the participation of knowledge – its generating, storing and distribution – in all areas and on every level of an organization (Mikuła 2001, s. 59).
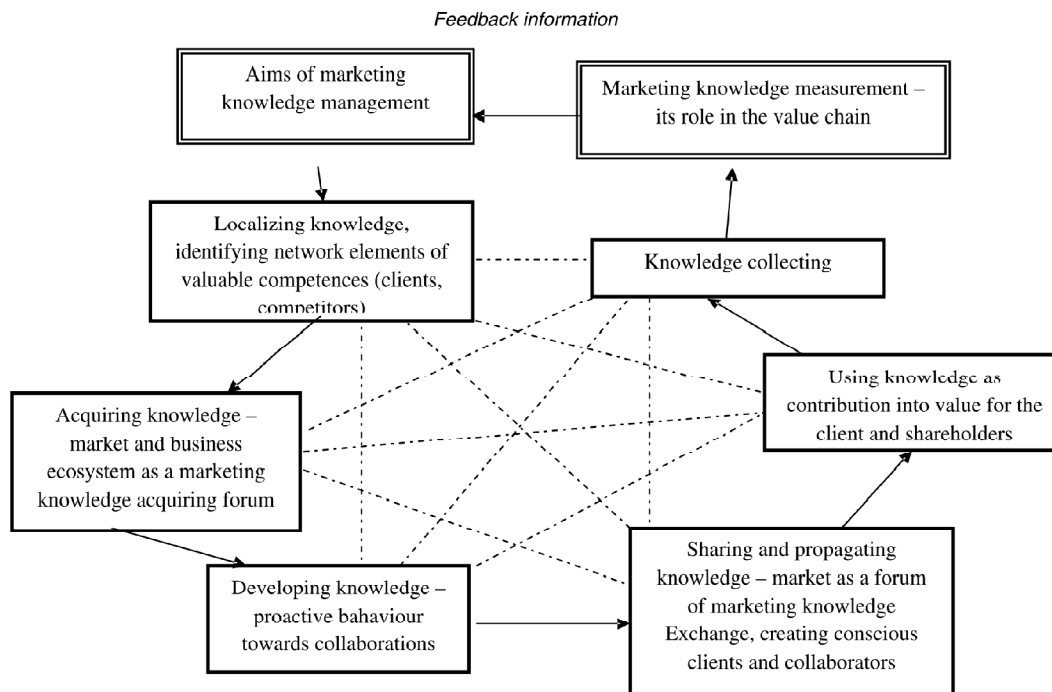
According to the metaphorical approach (Davenport, Prusak 1998) to knowledge management, a company as a system creating, storing and applying knowledge may serve as a metaphor allowing to look at management practices to date in a different way. This approach stresses knowledge transfers within the organization, bottlenecks as well as other disturbances in this transfer. Knowledge in the process approach (Davenport, Prusak 1998) is a resource of value, which may be processed and applied. The presence and engaging of knowledge into functioning of an organization has not been questioned, however to date it occurred in an extensive and unconscious way. Knowledge management becomes a necessity in view of rapid development and constant changes within contemporary organizations, the growth of knowledge-rich products, globalization of economy and many other factors. Hence the possibility to use and affect knowledge attracts more and more attention. The universal approach (Davenport, Prusak 1998) can

be epitomized by the phrase "everything is knowledge". It is a mixture of expressed experience, values, contextual information and expert's insight, which provide basis for evaluating and assimilating new experiences and information. Knowledge comes into being and is used in the mind of its owner. Within an organization knowledge is often built not only into the documents or knowledge files but also in the organizational procedures and processes, in codes of practice and norms of behavior. The entrepreneurial approach is noticeable regarding practical solutions, consisting in concentrating on strictly defined knowledge areas and maximizing their exploitation. Together with the development of IT tools for companies, knowledge management is sometimes identified with the application of a certain IT solution (technological approach) (Panasiewicz 2004, s. 42-48).

Marketing knowledge management consists in indentifying, arranging, measuring and storing the possessed marketing knowledge as well as protecting it, extending, restoring and propagating, a processes successfully realized through a platform of exchanging knowledge and experience among all network partners, including the customer. It is a system of tools, processes, structures and cultures developed in order to improve sharing, creating and applying knowledge particularly for corporations' decision-making processes, including marketing ones (Tiwana 2003, s.34). A system offer, regarded to be attractive in today's market, that is complex and technologically involved, results from the collaboration of business networks, including the customer, who participates in creating value desired and expected by him and other customers (Fig. 1).

A new term has been coined in the literature Knowledge and Customer Relationship Management (KCRM – synthesis of KM and CRM), the idea based on real time, long-term relationship with the customer, who is considered to be value co-creator as knowledge and information received from him enables forecasting and development (Perechuda 2005, pp. 55-57). It consists in creating tacit knowledge in the process of interaction with customers and collaborators in terms of possibility to enhance each link of a value-added chain/network. Such a concept may be defined as a way of realizing the marketing knowledge management. The transfer of knowledge in a business process and knowledge management (Knowledge Chain Management) requires a link in the form of a customer, whose competences are or may be created within a value system. Hence the customer becomes the business component. The customer treated as a knowledge agent contributes to the fast development of the business's research and development capital, human resources, as well as relational and organizational capital of the company.

