Learning from the Past and Knowledge Management:
Are We Making Progress?

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Abstract

Learning from the past is crucial in making progress certainly when it comes to process safety. Nothing is so obvious. Yet there are obstacles of various nature such as Human Factors, technical complexities and restraints against knowledge management, and last but not least policy and decision making in view of cost-benefit. Human Factor will highlight human forgetfulness, problems of information transfer and it-will-never-happen-to-me attitude. Technical complexities is dealing with how to store information and data that it can become retrievable and will be retrieved at the right moment, on the right subject by the right person. There is quite a bit to improve in this respect. Knowledge management is a subject area in itself. It is on knowledge and information sharing on operational level, on tactical level in institutionalising data banks and compiling information and on strategic level. The latter deals with questions such as what do we know, how well do we know it, where do we have the knowledge available, how well is our education and training process, what should we know and exists elsewhere and what should we know and will have to be researched ourselves. Much wisdom is buried when it comes to policy and decision making with cost-benefit on the background. We shall touch upon the various aspects and give some examples where it went wrong to make the picture more clear. Finally the crucial question: Are we making progress? The author’s answer is neither full out yes, nor no. Our information society is not very active when investment has to be made in means of which you cannot predict they will pay-off tomorrow. There is some progress, but oh so slow…