Knowledge Sharing Between Agency and Customers to Strengthen Market Orientation: A Case Study of a State Government Agency in Australia

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Abstract
Knowledge sharing between agency, in this instance a State Government division, and customer is a form of market sensing which can provide the agency with information to make anticipatory assumptions about the market. Knowledge sharing within an agency and between an agency and customer, aligns the agency’s orientation to continually focus on the customer’s issues and in this way acts as an antecedent to adopting a market orientation. Knowledge management as discussed in this case focuses on direct or face to face communication and is considered in conjunction with industry Best Practice aspirations by the government agency. This case provides valuable insight into knowledge management as it is used by a State Government agency in Australia and the findings are applicable in other government situations internationally.

Keywords: Market orientation, knowledge sharing, government agency.

Introduction

Internal organizational synergies such as knowledge sharing offer heretofore unmined opportunities for business growth. The ever increasing pace of product innovation, shorter sales cycle times and a general lessening of resources within government agencies mean that every opportunity to improve efficiencies must be utilized to achieve improved productivity. In the more extreme circumstance of cuts to government agency funding managers need to encourage their staff to share knowledge with even more vigor. Knowledge sharing, it is posited, leads to a shared organizational understanding of weaknesses and strengths within the organization and a common frame of reference on the most effective strategies to improve performance. This case explores the idea that knowledge sharing between staff within a government agency and also between the agency and its customers, acts as an antecedent to the adoption of a market
orientation. This type of market intelligence is not easily obtained by outside parties partly because it requires considerable trust between organizations.

Knowledge has become one of the most precious commodities of commercial not-for-profit organizations. Knowledge management and its corresponding reliance on clear and ongoing communication, plays a key role in refining the competitiveness of an organization. Knowledge management concerns innovating, spreading, sharing, and using knowledge. Research on knowledge management informs organizational learning, personal management, culture, and wider aspects of organizations (Drucker, 1998).

This study investigates the concepts of knowledge sharing between a provider agency and its customers and the resulting best practice outcomes. It was found that business co-operation between these parties encouraged market orientation approach by a State Government agency in Australia.

**Theoretical Background**

Government agencies, along with their profit based counterparts, operate in dynamic environments where accountability is high and maximization of resources is expected. Effective knowledge sharing between supply chain members (in this example a government agency and its clients) can be a delicate business. Both parties are aware of the competitiveness that their combined knowledge brings. They are also cognizant of the damage caused by breaches of trust within the relationship and also the problems caused by inappropriate sharing of sensitive internal organizational knowledge. This paper explores knowledge sharing in a business to business setting, that of a Government agency as the provider and business organizations and local government entities as clients.

Thus, the research propositions are as follows:

Proposition 1: That face to face or direct knowledge sharing within the agency and between the agency and customer is an antecedent to the agency organization adopting a market orientation.

Proposition 2: That the second type of knowledge sharing; documented knowledge (hard and soft copy) provides strong supplementary support for direct knowledge sharing.

Proposition 3: That ongoing and regular communication is the most beneficial way to develop trust and credibility between inter-agency division and agency and customers.

**Knowledge Sharing**

For the past decade, many researchers have argued that creating a culture that values creativity, continuous improvement and the sharing of ideas is necessary for knowledge management initiatives to succeed (Davenport et al 1998; Davenport and Prusak 1998; Nevis et al 1995; DeLong and Faheys 2000; Gupta and Govindarajan 2000). For an organization to manage its knowledge assets effectively, it needs to have employees who are motivated to explore new market opportunities, new work procedures or new products, and who are willing to
apply new ideas to their own work; it needs structures and work systems that are flexible enough to admit innovative changes, and job definitions that grant employees a fair level of autonomy; and, very importantly, it needs to set up mechanisms by which new ideas are shared (Gupta and Govindarajan 2000). Malhoutra (1998) also holds to principles of flexibility by noting that it is important today’s core competencies do not calcify into tomorrow’s core rigidities.