The value for the customer, being a bundle of benefits and costs perceived while purchasing and using products and/or services is supposed to be the greater, the more effective were the knowledge-based relations between the business, its network partners and the customer (according to KCRM and network marketing), especially on the market treated as a forum of knowledge and competences

Figure 1: Process Model of Marketing Knowledge Management

Feedback information

Aims of marketing knowledge management

Marketing knowledge measurement – its role in the value chain

Localizing knowledge, identifying network elements of valuable competences (clients, competitors)

Knowledge collecting

Acquiring knowledge – market and business ecosystem as a marketing knowledge acquiring forum

Using knowledge as contribution into value for the client and shareholders

Developing knowledge – proactive bahaviour towards collaborations

Sharing and propagating knowledge – market as a forum of marketing knowledge Exchange, creating conscious clients and collaborators

Source: Author's study using the business knowledge profile. G. Probst, S. Raub, K. Romhardt: Zarządzanie wiedzą w organizacji. Oficyna Ekonomiczna, Kraków 2004, p. 280

exchange between network partners in global economy (Grudzewski, Hejduk, 2004, pp. 8-10).

A knowledge community is community construct, stemming from the convergence of knowledge management as a field of study and social exchange theory. Formerly known as a discourse community (Porter, 1992; Nystrand, 1982; Swales 1990) and having evolved from forums and web forums, knowledge communities are now often referred to as a community of practice (Lave, Wenger, 1991) or virtual community of practice. A community of practice (CoP) is a group of people who share a craft and/or a profession. The group can evolve naturally because of the members' common interest in a particular domain or area, or it can be created specifically with the goal of gaining knowledge related to their field. It is through the process of sharing information and experiences within the group that the members learn from each other, and have an opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally. CoPs can exist online, such as within discussion boards and newsgroups, or in real life, such as in a lunch rooms at work, in a field setting, on a factory floor, or elsewhere in the environment. Stemming from social exchange theory (in this case a social network is a social

Table 1
The Evolution of the Role of Clients in the Contemporary Processes of
Information Transfer and Value Creation

	Persuading predetermined groups of buyers	*Transacting with individual buyers*	*Lifetime bonds with individual clients*	*Customers as cocreators of value*
	Customers as a passive audience			Customers as active players
Time frame	1970s, early 1980s	Late 1980s and early 1990s	1990s	Beyond 2000
Nature of business exchange and role of customer	Customers are seen as passive buyers with a predetermined role of consumption			Customers are part of the enhanced network; they cocreate and extract business value. They are collaborators, codevelopers, and competitors.
Managerial mind-set	The customer is an average statistic, groups of buyers are predetermined by the company	The customer is an individual statistic in a transaction.	The customer is a person; cultivate trust and relationships.	The customer is not only an individual but also part of an emergent social and cultural fabric.
Company's interaction with customers, and development of products and services	Traditional market research and inquiries; products and services are created without much feedback.	Shift from selling to helping customers via help desks, call center, and customer service programs; identify problems from customers, then redesign products and services based on that feedback.	Providing for customers through observation of users; identify solutions from lead users, and reconfigure products and services based on deep understanding of customers.	Customers are co-developers of personalized experiences. Companies and lead customers have joint roles in education, shaping expectations, and co-creating market acceptance for products and services.
Purpose and flow of information	Gain access to and target predetermined groups of buyers. One-way communication.	Database marketing; two-way communication.	Relationship marketing; two-way communication and access.	Active dialogue with customers to shape expectations and create buzz. Multilevel access and communication.

Source: C. Prahalad, V. Ramaswamy: Co-opting Customer Competence. „Harvard Business Review" 2000, January-February, p. 80

structure made up of a set of actors - such as individuals or organizations- and the dyadic ties among these actors; the social network perspective provides a clear way of analyzing the structure of whole social entities; Wasserman, Faust 1994 pp. 1–27), a well-established perspective is to view knowledge communities as a type of exchange. The motivations for participating in the exchange vary. The exchange remains open based on the perceived value (e.g., return on time investment) to knowledge community members.

Knowledge communities can also be viewed as a method by which to do organizational or process innovation. KCs are often founded to introduce change to a system, an organizational or societal one, by identifying, creating, representing and/or distributing data, information and/or knowledge in and via a community context under the pretext that more significant value will be created via a knowledge value chain. From an organizational perspective, knowledge communities serve to maintain the strong ties and weak ties of the organization with many diverse publics; they help feed quality back into the organization (via more timely feedback and narrative analysis of discussions), drive organization credibility (via more rich exposure and building public trust by incorporating diverse opinion) and speed knowledge transfer and knowledge utilization (e.g., by providing a conversation space to bridge gaps between research and practice).

