



KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND SUCCESSION PLANNING: CASE STUDY IN A FOOD INDUSTRY FROM THE STATE OF PARANÁ, BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT

This study approached the topic of knowledge management (KM) from the application of the study of Durst and Wilhelm (2012) in the context of succession planning and aimed at obtaining a better understanding of how the Brazilian food industry deals with the danger of knowledge loss because of quitting or long-term absence of the organization's members. The differential of the study consists in the inclusion of the GC perspective in the succession planning matter, and the realisation of an empirical research made as a case study in a family-owned food industry located in the state of Paraná, Brazil. The exploratory research followed by a qualitative approach and semi-structured interview were elected for seeming appropriate methodological outlines for the present case study. The analysis focused in the identification of the critical personal of the firm; in the effects of knowledge loss perceived by the interviewees; and in the used means to store and share knowledge. The main results demonstrated similarities with the original study in the German context, such as lack of standardisation and documentation of the firm's processes; and also divergences, such as favourable culture for succession planning and

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knowledge management in the German firm and lack of understanding about the global view that involve the subject in the Brazilian firm.

KEYWORDS: *Knowledge Management. Succession Planning. Case Study. Food Industry.*

1 INTRODUCTION

This article approached the topic of knowledge management (KM) in the context of succession planning, while focusing in obtaining insights into how the food industry deals with the danger of knowledge loss due to quitting or long-term absence of organization members, from the application and continuity of the study by Durst and Wilhelm (2012) in the context of the Brazilian food industry. The study differential consists in the KM perspective in the succession planning and in the empirical research made in a Brazilian family-owned food industry.

The work's proposal is justified by the insertion of knowledge storing and sharing in succession in a distinct succession process, being such practise determinant for succession (MORRIS et al., 1997). Another relevant study context refers to the food industry, since in this kind of firm specific and technical knowledge of the sector are highly relevant for a competitive advantage (PAVEL, 2013). Borges, Lima and Carvalho (2008) analysed the succession process in a family-owned firm of the cachaça sector and stated although being the main studies and research focus, succession still presents a challenge in the fields of interpretation and modelling. In this way, research opportunities appear for the subjects in distinct scenarios, such as the food industry.

Departing from the principle that transactions management is intimately linked to succession in firms (SATANA et al., 2004), aspects such as the professionalization of firms, factors affecting the succession process, and internal versus external succession deserve to be outlined in the discussions of the topic. These aspects should be considered and analysed in the different stages of the succession process. Additionally, the need for the succession process to be previously defined is highlighted; this would allow the successor to receive adequate training and the required knowledge allowing succession to happen without big traumas or conflicts in return (LOURENÇO; OLIVEIRA; FERREIRA, 2010). From the behavioural point of view, Rossato Neto (2008) and Borges, Lima and Carvalho (2008) emphasise the complexity of emotional and social aspects in the relations between founders and successors, and stress that those aspects challenge the firms' ability to ensure the family's lead through generations.

Borges and Lima (2009) point out that Brockhaus (2004) exposes some elements that may affect in the process of career development of the successors: the education level and the vocational training of the successor; the premature involvement of the successor in the firm; the

acquisition of internal experiences to the firm; the preparation and the training of the successor; the relationship qualities among these successors with other agents involved in the familiar firm structure, among others. The authors also underline succession as a defining moment in the life cycle of a family firm, insofar as it influences its survival. Borges and Lima (2009) present a synthesis of categories for a better understanding of entrepreneurial succession: acceptability, credibility, legitimacy and leadership. Entrepreneurial succession corresponds to a process socially built from the interaction between predecessors and successors in the family-owned firm scope and that involves the manifestation of a set of elements associated to succession and to entrepreneurship.

The relevance of knowledge for companies needs to be considered in the succession process as well. Therefore, the discussion's scope regarding succession needs to be widened and should include knowledge management.