Knowledge sharing is the behavior of disseminating one's acquired knowledge with other members within one's organization or to leverage opportunities, to share knowledge across organizations that have sufficient visionary foresight to understand the value of co-operation across traditional organizational boundaries. The focus of knowledge management is how to share knowledge to create value-added benefits to the organization (Liebowitz, 2001) or partnership. The process of identifying, sharing, and using knowledge and practices inside one's own organization is one of the tangible manifestations of knowledge management (Choi and Lee, 2002 and O'Dell and Grayson, 1998). Knowledge sharing is a people-to-people process, and one of the knowledge management processes. In the knowledge management process, how to make individual knowledge into organizational knowledge is a major management issue (Grant, 1996 and Nonaka, and Takeuchi, 1995).

**Knowledge sharing: direct or documented**

For the past decades, knowledge sharing has been conceptualized as involving two distinct ways of transferring knowledge across organization subunits by different researchers. The first is through face-to-face/direct contact between individuals, when one person advises another about how to complete a specific task (e.g., Cummings and Cross, 2003; Hansen, 1999; Reagans and McEvily, 2003; Tsai, 2001). The hallmark of such person-to-person sharing is that the knowledge transfer requires direct contact between the provider and receiver of the knowledge, in meetings, video-phone, or via e-mail. Because it involves direct contact, such sharing allows for the transmission of tacit or non-codified knowledge, which is knowledge that has not been fully articulated in writing (Von Hippel, 1988). In brief, this type of knowledge sharing may be called personal advice usage.

The second way of knowledge sharing is from written documents that may be available in hard-copy (paper based) or in soft-copy (electronic format) (e.g., Hansen and Haas, 2001; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003). According to Winter (1987), sharing via written documents is most appropriate for knowledge that can be readily codified. The hallmark of such document-to-people sharing is the separation between the provider and receiver. In other words, there is no face-to-face contact in-between the receiver and the provider directly but can use the document as a stand-alone resource. This type of knowledge sharing may be labeled electronic document usage.

These two basic types of knowledge sharing are not mutually exclusive, but may be undertaken simultaneously by employees seeking to obtain knowledge internally (e.g. from other functional units of the organization) or externally via suppliers or partner institutions. One type of sharing may also lead to another: someone accessing and reading an electronic document may decide to contact the complier of that document, whereas someone obtaining personalized advice from a colleague may receive a tip about the existence of a useful electronic document. Nevertheless, personal advice and document usage represent two ways of obtaining knowledge, and it is useful to separate them conceptually and empirically because they are likely to involve different benefits and costs for task units.
This study focuses on the interchange of information between people from two separate organizations; the provider government agency which offers for sale highly reliable, credible information and its private enterprise customers. The government agency and its most valued clients investigated in this paper understood that collaborative action provided both parties with deeper insights to better manage a market orientation.

**Market Orientation**

Market orientation is a culture-focused on the continuous creation of customer value (Slater and Narver, 1994) through market information capture, synthesis and action. It is an intangible that is posited to be a source of competitive advantage that positively influences business performance (Jaworski and Kholi, 1993, 1996; Kholi and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990). Throughout the 1990s, a continuous stream of research in market orientation developed different definitions underpinning market orientation within a business organization.

Many researchers identified the usefulness and importance of market orientation by examining its impact on business profitability and confirming that profitability is a consequence of market orientation (Chang and Chen, 1998; Kholi and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990; Ngai and Ellis, 1998; Pride, Rundle-Thiele, Waller, Elliot, Paladino and Ferrell, 2007; Uncles, 2000). However, the definition of market orientation by Kholi and Jaworski (1990) and Narver and Slater (1990) appears to be gaining wide acceptance. These two groups of researchers identified that implementation of market orientation within a business organization is important as it is a stage of development and posited to lead to greater customer satisfaction and organizational commitment of employees (Kholi and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990). Their definitions imply a simultaneous competitor and customer orientation, with their more recent investigations broadening the scope even further to encompass technology, social and economic trends.

Gray, Matear, Boshoff and Matheson (1998) provide a similar explanation to both Kholi and Jaworski and Narver and Slater in market orientation studies. They explained that a business organization that emphasizes market orientation not only investigates differences between a production, selling and marketing philosophy, but also focuses more on awareness of responsiveness to environmental influences on marketing decision-making and implementation.