Willing to manage the customer's/collaborator's knowledge, the business has to decide about the following:

- – who to share the knowledge with, considering not only internal addressees (personnel) but also external ones (target customers, business partners), as well as their activity in adopting innovations, loyalty inclination, significance in propagating knowledge and threat of their integration (respectively backwards or forwards),
- – which knowledge to share, as for its scope and value for creating the customer/partner active in adapting innovation, loyal and persuasive propagator that would not integrate.
- – how to share knowledge, which means creating a platform facilitating relations of those who possess knowledge and those who need specific knowledge, irrespectively of the level of their consciousness of lack of knowledge (De Long, Seemann, 2000, pp. 33-44).

2/ Knowledge Management in Network Structures

Knowledge communities are a form of implementing the knowledge management concept typical for network structures, whose participant, next to business partners, is also the client. Knowledge created, exchanged and used in those structures, is the effect of their cooperation. The client knowledge communities constitute an integral subsystem of the business network structures.

Network structures in business are groups of more than two independent organizations related to one another with bonds of the following features:

- decisions on resources are made not only integrally by the parties to the transaction but also collectively by collaborating parties,
- flow of resources between collaborating parties is not of tentative but rather repeatable nature, mutual expectation of collaborating partners cover a longer time perspective,
- information (knowledge) available to the collaborating parties is much greater than the one in case of market coordination,
- the parties coordinate their activities through negotiations and agreements, not competition.

Networks create an additional value compared to the value equal to the sum of individual activities. Synergy is a factor generating mutual attractiveness of collaborating partners and thus it constitutes cross-organizational networks, both sub- and cross-sectoral ones. The network partners take part in building up the network success (collaborative strategies). The sources of this success lies in conscious and committed common implementation of a long-run strategy of building up values for which producing and managing the network of knowledge is essential (Sztangret, 2008). The knowledge sharing and its spreading may mean a centrally managed process of the knowledge dissemination within a certain group of employees and/or the network partners, as well as transfer of knowledge between individuals and groups of individuals (Probst, Raub, Romhardt, 2004 p. 177). The knowledge management, particularly in network structures, requires a system attitude since it covers the following: sets of knowledge, relation networks between partners, ways of transferring knowledge, IT systems, IT networks, semantic systems and culture of organization.

In a network structure the intellectual capital is the key competence of the enterprise – the network Promoter, tacit knowledge is reserved for the integrator and strategic collaborators and prosuments. The integrator in this case is defined as possessing key competences and coordinating their transfer within the network (Żabiñski, 2008). In addition, continuous dissemination of knowledge takes place (Perechuda 2005, p.153). Knowledge circulates on different levels of the network and in different directions. Transfer of knowledge is defined as aggregated amount of know-how and information passed in a certain time unit (Schulz, 2001, p.662).

Regarding knowledge markets certain transfers can be distinguished, between:

(a) participants of an internal market and internal experts of an enterprise,
(b) units of an enterprise's internal knowledge market and external experts, network entities,
(c) network's knowledge market entities and external experts, potential network participants, institutions and organization of close environment,
(d) network entities and the client.

Including a client with competences into a network (that is applying client strategies) it may be stated that thanks to the relations of the network partners that use effective tools, the market becomes a forum for co-creating competences of exceptionally synergic value.

Knowledge management is a cyclical process encompassing four stages: (Nonaka, Takeuchi, 1995):

(a) socializing – it is a process of sharing experiences and creating such tacit knowledge as mental models and technical competences, interactions with the client before preparing the design of a new product, it is sharing tacit knowledge and creating better ideas on this basis;

(b) externalization – a process of knowledge creation, in which tacit knowledge becomes disseminated through metaphors, analogies, concepts, hypotheses or models, it means transformation of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, that is disclosed to partners;

(c) combination -compiling different kinds of explicit knowledge, processing knowledge from various sources (also knowledge coming from partners) by way of selecting, standardizing and categorizing information, which may lead to the creation of knew knowledge,

(d) internalization - its a process of transforming explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge, it is learning by doing, including contacts with partners.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The method used in this research is an in-depth case study analysis. This consists in a comprehensive presentation of a real situation occurring in a particular company or in regard to one of the functions realized within the company (e. g. management, marketing), which is treated as an individual case. It involves seeking for all necessary data enabling its in-depth analysis, formulating possible choice options and making the best possible decision, accompanied by a proper justification (Wiktor, 1996, p. 11). Application of this method seems well founded, considering the following:

1. The research concerns contemporary, dynamic phenomena and the process of knowledge formation, pertaining to these phenomena;

2. The research concerns investigating actual contexts of these phenomena, concerning significant ambiguity of boundaries between the very phenomena and their contexts;

3. The object of the research is too complicated, to explain cause and effect relationships with the help of methods such as poll or experiment (Perry 2001, No 1, s.305).