In Merhi et al. (2010), the topic of family succession is presented as a field of study since the 50s, presenting as a starting point the study by Christensen (1953) and proceeds with a consideration of many studies published in Brazil (e.g. LEONE, 2002; ROSSATO NETO, 2008; LOPES, 2008; BORGES; LIMA; CARVALHO, 2008; BORGES; LIMA, 2009; OLIVEIRA et al. 2010; LOURENÇO; OLIVEIRA; FERREIRA, 2010). Yet, these studies have not considered the role of knowledge in family succession.

This article is structured as follows: The next two sections present the theoretical background of the topics of knowledge management and succession planning in the food industry. The fourth section presents the methodology utilised in the study. The fifth section presents and discusses the findings, and the last presents the conclusion.

2 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY

Knowledge management is the collection of processes that govern creation, dissemination and usage of knowledge in order to reach organisational objectives (Davenport & Prusak, 1999). In the same way, McElroy (1999) defines KM as a set of processes that seek to change current processing patterns of organisational knowledge to improve both the procedure and the outcomes of knowledge.

According to Choo (1998), KM means the relation between meaning creation (interpretations, beliefs and representations), knowledge creation (explicit, tacit and cultural) and decision-making (rules, routines and preferences). The author argues that KM focuses on how information is selected and used in organisational actions. Corso et al. (2006) assert that KM aims at creating an environment that encourages people to learn and share knowledge through objectives, aligning the integration of information inside firms, and new knowledge that is useful for the firm. Therefore, it is possible to state that all converge to the encouragement and treatment of knowledge as a shared process in the organisational scope, regarding result achievement.

Cabrera-Suárez (2005) states that most of the critical abilities for management efficacy depend on tacit knowledge. Following this line, Sullivan, Carden and Martin (1998) expose that the ability of transferring competencies is affected by the knowledge's portability or specificity. The organisational memory exposed by Probst, Raub and Romhardt (2002) indicates the importance of knowledge storing for later transfer. According to the authors, the preservation of knowledge constitutes an important part of knowledge management, even if the firms reorganise themselves, the organisational memory value can be underestimated and, many times, past experience is not stored, thus relevant information and knowledge is lost. If the firm's knowledge creation and development depend on the bases supplied by previous knowledge, firms that wish to manage their knowledge in a way that it will be available and accessible in the future must establish mechanisms in order to retain this knowledge basis. Furthermore, these firms must be capable of storing their experiences adequately, guaranteeing that the organisational memory is continuously updated and preserved. In this way, Durst and Wilhelm (2012, p. 645) argue: "storing indicates that the documentation is viewed mainly as a way of transferring and sharing important data, information and knowledge."

From the point of view of the food industry, Pavel (2013) demonstrates the high relevance of knowledge in general, its specificity with regard to the industry's technical sector, in this case the wine industry, and of the experimental knowledge of the family business. According to Pavel, the wine industry requires very specific competencies and suggests the evaluation of the different types of knowledge and pathways of learning in order to address the issue of business continuity. This underlines the significance of studying KM in succession processes in order to understand better the relationship between the two topics and its implication for theory and practice.

3 THE LINK BETWEEN SUCCESSION PLANNING AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Current literature shows succession planning as highly relevant for the firm's performance on the long-term (Pavel, 2013). Morris et al. (1997), Sharma, Chriman and Chua (2003), and Tirsadari and Dhewanto (2012), all agree on the consequences and implications of the succession process and underline the importance to consider the different types of stakeholders involved. In this context, Eddleston and Kellermanns (2007) point out that without a participative strategic process, family-owned firms may be prevented from developing new strategies of knowledge transference and key capacities for the new generations, which might harm the firm's development. The matter present discussions since the 1980s, as the succession problem often derives from the incapacity of the current generation to allow the next generation to grow, develop and eventually take control (DAVIS, 1983).