A steady stream of research has developed the theory underpinning market orientation within a business organization. Researchers identified the usefulness and importance of market orientation by examining its impact on business profitability and confirming that profitability is a consequence of market orientation (Appiah-Adu and Singh, 1998; Chang and Chen, 1998; Guo, 2002; Kholi and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990; Ngai and Ellis, 1998).

Traditionally, a market-oriented organization focuses on understanding the expressed needs of customers in their served markets and on developing products and services that satisfy those needs (Chang and Chen, 1998; Guo, 2002; Ngai and Ellis, 1998). However, new generation market-oriented businesses are committed to understanding both the expressed and unexpressed needs of their customers, and the capabilities and plans of their competitors, through the processes of acquiring and evaluating market information in a systematic and anticipatory manner (Slater, 2001).

In summary, market orientation has been widely accepted by scholars and researchers as the implementation of the marketing concept (Kotler, 2000; Pride et al., 2007), and the marketing concept is concerned with customer-orientation, innovation and profit as an inducement for creating satisfied customers (Osuagwu, 2006). Market-oriented business organizations not only
focus on understanding and fulfilling what their customers expect, but also aim at fulfilling their customers’ needs in advance. Employees within a market-oriented business organization are able to identify changes or environmental influences on marketing within their served markets.

In business-to-business (B2B) settings successful ongoing relationships are based on a history of satisfying exchanges with all parties recognizing the importance of trust and mutually beneficial knowledge sharing. To succeed in the modern dynamic business environment organizations have recognized the importance of learning from and listening to key accounts in order to clarify customer needs and fully develop a marketing orientation. The form of that learning and listening can be tempered by the nature of the employees engaged in the communication. It is important to reap the benefits of understanding both technological and interpersonal aspects within the organization and again by taking heed of customers’ opinions. A unique aspect of this study is that it draws upon the expertise of government agency managers whose strengths vary from relationship management, product development and maintenance through to technical management, thus providing greater depth and insight than if drawn from only one modality.

Methodology and Data Collection

This study investigates the concepts of knowledge sharing and best practice which aim to encourage market orientation within one of the state government agency in Australia. Case approach and methodology that are used in this study are discussed and described in the following sections.

Method

The State Government agency (SGA) used in this study is a key provider of cartographic materials for sale to business and the public. The agency is representative of government agencies in other similarly developed nations in that its product is considered to be highly accurate, its content considered to be highly credible and current, and verification of these aspects is extremely difficult if not nigh on impossible. This SGA is the largest mapping organization in the southern hemisphere, embracing satellite, aerial and survey data. It is also the repository of much legal information related to land ownership and control. Over the last decade an integrated property warehouse (IPW) has been under construction and population, generating comprehensive problems of awareness of what is there and how it might be used. Given the sensitive nature of the material developed by this government agency representatives expressed a wish that although the content could be used for research purposes they did not want the agency to be identified beyond that already expressed.

Description of cases

In-depth interview were used as the data collection technique in this research which aim to allow the researchers to enter the real world experience of the participants. Interview participants were prominent employees from the SGA case environment involved in the process of customer value, delivery and consumption. Each in-depth interview lasted for one hour. In keeping with recommendations that a knowledgeable and diverse sample of subjects be employed, interviewees were selected from staff across different divisions from SGA in all roles.
(from relationship managers to support staff). This approach was intended to extract rich information from staff members who come from different divisions within SGA and its client organization as shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Division / Department</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Interviewees’ Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SGA</td>
<td>Local Government Business</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Relationship Manager (RM1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development Unit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGA</td>
<td>Business Services Unit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Relationship Manager (RM2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGA</td>
<td>Land Data Unit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Relationship Manager (RM3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGA</td>
<td>Spatial Data Services Unit</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Product Manager (TM1) Technical Manager (TM2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGA</td>
<td>Survey Unit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Technical Manager (TM3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Developed for this research

Interviewees were asked if they were willing to assist in this research project by discussing their thoughts on how a SGA can better capture and deliver customer value to client organizations. The in-depth interviews were held during the period between September 2007 and January 2007 in which formal face-to-face and video-conferencing interviews were included. The interviewer did not need to travel across the region as most participants were based in Sydney, New South Wales (NSW). Video-conferencing was used to interview some participants located in the regional area of NSW.