The unit of analysis/the subject of the case investigated are „complex situations" (Perry, 2001), i. e. groups of economic subjects (particularly leaders of

network structures and clients) and their marketing behavior. A case reflects changes that are new and to some extent critical for the investigated subjects, particularly in Polish conditions.

In the initial stage of the research networking products promoters have been selected, through the review of experiences and using the criterion of their position on the Polish market (Fig. 2). Then their network partners and cooperants outside the network have been determined and subnetworks of clients have been selected. This is an attempt to find best practices within marketing knowledge management in network knowledge communities, for the purpose of creating and exchanging computer products. Four leaders/network promoters have been subject to the research (Miles, Huberman 1994, p. 30; Eisenhardt 1991, p. 545).

The selected cases deliver both literal and theoretical replication (Perry, 2007, pp. 314-315). The investigated companies are representatives of a convergent sector (telecommunication, IT, media) and offer various products for business, public, home, entertainment or universal purposes. Their common feature is strong engagement in creating knowledge communities and cooperating in this field.

Internet resources have been identified and critically analyzed, in particular websites of the selected subjects, as well as publicly available computer databases, reports and studies of the sector's organizations published in the Internet. Detailed, continuous observation of the Internet sources has been applied since 2000.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1/ The Knowledge Community of IBM

In line with the corporation policy, **IBM** supports computer education and promotes business computerization, assists students, IT users and educational institutions. Within T*he Academic Initiative* IBM Polska cooperates with the University of Warsaw and a dozen of other academic centers. The initiative enabled the installation of one of the biggest computers in Central and Eastern Europe at the University of Warsaw, thanks to which a lot of Polish institutions have gained access to the world academic networks and the most up-to date software tools.

IBM has been very actively involved in the initiative „Internet w Szkoªach – Projekt Prezydenta RP" */Internet in Schools – Project of the President of the Republic of Poland/*, a nationwide event enabling installation of internet classrooms in schools, financed with non-budgetary means. In December 2002, under the auspices of the Minister of Science and Computerization, IBM in Poland started implementing KIDSMART programme, the initiative to support elementary education of pre-school aged children. Each quarter IBM Polska supplies 30 „Young Explorer" computer sets with educational software installed to 30 Polish kindergartens.

In IBM Education Centre in Warsaw there are held training courses for employees, partners and potential collaborators, as well as customers. The courses'

Figure 2: Star Network Model, Integrated by HP, Intel, IBM, Microsoft, showing the Dimension of offer's Width and Relation Scope
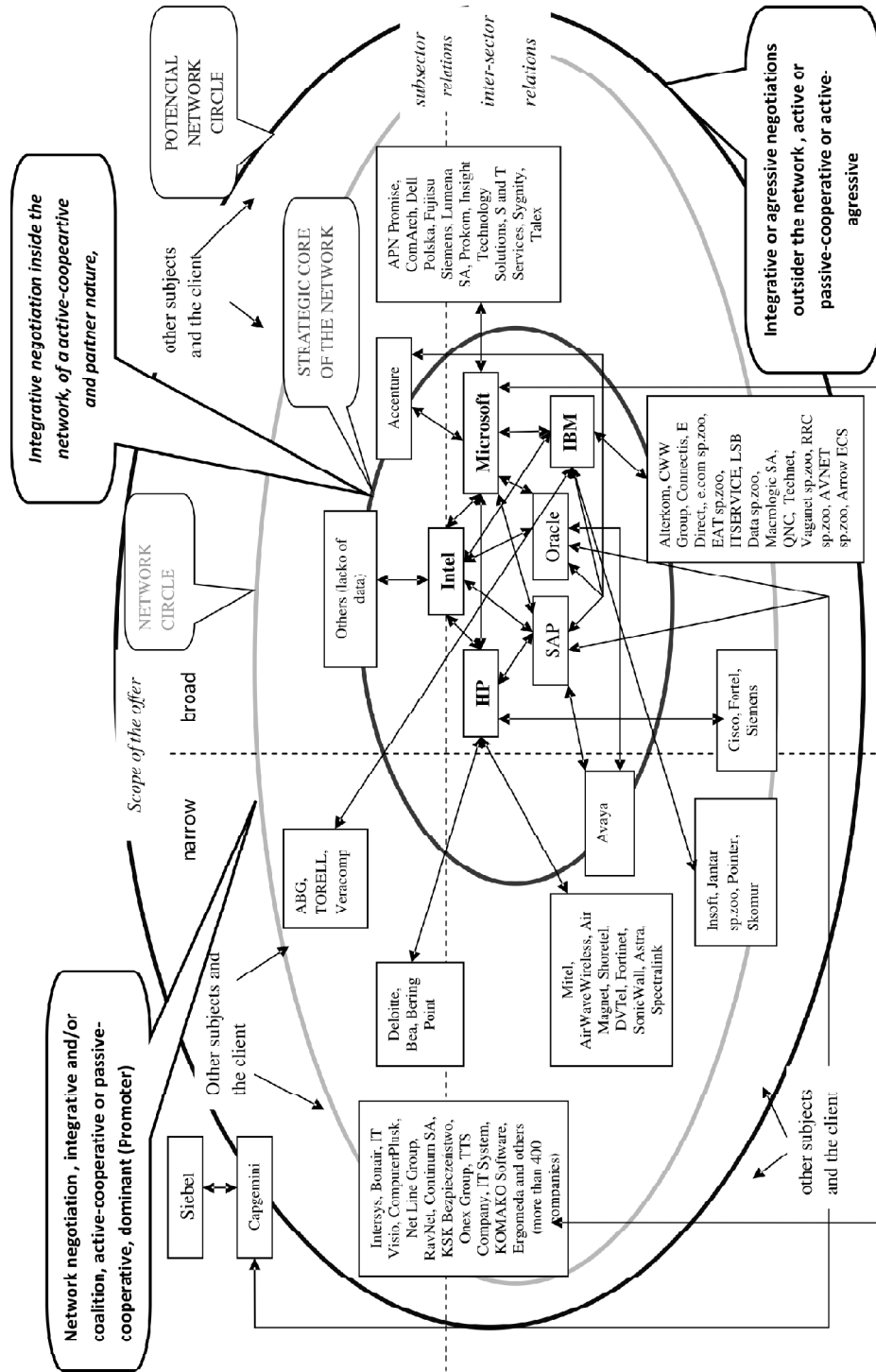