This challenge is corroborated by Morris et al. (1997) and Tirsadari and Dhewanto (2012) with a point of view that the succession processes, where the activity is transferred from a generation to another, represents the most critical aspect of family-owned firms, because it includes a dynamic that leads to the transaction.

For Getza and Peterson (2005), succession is encouraged as soon as internal successors (from the family) involve themselves with the business. According to Sharma, Chriman and Chua (2003), the two critical dimensions of successful successions are the successor's satisfaction with the process and with the firm's post-succession performance. Additionally, Tirsadari and Dhewanto (2012) stress the relevance of factors such as personal relations between parents and children, trust and the successor intentions (individual needs, objectives, abilities and capacities). Cabrera-Suárez (2005) names leadership and commitment as crucial success factors. Moreover, factors that directly affect the succession process are: (1) tendency of the holder to leave, (2) disposition of the successor to take over, (3) a deal among the family members to maintain family involvement in the business, (4) acceptability of the individual roles, and (5) succession planning (SHARMA; CHRIMAN; CHUA, 2003).

Sambrook (2005), Durst and Wilhelm (2012) mention different types of knowledge that need to be taken into account from a successor's point of view. These are the technical knowledge (easily codified); knowledge about the firm (made explicit relatively easily), and the

specific tacit knowledge related to leadership, decision-making and risk-taking (most difficult to make explicit).

Concerning the Brazilian environment, Machado, Wetzel and Rodrigues (2008) report that the succession process is the most popular topic related to family firms. The authors look into women as successors. According to the authors, aside from the succession problematic, in Brazil the difficulties faced by women are even bigger than in Europe or North America, given the strong patriarchal formation of the Brazilian society. In this study, they question how potential successors of Brazilian family-owned firms have perceived their experience of succession, the main weaknesses and opportunities of working in their firms, the conflict with previous generations and their balance of life and work. The results indicate a lack of planning in the firm's hiring, presenting difficulties and taking a long time in the identity creation, distress because of a lack of an entrepreneurial profile, loss in the social contact networks, excess of protection by the father and healthy balance between life and work. However, the study does not mention aspects related to the role of knowledge in the succession process.

Family business succession is one of the most studied and researched topic in Brazil. The large interest can be attributed to many factors. Among them, we underline the fact that the process's success or failure may ease or compromise the business continuity (CANÇADO et al., 2013). For these authors, a huge part of the continuity impossibility of family businesses is due to the erroneous understanding that succession is an isolated event, and seek only to transfer power. The distinct questions associated with the succession process indicate an imbrication of relative aspects to patrimonial and management succession. The strategic challenges, related to the evolution cycle, be it in the scope of the family, the firm or the property, are management objectives. Aspects such as the maturing process of the children, the transfer of power among generations, contradictions between family and organisational interests and conflicts are all factors considered by the authors. They further suggest including the issue of professionalization as a variable to be studied in the context of succession

Bayad and Barbot (2002, apud BORGES; LIMA, 2009) stated that the recognition of the successors' competencies (technical or relational), which can be valued from their experiences, support in the building of credibility. In this way, the authors believe the credibility for successions appears as the successors start to learn with their lived experiences in the organisational scope, in order to gather knowledge through activities they participate. The authors

state when successor participate in any organisational process, they acquire knowledge; hence, acquiring credibility. This set of practises contributes to the development of abilities and competencies. These competencies, once acquired by the successors, are recognised by the predecessors, who come to accept the successors' functions and roles.

Loss of knowledge may represent the most critical aspect related to succession planning, "lost knowledge means the decreased capacity for effective action or decision making in a specific organizational context" (DELONG, 2004, p. 21). For Tonet and Paz (2006), the loss of knowledge is a consequence of lack of knowledge sharing. According to these authors, the sharing of knowledge in the work environment is a way of assuring that the firm's collaborators and employees can repossess to one another their acquired knowledge, and ensuring the dissemination and possession of required knowledge. The risk of knowledge loss harms sharing and, consequently, avoids possession of this knowledge by the firm.

