

Knowledge Management – Are you in the know?

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- Is your organisation a Learning Organisation?
- Do you have Knowledge Workers?
- What do these terms even mean?

Let's rephrase these questions:

- Does your organisation capture and learn from successes and failures?
- Do your employees share information and intellectual property (IP) to be able to perform better?
- Is there a central repository of project documentation, policies, procedures, frameworks and other publications?
- Are there single points of reliance on certain key individuals and information they retain in memory?

Knowledge management (KM) as a theory and then a practical discipline can hold many of the positive answers to the above questions. Knowledge Management can be defined as the creation, retention and transfer of tacit and explicit knowledge by individuals, teams and entire organisations, with the goal of becoming a more intelligent learning organisation and build critical capabilities for greater success as a business.

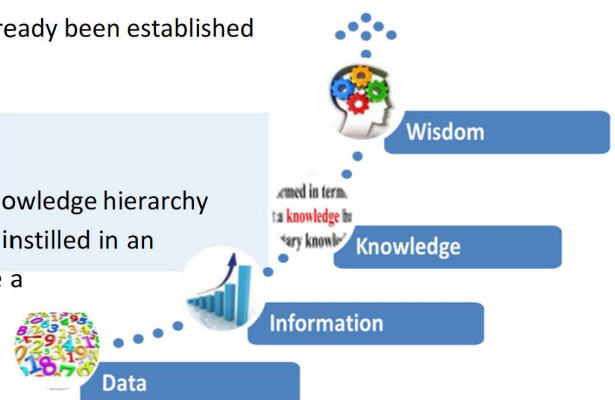
KM is particularly important for organisations who do not deal in tangible, packaged products, for example: service providers and consulting firms who need to create and re-sell their knowledge, ideas and individual brilliance. Is this your organisation?

If your business involves the generation of contextual tacit know-how, you need to be able to convert tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge.

Some of the benefits of managing our IP and knowledge in our organisations include:

- Increasing business efficiency in our strategic planning, operations and projects
- Not reinventing the wheel
- Saving time - and we all know that Time equals Money!
- No duplication of effort in that we use information that has already been established
- Don't make the same mistakes repeatedly
- Continually improve in how we operate.

An understanding of the theory of knowledge management, and the knowledge hierarchy is essential for ensuring a good culture of knowledge management is instilled in an organisation and that the employees understand what it means to be a knowledge worker. The knowledge hierarchy refers to the relationships between data, information, knowledge, and wisdom in a hierarchical arrangement.



- **Data** refers to symbols, numbers, words and other characters that have little or no meaning as they stand on their own.
- **Information** gives meaning to data. Once processed, data becomes information which is useful and provides answers to "who", "what", "where", and "when" questions.
- **Knowledge** is then the application of data and information to a situation and understanding how things work. Knowledge is information that has been processed, organised or structured in some way and applied or put into action.
- **Wisdom** is the final step in which knowledge may be used to further evaluate understanding provides the ability to increase effectiveness. Wisdom adds value, which requires judgement and ethical values.

To become a knowledge organisation is where our people use systems and processes to create, manage, share, use and transfer knowledge based services through linking the past, present, and future, we need to capture and preserve knowledge from the past as well as share and mobilise the knowledge of today for use in the future.

To achieve this, we need to:

- Have an established KM Framework that will guide our teams in the processes for creation, storage, sharing and utilisation of knowledge and information. This should include the appointment of a knowledge champion in each division or function to drive and implement KM.
- Have employees working as Knowledge Workers, where our teams are focussed on developing and establishing Intellectual Property that is relevant and contributes to the organisation becoming a thought leader and building physical evidence of the organisational memory.
- Become a Learning Organisation where we are benefitting from tacit and explicit knowledge of previous projects, programmes and processes.
- Be seen as a Thought Leader where we are encouraging employees to research, write and publish technical articles and white papers as are relevant to their field, speak at conferences and contribute to industry networks.

So let us focus on our organisation, the knowledge and organisational memory and become “in the know”!

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