



Knowledge Bias: Neo-feudalism and Other Reasons to Avoid Sharing Knowledge by Knowledge Workers

Yoav Gal¹ · Adiv Gal²

Received: 25 January 2016 / Accepted: 27 July 2017
© Springer Science+Business Media, LLC 2017

Abstract Assuming that knowledge workers are usually not unwise, there must be a reason for the phenomenon in which most of the knowledge sharing initiatives in classic enterprise systems fail. This article proposes a model that attempts to explain the situation. The model departs from what is implicit in most discussions of this kind, to wit, that moral behavior is usually assumed. Instead, the model supposes generally unprincipled behavior by knowledge workers. Knowledge worker in the knowledge economy is not “just a worker” as he/she was in the old type of economy organizations. Every employee is a unique factor of production, and he/she goes through quite a long training process, but one that continually teaches to strive to reach the individual’s objective by illegal means (see the detailed discussion below). Posited here is that knowledge workers, who grew up in an environment of infinite abundance, are spoiled and do not have much patience for anything that does not give them instant gratification, they then take their values to the workplace. That is, the moral values that they apply in the workplace are based on what they learned during their training process. Completing the cascade of factors are the personal, unwritten but nevertheless prevailing, contracts between the employee and his/her patron or immediate supervisor, entailing personal loyalty rather than to the organization as a whole. This parallels almost exactly the structure of the decentralized feudal economy. Senior executives who change organizations frequently bring trusted staff members with them. Often, the incoming boss or executive is the “new broom that sweeps clean” staff members who

✉ Yoav Gal
yoav_gal@smile.net.il

Adiv Gal
adiv_gal@smkb.ac.il

¹ Agricultural Research Organization (A.R.O.), The Volcani Centre, Hamakkabbim Road 68, POB 15159, 7505101 Rishon Leziyyon, Israel

² Head of the Science Department, Kibbutzim College of Education Technology and the Arts, 149 Namir Road, 6250769 Tel-Aviv, Israel