Source: own elaboration

programs cover new IBM products, IT services and projects management. The course for business partners aim at preparing them for IBM certification exams. Additionally, IBM Innovation Center offers workshops and seminars on the newest technologies (such as IBM WebSphere, Linux, dispersion processing and network services) for partners and collaborators. The company's services also include open training courses and those prepared on request as well as based on the individual needs expressed by potential or actual customers. IBM Education has an offer for regular customers (*www.ibm.pl,* 07.05.2011).

Initiatives within the customer's/collaborator's knowledge management

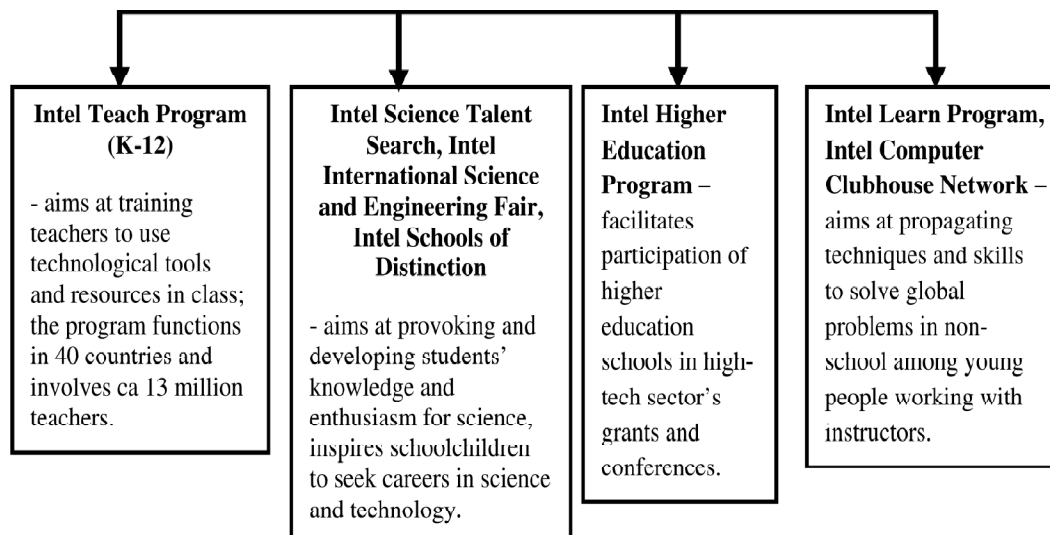**Figure 3: The Customer Knowledge Management in IBM**
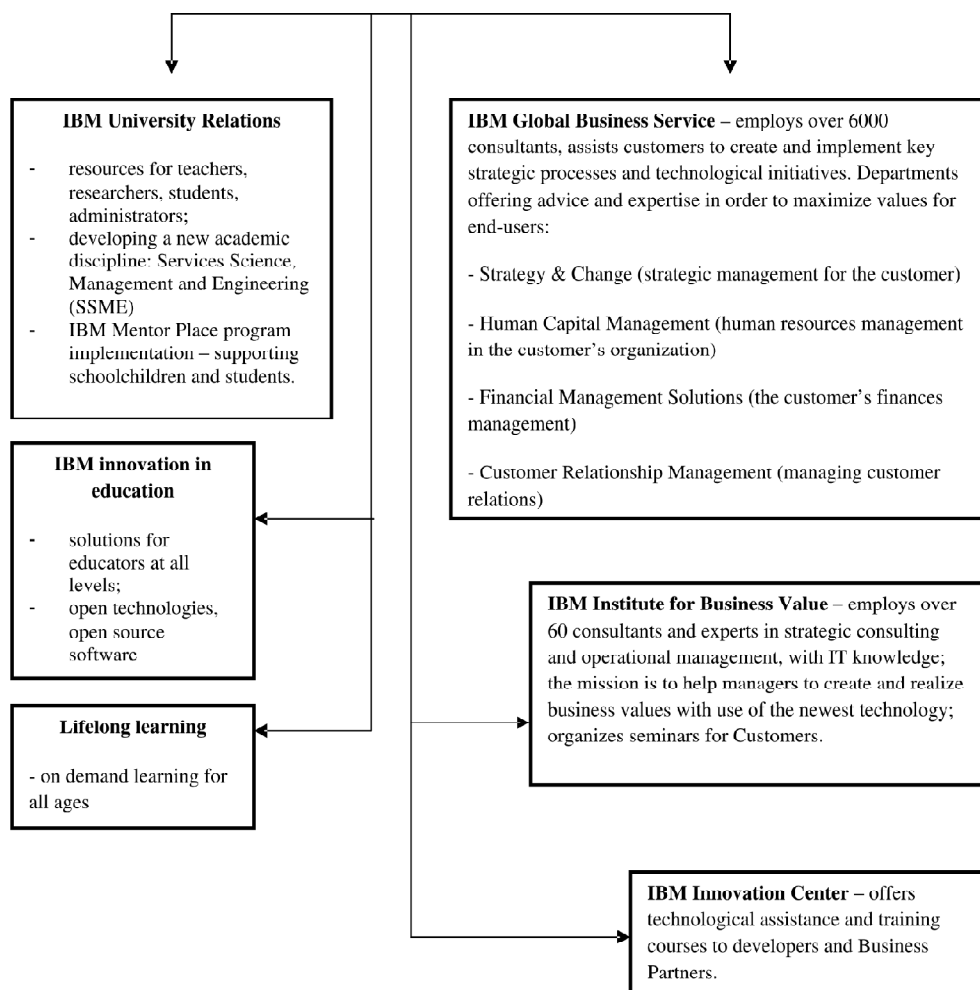
Source: The authors' own study based on the company's internal information