Even though knowledge is recognised as an influential factor in the succession process, it is not clear how this knowledge might be stored or transferred, or even managed. Hence, this underlines the need for research in general and in the food industry in particular.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Following the original study by Durst and Wilhelm (2012), which was conducted in the German context, an exploratory qualitative research approach seemed appropriate for the present case. According to Creswell (2012, p. 210) qualitative research approaches can address different issues: "the individuals (narrative, phenomenology); to explore processes, activities and events (case study, fundament theory); or learn about the broad behaviour in culture sharing of individuals or groups (ethnography)".

Regarding Durst and Wilhelm's (2012) study, data were collected through qualitative interviews. The authors considered this kind of research adequate for understanding "what", "how" and "why" (SAUNDERS et al., 2009, p. 313 apud DURST; WILHELM, 2012, p. 641). A research guide supported the interview process (ATTACHMENT 1). Open questions that emphasised the exploratory nature of the study were made. Having developed the first draft of the interview script, a pilot interview with an individual working on a distinct firm, which presented the same organisational structure, was made. This course of action lead to a few alterations on

how the questions were made. The interviews took between one and two hours and took place in the interviewees' workplace, were recorded and transcribed later.

In the present study, the selected firm for the case study is a firm that operates in the food branch, located in the southwest of the state of Paraná – Brazil, specialised in the production of frozen products for bakery and confectionary. The firm is characterised by the family-owned culture, having its activities initiated 20 years ago and presents an annual growth of more than 30% in the last 2 years. Today, the biggest part in factory floor is constituted by a board of 350 collaborators, but the firm also presents family-owned culture characteristics. In less than a year, some small practises began to be implemented in the firm's routine to professionalize the processes. We could access the firm through professional activities made by one the researchers of the study. The analysis unities were many departments between production and management, in order to include professionals of distinct department fields and hierarchical positions. We selected individuals seeking to allow the researchers access about the different perspectives present in the firm, totalising 14 interviewees.

We collected data through semi-structured interviews, validated in the German scenery by Durst and Wilhelm (2012), with 14 individuals of the Brazilian firm. The open questions are evidence of the exploratory character. According to Köche (1997), the exploratory research is adequate for cases that still do not present a developed theory system and is necessary to trigger an investigation process that identifies the phenomenon nature with essential characteristics of the researched variables.

Following the study by Durst and Wilhelm (2012), this research emphasised the identification of the firm's critical personnel; the effects of knowledge loss perceived by the interviewees; and the means used to store and share knowledge.

The interviews lasted approximately one to two hours each and occurred in the work environment of the interviewees. They were recorded from March to April and transcribed in April 2014th, being summarized in their totality. The service time of the interviewees varied from three to nineteen years in the firm, and confirmed experience accumulation and know-how, similar to the Durst and Wilhelm (2012) studies, in the German context.

The treatment of data was developed according to the proposal of Durst and Wilhelm (2012), based in the studies of Miles and Huberman (1994), who consider data reduction, data visualisation and conclusion drawing. Creswell (2012, p. 217) corroborates this analysis process:

“[...] in the qualitative data collecting, the researcher analyses them by subjects or perspectives and reports them.

5 RESULTS

5.1 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The studied firm began its activities in 1993 residing on its founding partner. Its trajectory started with its own capital and began domestically producing pizzas, snacks and cakes. In the year 2000, the current directors initiated studies aiming to provide the market with a new system of ultra-freezing, looking to amplify business and multiply production. After three test years, planning, studying and visits, they decided to invest in the ultra-frozen bakery and confectionary concept.

Currently, the firm offers the market a complete bakery and confectionary product line aimed to retail. It is installed in the industrial neighbourhood of a small city with 20.000 habitants in the southwest of the state of Paraná, Brazil. Its products are distributed and commercialised in more than 350 cities in five states of Brazil. The firm's production reached more than 300 tons per month in 2012.

