

# **PERCEPTION AND PRACTICES OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING BY FOOD INSPECTORS**

*Seunghee Wie, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, California State University - Sacramento,  
6000 J Street, Sacramento, CA 95819, 916-278-7108, wie@csus.edu*

*Yong Choi, School of Business and Public Administration, California State University - Bakersfield,  
9001 Stockdale Highway, Bakersfield, CA 93311, 661-654-6691, ychoi2@csu.edu*

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to identify the overall perception about knowledge sharing at food inspection agencies and empirically examine the extent of knowledge sharing systems and agency rationales for knowledge sharing. 46% of all respondents strongly agree that the knowledge sharing can improve their organizations' overall performance and sustainable competitiveness, while 24% strongly agree that they believe the knowledge sharing program fits their organization and the industry. The work e-mail system, employee meetings, and information from co-workers were the most frequently used knowledge sharing channels in their agencies.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Knowledge Sharing is a concept in which an organization consciously and comprehensively gathers, organizes, shares, and analyzes its knowledge in terms of resources, documents, and people skills. Understanding how agencies adopt and deploy knowledge would offer insights into the capacity of county government, and its ability to cope with these challenges. Knowledge Sharing is a set of strategies and tools that could help these organizations deal effectively with their reality [1]. As of July 1, 2007, the California Retail Food Code (CalCode) replaced the California Uniform Retail Food Facilities Law as the governing legislation for retail food facilities throughout the state of California [2]. With the enactment of CalCode, the County Food Protection Program (part of the Environmental Health Division) is responsible for the enforcement of state and local health codes at all retail food facilities. To enforce the Food Protection Program, it is very critical and essential for food inspectors to be updated with current local and state health codes, FDA recalled food, news of foodborne illness outbreak, new laws such as the Menu Labeling Law, Trans Fat Ban (effective as of January 1, 2011), Food Handler Card Law (effective as July 1, 2011), and the Polystyrene Food Container Ban (Proposed effective as of January 1, 2016). Without sharing accurate knowledge in a timely manner, it would be very challenging and difficult to protect the public's health.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study population was food inspectors in all 58 counties of California. Fifty-eight directors in the County Environmental Management Department were contacted and nine directors voluntarily agreed to distribute the online survey to their colleagues. Therefore, the exact number of samples invited was not able to be identified and the total number of responses was 119. A questionnaire was modified from the

similar study [1] that determined the critical factors of knowledge management success in public administration. Demographic information of the respondents was also obtained. Results were summarized using descriptive statistics and multivariate analysis with Statistical Package for Social Science (Version 21.0, SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL).

## RESULTS

The majority of respondents were women (61%). 32% of respondents were between the ages of 41 and 50, while 25% and 24% of respondents were the age of 31-40 and >51, respectively. Food inspectors from Southern California comprised most of the respondent pool, making up 51% of participants, followed by Central California (29.80%) and Northern California (28.84%). An average years working in this field was 14.1 years. The work e-mail system, employee meetings, and information from co-workers were the most frequently used knowledge sharing channels in their agencies. 46% of all respondents strongly agree that the knowledge sharing can improve their organizations' overall performance and sustainable competitiveness (average 4.38 out of 5 scale), while 24% strongly agree that they believe the knowledge sharing program fits their organization and the industry (average 3.88).

## CONCLUSION

These results provided preliminary information to develop a better understanding of the critical factors affecting the successful implementation of knowledge sharing at food inspection agencies. Key stakeholders of public agencies demand nothing less than comprehensive inter-agency knowledge sharing [3]. Such a practice would require food inspection agencies to overcome traditional turf protection instincts and to communicate and convey knowledge in a manner that is understandable and useful to other agencies.

## REFERENCES

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