2/ The Rules of Client Cooperation within the Asymmetric Social Network (based on the Intel's Example)

Taking the client knowledge management initiatives (Fig. 4), **Intel** belongs to a network of partners cooperating for promoting information and communication technologies (ICT). Standards of ICT familiarity for teachers and academics have been developed jointly by Cisco, Intel, Microsoft and International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), Virginia Polytechnic Institute, the State University (Virginia Tech) – which proves a system nature of knowledge management. Intel is an active participant of numerous conferences, for example: Intel, Innovation in education. It invests ca 100 million USD yearly in education programs in over 50 countries.

Initiatives within the customer's/collaborator's knowledge management

Figure 4: Client Knowledge Management in INTEL

| Intel Teach Program (K-12)	Intel Science Talent Search, Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, Intel Schools of Distinction	Intel Higher Education Program –	Intel Learn Program, Intel Computer Clubhouse Network –
- aims at training teachers to use technological tools and resources in class; the program functions in 40 countries and involves ca 13 million teachers.	- aims at provoking and developing students' knowledge and enthusiasm for science, inspires schoolchildren to seek careers in science and technology.	facilitates participation of higher education schools in high-tech sector's grants and conferences.	aims at propagating techniques and skills to solve global problems in non-school among young people working with instructors.

Source: The authors' own study based on the company's internal information

By systematic broadening the knowledge forum, Intel takes part in defining standards of future cooperation of non-governmental organizations and the government. Such activities are another possibility of informal management and creation of knowledge.

The implementation tools in the scope of client strategy, are in this case of social-cultural and technological nature, including elements of financial back-up (table 2).

Figure 5: Knowledge Community Model Realized by Intel in Poland
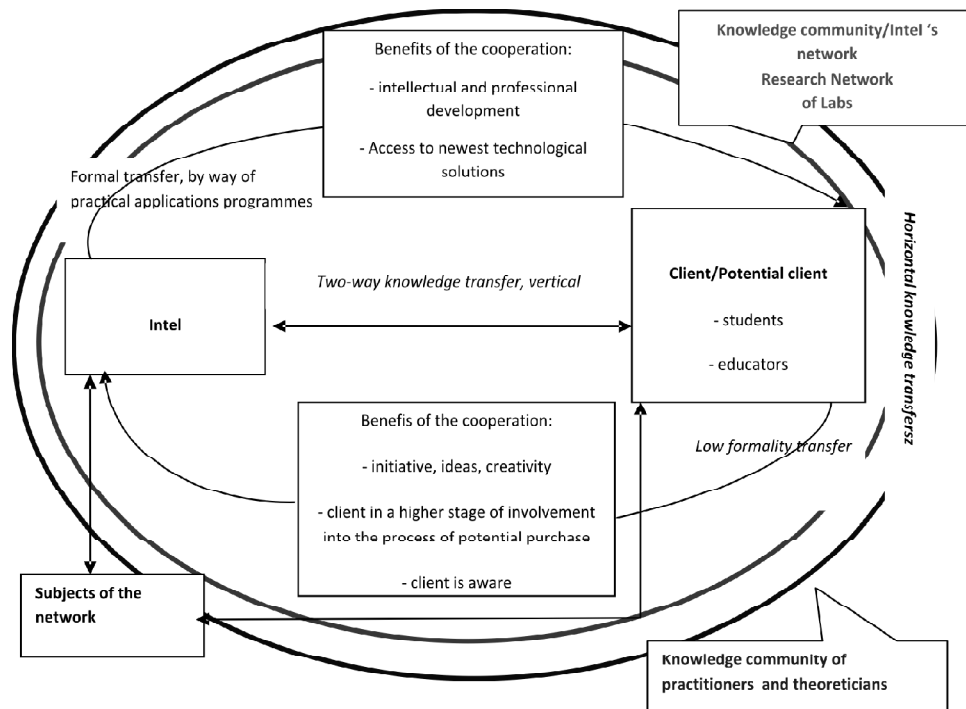
Source: own elaboration