Overall, the participants were responsible, during the twelve months prior to interview, for value creation and delivery in the SGA network. In all cases, the interviewees were made aware of the nature and scope of the research project and guaranteed their anonymity, ensuring that ethical standards were not breached. In brief, interviewees can be group into two categories –

- **SGA Relationship Managers:** RM1, RM2 and RM3 (as shown in Table 1); and
- **SGA Technical Managers:** TM1, TM2 and TM3 (as shown in Table 1);

A brief description of these managers’ roles in different divisions is provided in the following paragraphs.

**Relationship Managers**

Three senior managers located in Sydney, Bathurst and Orange SGA’s were willing to discuss their perceptions and shared their thoughts on how SGA can better capture and deliver customer value to the client organizations. Mainly they are the key persons from different units (Local Government Business Development Unit, Business Services Unit and Land Data Unit) who look
after SGA’s customers such as local government, real estate agents and the Forestry Department of NSW. In brief, all three relationship managers (identified as RM1, RM2 and RM3) claim that they constantly have contact with the Local Government Agency’s (LGA) employees about the data that they need and provide different forms of support to fulfil their clients’ needs.

**SGA Support/Technical Managers**

In this section, three SGA managers (1 x Product Manager and 2 x Technical Managers) from support/technical units located in Sydney and Bathurst SGA were involved in these in-depth interviews. These three support/technical managers were chosen to be involved in this research because they are the key persons from different units who have direct contact and/or provide technical support to the SGA’s customers, such as the LGA’s employees, about the data that they need. They are identified as TM1 and TM2 from Spatial Data Services Unit and TM3 from the Survey Unit.

**Results**

This section discusses the degree to which the SGA managers perceive knowledge sharing as contributing to market orientation and its intrinsic value. Their opinions about the value of Best Practice are also discussed and this is supplemented with excerpts from interviews to give a richer perspective.

**SGA Relationship Managers’ Perceptions**

Respondents from three participating units agreed that knowledge sharing is an antecedent that may encourage market orientation. RM1 from the Local Government Business Development Unit claimed that their division provides different types of support to facilitate the LGAs to achieve their tasks. Knowledge sharing will be the major support that pleases the customer. RM1 stated that:

> We will have two to three meetings each year with all the senior managers from the councils to share different information and knowledge that we acquire. Agenda in the meeting includes the quality of the data we provide to the LGAs, the currency of the data, what we are doing to make our data more accurate and also what councils can help us to make our data more accurate. Because, for example, council can give us more current information on addresses of people … when people move into the council area, they will know who they are, when people move out, they can tell us … so council can help us in a real way to have better and more accurate address information. These are the information we share. Also, there are five software providers to the councils in NSW, so we need to discuss with the councils in terms of how information can be shared among the councils and SGA over the Internet. First of all we need to talk about how we can help to write a compatible program that allows us to share the information on a different platform … basically we will do what we can to match them. For example, there might be some local government who want to do some major development and they want some area photography. We have a program to do area photography … we may modify our program to do what they need by changing our
program so they can get in without spending unnecessary money. So basically we can change our program to suit the clients. (RM1)

A senior manager from Business Services Unit (RM2) claimed that the funding from the States government has been cut significantly which leads to less support. However, they are still trying their best to support the LGAs upon request:

We used to organise meetings three times a year with the councils to exchange information but now we can only have it once a year. There have been a lot of studies about the effort we put in and most of the local government authorities say it is not enough effort … we need to have more in of what we had before … but the government funding is less and we can’t do much … so what we try to do is distribute the newsletters and emails online to the councils constantly so they will still get all the information from us in terms of what we are doing now and keep them posted. We still facilitate sharing of information upon request by the local council. What we found was there was a great disparity in a knowledge base between the councils and we have to provide very little to some councils and a lot more information to smaller councils. They just don’t know how to do certain things and because of the high turn-over rates of GIS officers within the LGAs, we just have to re-educate the GIS officer as each new person comes in, with everything needing to start from the beginning. Sometimes machine will be sitting in the corner and not even used because some person left the council. Generally that will only fall to the smaller council. (RM2)