The current financial situation is stable, presenting a bank debt bound to investment in already finished construction and functioning equipment, allowing a financial conduction of enterprise inside the market's possibilities. The economic enterprise situation is significantly comfortable to take in good term already contracted and on-going projects.

The capability of debt payment is attested by the balanced cash flow, being the commitment with total instalments lower than 1/3 in the flux generation of equity in cash, average Pay Back at around 48 months, IRR superior to 20%, that summed with the low oscillations of sales in the activity allowing tranquillity in the financial flow to make front to the existent financial commitments.

The current factory unity presents the following characteristics:

- ✓ Owns a land with a total area of more than 60.000 m²;
- ✓ Presents two sheds constituting a production area at around 6.000 m²;

- ✓ The internal structure is composed by production and freezing machinery, sales and attending teams, as well as a big number of potential clients that already used the firm's products.
- ✓ Owns vehicles with 12 destined to cargo, all semi new and in good conservation shape for the firm's logistic;
- ✓ Production flux with the processes and registered operations in Automated Systems of Information that is utilised in decision-making and results following;
- ✓ Work activities run in two turns and eight daily hours.

The firm's administration is characterised by a centralised family culture, being organised and composed by managers, supervisors, and in-charge employees, all respond and depend of founders and directors decisions. The direction acting is largely strategic, because it seeks ways of expansion in the market, development of new products and professionalization of the internal management work. However, it still has a strong operational acting tending to decentralization of activities and professionalization.

As for the trainings, the firm has invested in education and quality of life programmes, beyond standard hiring trainings. The factory unity is responsible for trimestral training such as Hygiene and Manipulation of Food, Work Health and Security, Leadership and Team Work. Other trainings focus on management leadership, providing knowledge and information about human management, and are available only for people who occupy leadership positions. For technical learning, there is no patterned training, only a standard procedure.

The interviewee occupy leadership or technical positions, as follows in Table 1.

5.2 IDENTIFICATION AND IMPORTANCE OF KEY MEMBERS OF THE FIRM

According to the interviews, most of the researched identified the key members, with an emphasis in the direction members (A and I) and the production coordinator (B), implying a strong dependence in the whole firm in relation to these professionals. This result is corroborated by Durst and Wilhelm (2012, p. 642),

The result implied a strong dependence in the firm's three members of the Administration Council. If one of them had to leave, the firm would be

susceptible to suffer considerably, since there was no one to take over these positions.

Table 1: Interviewees characteristics

Interviewee	Position	Age	Service time
A	PRESIDENT DIRECTOR	50	20
B	FOOD ENGINEER – PRODUCTION GENERAL COORDINATOR	27	6
C	CHARGED IN PRODUCTION – BAKERY	46	11
D	CHARGED IN PRODUCTION – DOUGH	41	13
E	CHARGED IN PRODUCTION – BAKERY	27	8
F	PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR – SNACKS	31	9
G	WAREHOUSE SUPERVISOR	24	4
H	FINANCIAL MANAGER	23	6
I	FOUNDER PARTNER – DIRECTOR	45	20
J	CHARGED IN PRE-WEIGHTING	41	4
K	CHARGED IN STOCK CONTROL	21	4
L	EXECUTIVE SECRETARY	39	17
M	QUALITY ENGINEER	25	3
N	PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR – CONFECTIONARY	43	19

Source: Made by the authors (2014).

The key members’ indication occurred mainly in the following points: they take part in strategic development areas of the firm; know the entire firm’s areas; know the firm’s processes; followed the firm’s growth; make decisions; defend the firm externally. From the identification of the key members, the firm would suffer negative consequences if one of these professionals quit, according to the interviewee A:

“Initially there would be implications but not for a very long time. There would be an immediate fall in the product quality, in the relationship with the clients and in sales. But (they) could be substituted by other people available in the market. I believe that the firm with the people who are here, other people would stand out, that in the long run would substitute these people, and approximate in quality to what these have”.