Such a way of acting is a sign of creating global knowledge community. In the opinion of Intel it is also a reflection of implementing business ethics program.

The actions of the Intel company are an example of an asymmetric social network, based on interpersonal relations created by the participants of the central organization. In this way a special potential of the cooperating subjects comes into being. These subjects are ready to undertake actions when necessary and this form of cooperation is not accompanied by any formal contracts or capital relations (Grudzewski, Hejduk, 2002; K. Perechuda, 2005; Żabiñski 2008; Żabiñski 2007).

3/ Rules of Cooperation within Knowledge Community, based on the Example of Formalized Structure (Promoter Microsoft)

The Microsoft company creates knowledge communities (table 3) by participating in programs for the benefit of potential network users and global society. Such programs include: facilitation of dynamic development for companies, the development of information society, promoting innovative technologies as a factor increasing competitiveness, dissemination of innovative technologies as a factor increasing the accessibility of offices for citizens, promoting the possibility of financing investments in new technologies with the help of EU subsidies.

Table 2
The Tools of Client Knowledge Community According to Target Groups

Target group	*Tools*
Teachers of elementary and middle schools	- conferences, e. g. "Moving Young Minds" - programs„ Nauczanie ku przyszłości", „Odyseja innowacyjna" (eng. teaching towards the future, innovation odyssey) - direct training in the scope of applying technology in class - website „Intel Edukacja" (Intel Education) – educational on-line program for educators
University scientific workers and students	- global educational strategy with the participation of companies and the government - scientists' forum, e. g. the university representatives from EMEA region - sponsoring university research and grants in the following fields: application, telecommunication architecture, communication, microprocessor technologies and systems - programs in favor of implementing technological solutions, e. g. „Otwarty program nauczania" (eng. Open educational program) - Intel's lectures for students - doctoral studies in 12 European R&D institutes - competition for students aiming at increasing interest in post graduate and doctoral studies
Students	- Scientific rivalry – organization called Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) rewards accomplishments of young scientists - activating students into initiatives such as e. g. international scientific and technological fairs
Society	- computer clubs of Intel - educational programs „projektowanie i odkrywanie" (eng. designing and discovering) - expanding broadband access to Internet

Source: own elaboration

The company undertakes obligations for the benefit of eliminating IT exclusions. For this purpose new programs and products are being developed in order to enable social and economic development within areas of low level of technologization. Enlarging the project Microsoft Unlimited Potential, the company intensifies its actions to date consisting in using technology and training, when partnering with organizations throughout the world, with the purpose of transforming educational systems, cultivating local innovativeness and creating workplaces and development opportunities, to obtain, as a result, continuity of social and economic development cycle in order to create educated target markets.

Table 3

The subjects of Microsoft's knowledge community, aims and tools of effecting transfers

Program	Co-implementers	Target group	Tools	Purpose and form
European Counseling Initiative	HP, Intel, BRE Bank	Small and medium enterprises Self-government units	Direct relations with specialists (consulting company, bank representative), on-line relations	Free seminars and conferences (e.g. Microsoft Entrepreneurship Forum) concerning obtaining European funds, using modern technologies to achieve competitive advantage, databases of current subsidies, preparing applications for subsidizing a particular project, procedures of obtaining financial funds for own contribution (success fee payments)
Subprograms of IDE · ITeraz Europa	Cisco, HP, Intel, Microsoft	Local authorities	Direct and on – line relations	Knowledge on the accessibility of EU funds for investments in modern technologies
Entrepreneurship academy	TP SA, HP, Intel, Siemens, Bank Millenium	Enterprises	Direct and on – line relations	Knowledge on the accessibility of EU funds for investments in modern technologies
Partnerstwo dla Przyszłości (eng. Partnership for the Future) (Microsoft Unlimited Potential)	Governments, non-governmental organizations, sector's leaders, scientific community	Enterprises Educators and students	Direct and on – line relations Software packages – Microsoft Student Innovation Suite, Centers for technology education (Community Based Technology and Learning Center, Project Ikonk@, Center of education and professional activation of the disabled Associa-tion „Gniazdo" (eng. Nest)	Subprogram Education: courses and training (certificates in the field of Microsoft technology) Computer laboratories, E-reading rooms