Explained by RM3, it is very important to get all senior staff from different councils to meet face-to-face and share any thoughts or ideas that can help each other to work in more efficient ways. In other words, knowledge sharing amongst the councils and SGA is very important:

Our division will call for a meeting with all the councils who use our products every three months. Councils involved in this meeting are from Bathurst, Orange, Blayney, Cowra, Mudgee and etc. The response rates are very good at each and every meeting, all these councils will have their senior staff attend the meeting. The agenda of the meeting includes the feedback and/or issues about our products and services provided for the previous quarter and I also explain to the councils about what our team members have done to resolve the issues raised by the councils over the past months. Occasionally we might talk about how things can be improved among the relationship within the councils and SGA … It is a good time for the council managers to have a face-to-face conversation with the SGA representative. (RM3)

SGA Technical Managers’ Perceptions

TM1 provided an example about how SGA could share its knowledge and expertise with clients:

Best Practice is a very useful concept. I can give you an example of knowledge sharing and best practice of SGA and the councils. Usually council will say - we need more information in our area. Traditionally our DCDB data has been collected from an existing hard-copy map … sometimes the data is less accurate where it depends upon the accuracy of the map or initial scale of the map; that varies across the state. In other
words, the position of the cadastral is based on the medium scale map [the map that is maintained and owned by the council] and is not that accurate as compared with the current version (maps owned by SGA). So it is the LGAs’ responsibility to bring it up to more accurate level. Just recently in the last week, Wagga Wagga council has been just in touch with us and said that they wish to put in some money to upgrade the cadastral in their area, what can we do to assist them? So that becomes a collaborative effort; we will do some survey work for them and help them to adjust their cadastral to a better position and match our cadastral. Of course we will not charge them for anything. So that is what we are looking at across the state – sharing our knowledge and expertise with all the councils to have a better control, so the cadastral data can be more accurately maintained. So it is truly based on council whether or not they wish to get a more accurate cadastral data in their area. (TM1)

As claimed by TM2, his main job function is to make sure that all data are accurate and ready to be released to SGA’s customers and, at the same time, to resolve any query raised by any customer in regards to the data produced by the division. TM2 also claimed that the sharing of knowledge with all customers is one of the first priorities in the division as they have more than 200 customers across the country:

Knowledge sharing is one of our priorities! As you can see knowledge sharing amongst clients is increasingly used as a strategic tool, to boost customer service, decrease product development times, and to share best practice ... Let me give you an example - regular consultation forums and participation in industry seminars and events provides opportunities for SGA to inform industry participants of product, service and legislative changes, promote opportunities for product and service development, and canvass industry and government client requirements and priorities for business process improvement and other capital investment initiatives … I can tell you that constantly sharing information with our clients will make them feel that they are important to us and we are keen to do business with them. This will allow our clients to have a positive feeling about SGA and be pleased with the services that we provide … I believe this is why they keep coming back to us. (TM2)

We do have a policy on knowledge sharing with our clients. If we notice that there is an error in our client’s data, we will upgrade the data for them for no charge. This is part of the free services provided by SGA to all the LGAs. We see that as knowledge sharing and at the moment the only upgrade action is probably associated with the Sydney Water area. We basically use our 99% resources just doing update with Sydney Water in the 45 shires. (TM2)

According to TM3 from Survey Unit of SGA, the main function of the unit is to provide surveying services on behalf of the Surveyor General, including maintenance of official state control survey data, placement of permanent survey marks in the ground and determination of boundary disputes. The Survey Unit tends to be a good source for LGAs to gain varied information and knowledge that will benefit them and allow them to better serve their region in turn. TM3 claimed that all this knowledge could be shared between SGA and LGAs. In the long
run, LGAs will be able to be independent and rely less on other government agencies for their day-to-day work:

New knowledge must be transferred throughout the SGA and its clients’ organization. As for us, we always invite our customers to attend the workshops we organize on an on-going basis to share different information and talk about our new products. This will benefit our customers and make sure that we can all stay connected with the contacts and networks we establish during the workshop. What I believe is something that has worked well in one location can be applied in another one. There is a deliberate effort to reduce structural, process, and interpersonal barriers to the sharing of information, ideas and knowledge amongst members. (TM3)

In Table 2 (see below), the first column addresses whether knowledge sharing and best practice are important from SGA managers’ point of view. The second column is quoted directly from the managers. The quotes are about actions undertaken which can be categorized as knowledge sharing and best practice within the network organization. The final columns revealed the managers’ priority in terms of knowledge sharing and best practice (product vs. customer). These columns contain ranks with ‘1’ being the first matter to be focused on and ‘2’ being the second most important to look at.