In this same view, the interviewees E, F, G, J and N state, respectively:

“Our difficulties would triplicate, today this is the person who orients from human management, in the practical part of products he/she has a great feeling, if we lost him/her we would

compromise this area greatly. All was created by him/her and that is why he/she is so important”.

“I believe there would be consequences, in the first moment the firm would feel the same it felt in the beginning, where important people left and it was hard. It will be hard, but later on the firm adapts”.

“In the beginning it would be complicated, but no one is irreplaceable, for being a key member a lot of people report to this person, in the administrative there is no one ready to substitute this person”.

“I think there would be consequences [...], I think that no one is irreplaceable, other professionals would take over, it is a matter of adaptation”.

“They would be very missed, very missed. The firm would move on, but would suffer, because they would be missed. Implications, I believe yes, there is a saying that people are irreplaceable, and the capacities that these people have are many, so I believe yes, there would be implications”.

The interviewee I pointed out a more critical and proactive perspective, as for questioning the failures of the firm in this way:

“At the moment I think yes, there would be implications. [...] not that it would not [affect] the firm, but in my point of view, I think that for some time at least the firm would be stagnated, until people have conditions to know all that we know and do. Today the firm does not have enough management, it does not run by itself, it needs us. Until we question ourselves in this way”.

Results of the knowledge loss about specific areas were visualised according to interviewee B:

“At the first moment I see that the commercial area would suffer the most, the financial as well, not because the firm depends on it, but because it has much knowledge. Today, in terms of production, since the firm is so connected to the commercial sector, it would suffer an impact”.

Decision centralisation indications can be verified according to the interviewees D and M:

“We would need to learn how to walk with our own legs. We would have enough difficulty [to] learn how to deal and to make more decisions” (D)

“We would have to adapt to their absence, start deciding stuff, because today I do not decide. Or seek other people. I think the firm would not stop, there is no irreplaceable person, but surely they would be missed”. (M)

As for this aspect, Durst e Wilhelm (2012, p. 643) point out:

Despite the size and age of the firm, there is still a much centralised execution way. There is an impression that both the interviewee still act as new founders of a society where commercial operations are structured around founders, and not as managers of an established medium sized business that must be executed professionally, for example, in terms of delegation.

Similar results were visualised in the research, once the interviewee believed that the people could be substituted in the firm on the long-term, without being aware of what the immediate loss would cause. The interviewees perceive this only in the operational ambit, demonstrating that there is no participation of the key members in the direction decisions. There are no long-term view indicatives as for the loss of knowledge of professionals that generate innovation and develop strategies. This demonstrates clearly that there is no succession management nor planning in this way.

5.3 STORING AND SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE

As for knowledge storage, we observed that there is no institutionalised organisational memory, only a few accountability data were cited, financial *“in the firm’s computer, electronic files”*, according to interviewees A, B, G and *“production recipes”*, according to interviewees F and N. Generally, there are no policies nor tools for knowledge storage. The firm still works a lot with informality and in the *“head of members”*.

This perception is convergent with Durst e Wilhelm (2012, p. 644),

The results related with storing indicate that documentation is viewed mainly as a way to transfer and share important data, information and/or knowledge. Other solutions through communication and/or observation are underestimated or not thought.

In order to share knowledge the firm uses only meetings, informal talks, experiences exchange and email as its only tools (interviewee B). There are no standard ways for this mean, according to interviewee B:

“A big part of sharing happens in talks, orienting seeking to show different ways, the bigger part in talks, orientations and trainings, since the moment it receives a new employee, one has to transfer information”.

Also in the view of this interviewee, with the firm’s growth knowledge sharing rose:

“[...] through what I talk to people, they teach what they know and pass for each one of us. I believe that [...] at the moment, people are passing, teaching, some time ago it was not like this, they withhold knowledge for themselves”.