contd. table 3

Program	Co-implementers	Target group	Tools	Purpose and form
Microsoft Imagine Cup	-	Students	Direct relations	Subprogram Education: technological competition increasing interest in technology and innovation outside school, internship program
Academic Board at Microsoft's	-	Universities and colleges	Direct relations	Development of cooperation in the field of teaching, research and university computerization
Innovation centers (entrepreneur incubators)	governments, educational institutions, enterprises, banks	Small and medium enterprises Labour markets	Direct relations, Internet portal Centers for technology education	Subprogram on supporting local innovativeness and development opportunities: access to programs and services of Microsoft for the purpose of raising qualifications of employees, creating workplaces, strengthening innovativeness and competitiveness
Partnerstwo na rzecz dostępu do technologii (eng. Partnership for Technology Access)	Government, technological companies, banks, non-governmental organizations	Developing economies	Direct relations	Program on increasing access to personal computers and technology application
Network of knowledge telecenters (TKN)	Academy for Educational Development, telecentre.org	Governments, enterprises, community leaders	Book publication, webpage	Stimulating technology application for social-economic development

Source: own elaboration

Within the knowledge community, created in the Internet, Microsoft singles out the following:

- Microsoft online community – it is a place in the Internet for programmers and IT specialists, where one can find knowledge, problem solutions as well as meet new people in the IT field. The online community is created both by Microsoft and the very community members (WSS and CodeGuru portals). Microsoft also reaches communities through its newsletters (TechNet Flash i Dev Flash).

- Offline communities are mostly User Groups, gathering Microsoft technology enthusiasts. Their regular meetings are a perfect way to collective knowledge acquisition, technical topics discussions and sharing experiences. The Group offers particular, specific knowledge regarding Microsoft technology.

- Microsoft Most Valuable Professionals (MVP) is an international Microsoft program for programmers and IT specialists. The MVP title is granted to those, who through their actions, have significantly and positively influenced the technological community and are its main core. Microsoft intends the online and offline community leaders to know, that their effort is noticed and appreciated. MVP is a form of gratitude for the efforts to date and motivation and support for further activity.

Through making modern technologies available to clients, partnership with the government, entrepreneurs and social organizations, the company by creating network of knowledge transfer, uses financial, technological and social tools. It attempts to contribute to social and economic development of countries, which is perceived as a form of implementing ethical business, also in Polish conditions.

The actions of the Microsoft company are an example of a network bearing traces of a bureaucratic/formalized relation, which consists in valuing the engagement of particular participants. In this case contracts on cooperation and partnership are created, determining among others exclusivity clauses, forms of know-how transfer and motivational systems (Grudzewski, Hejduk, 2002; Perechuda, 2005; Żabiñski 2007, 2008).

4/ Relations with partners of a client ecosystem of knowledge based on the example of HP

Within the client strategy of knowledge management HP acts for the benefit of creating global, educated society, which also includes Poland. The Center of Digital Community, appointed for this purpose, is training teachers, students, social workers and the unemployed, particularly in poor regions. HP notices long-term market opportunities in developed and developing regions, which currently do not have access to advanced technologies, by transferring knowledge of the field.

Such centers come into being in cooperation with a network of partners: schools, colleges, universities, local authorities, social and non-profit organizations. These centers operate in France, Ghana, Hungary, Ireland, Jordan, Northern Ireland, Russia, Portugal, Ukraine, Scotland, Senegal and Republic of South Africa. Initially the HP initiative opposed IT exclusion of certain social groups, currently however it focuses on the exchange of knowledge with the client, which will cause intensive use of IT for accelerating entrepreneurial development and stimulating economic growth.

CONCLUSIONS

The company's knowledge is a subset of its intellectual capital, which enables taking effective decisions. Knowledge sharing consists in its propagation within the organization and beyond. Thus, one may talk about synergic effects obtained from joining knowledge, professional experience and ways of thinking of different people, partners and their communities. Knowledge management involving obtaining, analyzing and using knowledge contributes to the increase of competitiveness and value of the company. The company's market value comprises intangible assets, such as relations with a competent partner as well as conscious settlement of transactions and client's recommendations. The customer's and partner's created knowledge together with their involvement in the forum for future events is the marketing contribution in the company's value. Such knowledge makes the structural capital regarded to be the company's intellectual property and is perceived, apart from the company's general marketing skills, abilities and competences, as the marketing intellectual capital. The case study analyses presented in this paper prove that companies from the IT sector actively seek this kind of partners' and clients' involvement, which in result leads to co-creation and exchange of knowledge. Although in particular cases knowledge communities were created in slightly different way, the main aim remains the same.

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