**Table 2. Summary of case findings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Importance of knowledge sharing and best practice</th>
<th>Concepts of knowledge sharing and best practice</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RM1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>“We will have two to three meetings each year with all the senior managers from the councils to share different information or knowledge that we acquired. Agenda in the meeting includes the quality of the data we provided to the LGAs, the currency of the data, what we are doing to make our data more accurate and also what councils can help us to make our data more accurate.”</td>
<td>1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>“… the government funding is less and we can’t do much … so what we try to do is distribute the newsletters and emails online to the councils constantly so they will still get all the information from us in term of what we are doing now and just to keep them posting. We still facilitate sharing information upon requested by the local council.”</td>
<td>2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>“Our division will call for a meeting with all the councils who use our products every three months ... The response rates are very good … The agenda of the meeting includes the feedback and/or issues about our products and services provided for the previous quarter and I will also explained to the councils about what our team members have done to resolve the issues raised by the councils for the past months.”</td>
<td>1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TM1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>“For example Wagga council were just in-touch with us and said that they wish to put in some money to upgrade the cadastral in their area, what can we do to assist them? … We will do some survey work for them … and of course we will not charge them on anything. So that is what we looking at across the</td>
<td>2 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Themes from Qualitative Data Analysis

The main themes which emerged from the data analysis suggest that implementation of knowledge sharing and best practice with clients’ organizations are both important. The key components suggested by the respondents align well to the research propositions and are as follows: that sharing knowledge with customers by the agency is representative of a market orientation as earlier defined by Kotler (2000) and Pride et al. (2007) and it is engendered by that sharing. This was expressed by respondents as taking up opportunities to share knowledge and expertise, by helping customers to accomplish some tasks, free-of-charge. It was further suggested that with a common purpose there is greater likelihood of creating value-added benefits for both parties.

The view that the second type of knowledge sharing such as documented knowledge provides strong supplementary support for direct knowledge sharing was expressed throughout the interviews. Its application was expressed as a need to go beyond tacit understanding between parties and face to face communication by circulating newsletters to client organizations. These were seen as providing an additional benefit of being tangible and therefore allowing clients to review them many times over.

Reflection on the third proposition suggests that ongoing and regular communication is a beneficial way to develop trust and credibility between agency and customers. This was expressed as the need to organize meetings frequently with key staff members in client organization and to run frequent training and workshops for customers. It is apparent that respondents were concerned that the agency should continue to focus on clients’ needs in spite of reduced government funding for their departments and that knowledge sharing and the development of best practice were the keys to success.

Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research

This case study explored the issues of knowledge management particularly as it relates to face to face applications and adherence to industry Best Practice in customer management. Knowledge management was seen as an antecedent to developing a market orientation. Such orientation was reviewed in the literature and considered to be of fundamental importance to ensuring a strong business future.
In depth interviews provided a rich insight into the real world experience of participants. Nevertheless any form of data collection must go through a reductive process leaving the recording poorer than the reality. The situations described by respondents showed an environment rich with relationship complications and unpredictability, such as the agency’s lack of authority about their own funding as is often the case with government divisions. These issues add depth to understanding the requirements to building customer relationship in less than ideal conditions. This case did not delve into these issues, seeking instead to provide a thorough exploration of the topics as noted. Nevertheless these areas if researched would make a valuable contribution to understanding the background to developing strong relationships with customers. Future research could extend that which was undertaken here by extending the respondents selection criteria to include staff at other authority levels and make comparisons with other government agencies.

The value of relationships was emphasized by respondents in this case study and is particularly important here given that the agency in question is a government division rather than a for-profit enterprise. The findings are therefore of importance to other government divisions both in Australia and internationally who are seeking to provide high quality services to their clients. It is recommended that such government agencies also adopt a knowledge management approach to drive a market orientation.
References