On the other hand, the firm does not have a culture aimed for sharing and knowledge is departmentalised and segmented according to its field (interviewee A, F and H):

“There is not a defined culture, but one of the ways we use is reunions and a lot of private conversations with one another, which allows us to know better the field everyone acts”. (A)

“[...] when it is inside a sector it is more open, chats more, shares more, from sector to sector there is still a barrier, there is a lack of interest to know the daily difficulty of the other, or difficulty of the other in speaking, socialising, sharing”. (A)

“It is bad, when the firm was smaller the interaction was better, now that is has grown this contact has lowered, a grave problem of communication. Information is late, wrong... this due to having too many people”. (H)

“The firm’s culture is sectorial, one has eased access to that knowledge if one is in the same sector. With meetings in each sector”. (F)

In this manner, the lack of sharing projection in culture is expressed in statements that there is no sharing due to fear (Interviewee A); insecurity (Interviewee F); and not knowing how to transmit knowledge (Interviewee I). In general, for the remaining interviewees knowledge sharing does not occur due to lack of time and it only happens partially or informally.

In this way, the fact that any process is documented in the firm is corroborated by Durst and Wilhelm (2012, p. 645),

The fact that there is no patterned documenting process in the entire firm is considered an important problem of the field (...) Besides, the interviewees seems to concur with the fact that it could be more documented in order to deal better with people’s absence or quitting, and have a more efficient work flux.

The result analysis allows us to state that there are strong indications of the lack of management in the firm in what regards succession planning, due to the strong centralisation of decisions and incipient people management. There are no indications of knowledge management, nor a process of the firm is documented, some employees even state that they do not know what it is; trainings are specifically aimed to operational aspects of the production branch, and in some cases to leadership. There is a prevalence of the operational view of each field over the firm’s global view, hindering any kind of holistic planning on medium or long terms. Measures as identification and capacitation of successors, methods application and knowledge management techniques for institutionalisation of the firm’s knowledge, creation of organisational memory and cultural change aimed for global, systemic and professional view are some of the possible suggestions for this context of the family-owned food industry in Brazil.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study examined the topic of KM in the context of succession planning and was mainly interested in how the food industry deals with the danger of knowledge loss because of

quitting or long-term absence of organization members. The study is a replication of the study by Durst and Wilhelm (2012), applied in the Brazilian food industry.

The results indicate that the firm does not present indications of succession planning nor knowledge management, because of the operational actions and views from key members, lack of standardisation and documentation of the firm's processes, operational capacitation and informal and departmentalised sharing of knowledge. However, the current favourable economic situation of the firm allows elaborating a scenery where knowledge loss with a risk of absence or quitting of the collaborator may be minimised from succession planning and knowledge management.

This situation is different from the German context, as Durst and Wilhelm (2012, p. 646) stated, "The study results clearly show that the firm's members are aware of the dangers of knowledge friction. Nonetheless, the precarious financial state of the firm does not allow development and implementation of measures to combat the problem."

From a practical point of view, measures as identification and successors' capacitation, applications of methods and techniques of knowledge management for institutionalisation of the firm's knowledge, creation of organisational memory and cultural change aimed towards global, systemic and professionalised view are some possible suggestions for this context of the familiar food industry. According to Durst and Wilhelm (2012), this can reduce the vulnerability of the firm if key members quit, consequently, may help the firm to maintain its response capacity.

From a theoretical point of view, this study sought to approach the relation between the subjects of succession planning and knowledge management, considered scarce in the food industry context. Additionally, we indicate studies that aim to clarify the many types of required knowledge in succession planning.

Similar limitations to the studies from Durst and Wilhelm (2012) were identified, such as the impossibility of statistical generalisation, the fact of having solely direction members participating in the interviews may have caused bias in some results; the research method has adopted the transversal approach, without visualising possible temporal occurrences in the firm's environment, due to the characteristics of this research. In this way, new longitudinal investigations are suggested to be made in order to evaluate the impact of knowledge management, more specifically its loss, in the planning and succession through time in the firm. Another limitation of this study refers to the exclusive field of application in the south of Brazil,

without taking into account other localities and regional specificities, broadly diversified due to the geographical dimensions of the country.

At last, due to the growth of the firm verified in the last years, the firm's knowledge indicates some kind of treatment, however, without the application of formal practises of knowledge management.

Conclusively, we believe the study supplied contributions to the importance of the analysis of the required knowledge and the knowledge loss risk in the organisational succession processes in the Brazilian context from the integration of two relevant subjects, in the organisational and academic scopes.

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GESTÃO DO CONHECIMENTO E PLANEJAMENTO DE SUCESSÃO: ESTUDO DE CASO EM UMA INDÚSTRIA DE ALIMENTOS DO ESTADO DO PARANÁ - BRASIL

ABSTRACT

Este estudo abordou o tema da gestão do conhecimento (GC) no planejamento sucessório e teve o objetivo de entender como a indústria de alimentos lida com o perigo de perda do conhecimento na saída do colaborador ou ausência de longo-prazo, a partir da aplicação do estudo de Durst e Wilhelm (2012). O diferencial do estudo consistiu na inclusão da perspectiva da GC na problemática do planejamento sucessório e na pesquisa empírica realizada como estudo de caso em uma indústria familiar de alimentos localizada no Estado do Paraná - Brasil. A pesquisa exploratória com abordagem qualitativa e entrevista semiestruturada foram eleitas por parecerem delineamentos metodológicos apropriados para o presente estudo de caso, realizado em uma indústria de alimentos localizada no sudoeste do Estado do Paraná - Brasil. A análise centrou-se na identificação do pessoal crítico da empresa; nos efeitos da perda de conhecimento percebida pelos entrevistados; e, nos meios utilizados para armazenar e compartilhar o conhecimento. Os principais resultados demonstraram semelhanças com o estudo original do contexto alemão, como falta de padronização e documentação dos processos da empresa; e divergentes, como cultura favorável para o planejamento de sucessão e gestão do

conhecimento na empresa alemã e falta de entendimento sobre a visão global que envolvem os temas na empresa brasileira.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Gestão do Conhecimento. Planejamento de Sucessão. Estudo de Caso. Indústria de Alimentos.*

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Questionnaire Knowledge Management and Succession Planning

Q1. Relevance of knowledge

1. According to your opinion, is knowledge important in your organization? Let them specify their answers; ask for examples in the case of a positive answer.
2. Would you describe the organization as a knowledge-intensive organization? Let them specify their answers.
3. How do you acquire new skills, capacities?
4. Does the organization offer any form of continuing training? If yes, what is offered?

Q2. Knowledge identification

1. Who do you think is a key organization member in your organization?
2. What makes this person/these persons a key member?
3. Are you in regular contact with this person/these persons?
4. How intensive is this contact? What is shared/exchanged?
5. What would happen if this person / these persons would drop out / leave the organization? Implications?

Q3. Knowledge storage

1. In which form are relevant documents stored?
2. Could you list examples of relevant documents?
3. Who is responsible for these documents?
4. How often are these documents updated? How much work is involved in these updates?
5. Do you see room for improvement with regard to the storage? If yes, let them specify.
6. How does the organization handle the knowledge that is in the organization members' "heads"?
7. Is lot of knowledge in the organization members' minds?

Q4. Knowledge sharing

1. How do you assess knowledge sharing in the organization/departments? Addresses the culture.
2. What do you think about knowledge sharing? If positive, ask if he/she likes knowledge sharing.
3. In which forms does knowledge sharing happen? What type of knowledge, information, data is exchanged?
4. How does knowledge sharing happen between the key organization members?
5. Do these key organization members share their knowledge / expertise?
6. Do you think that organization members who have a wealth of experience / state of knowledge are appreciated in the organization? If yes, how does it show? If now, why not?