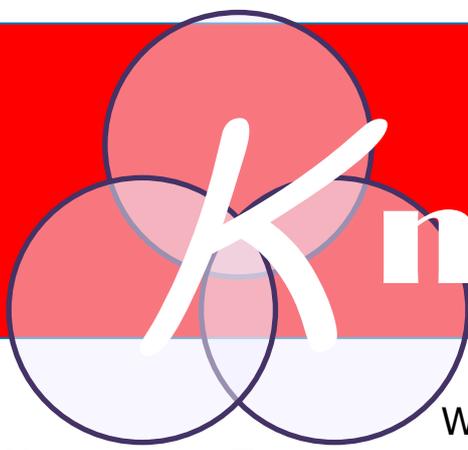


New Year 2012
Year of the Dragon



Knoco news

Welcome to the New Year edition of the Knoco Newsletter. The theme of this edition is knowledge management strategy

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How to build a KM strategy

There is no such thing as an "off the peg", "one size fits all" knowledge management strategy. Every organization needs to create their own knowledge management strategy, which fits their own context and their own business needs. Here is how to do it (for more detail, [order our strategy guide](#))

Start with the Business Drivers

As we explained in the May 2011 newsletter, [available from the Knoco website](#), knowledge management needs to be business-led. KM is not something you do just because it's a "good thing" to do - you do it because it adds value to the business. So your first step to writing a knowledge management strategy is to identify the business driver that you're going to support.

- Are you going to support growth?
- Are you going to support continuous improvement and operational excellence?
- Are you going to support customer engagement, by providing

knowledge to the front line customer interface?

- Are you going to protect business delivery, despite the retirement of many experts?

Identify the knowledge that is crucial to delivering business strategy

The link between business strategy and knowledge management can be identified using two questions.

First, you ask "What do we need to be able to **do** (i.e. what activities do we need to conduct) in order to deliver our business strategy?"

Then you ask "what do we need to **know**, to be competent at these activities?"



The answer to this second question will be a list of strategic knowledge areas for your organisation. It will tell you **what knowledge** you need to manage, to deliver your business strategy. It will identify the **knowledge hotspots** for your company.

Work out where that knowledge lies

Knowledge management, at its simplest, consists of building a system to transfer strategic knowledge from the people who have it, to the people who need it, in an effective, efficient and routine manner.

So once you have identified the strategic knowledge, you then need to map out where it lies, and where it needs to be transferred.

Is the knowledge centralized, in a small number of company experts? Is it dispersed among a community of experienced practitioners? Is it created as best practices and lessons from projects, living in the heads of the project managers?



Understand the audience

It's absolutely crucial to understand the users of the knowledge; how many there are, and the degree of context and knowledge they have already, then knowledge needs, their working styles and habits. The knowledge demographics of the organization are important (see section below), and knowledge supply needs to be compatible with working style. A mobile workforce, for example, needs to be able to access the knowledge of their peers through smart phones or other mobile devices, while a office based workforce can use desktop computers can use desktop computers

Choose an effective transfer approach

The two main strategic approaches for knowledge management are Connection and Collection, otherwise known as personalisation and codification. Although any knowledge management strategy will need a combination of these two, one might receive more focused than the other.

A Collection approach, where knowledge is collected and

codified and made available as documents, is effective where the knowledge is relatively straightforward, and needs to be transferred to a large number of people, for example in a company with a large turnover of staff, or a company wishing to transfer product knowledge to a large sales force.

A connection approach, where knowledge is transferred through communities of practice and social networks, is suitable for complex contextual knowledge shared between communities of experienced practitioners.

Drive Pull before driving Push

Many of the knowledge management strategies we asked to review, talk about "creating a culture of knowledge sharing"; in other words, they seek to promote publishing and "push" of knowledge around the organization.

This is the wrong place to start. There is no point in creating a culture of sharing, if you have no culture of re-use. "Pull" is a far more powerful driver for Knowledge

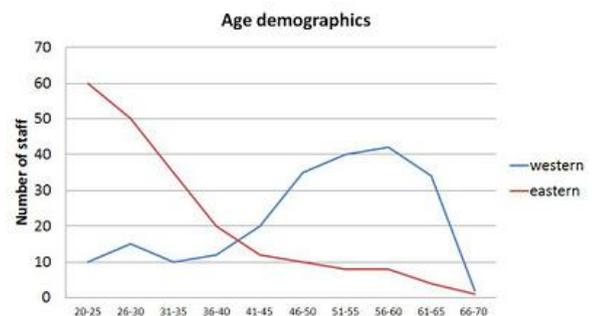
Management than Push, and we would always recommend creating a culture of knowledge seeking before creating a culture of knowledge sharing.

Create the demand for knowledge, and the supply will follow. Create a culture of asking, and the culture of sharing will follow.

KM and the demographics of the workforce.

A key factor that can affect your KM strategy is the demographics of the workforce.

Take a Western engineering organisation. Here the economy is static, and the population growth is stable. Engineering is not a "sexy topic". The workforce is largely made up of baby boomers. A large proportion of the workforce is over 40, with many staff approaching retirement. Experience is widespread in the organisation - this is an experienced company, and knowledge is dispersed. Your KM strategy will be a "Connection" strategy, where socially-enabled Communities of Practice are important, where people can ask each other for advice, and that advice is spread round the organisation. Experienced staff collaborate to create new knowledge out of their shared expertise. The biggest risk is knowledge loss, as so many of the workforce will retire soon.



Take an eastern engineering organisation. Here the economy is growing, the population is growing, there is a hunger for prosperity,

and engineering is also a growth area. The workforce is predominantly very young - many of them fewer than 2 years in post. There are only a handful of real experts, and a host of inexperienced staff. Experience is a rare commodity, and is centralised within the company, retained within the Centres of Excellence, and the small Expert groups. Here the issue is not Collaboration, but rapid onboarding and upskilling. The risk is not Retention of knowledge, it is deployment of knowledge.

These two demographic profiles would lead you to take two different approaches to KM. The Western company would introduce communities of practice, and use the dispersed Expertise to collaborate on building continuously improving practices, processes and products. Wikis could be used to harness the dispersed expertise. There would be huge potential for innovation, as people re-use and build on ideas from each other. Crowd sourcing, and "asking the audience" are excellent strategies for finding knowledge.

The Eastern company would focus on the development and deployment of standard practices and procedures, and on developing and deploying capability among the young workforce. The experts would build top-class training and educational material, and the focus would be on Communities of Learning rather than Communities of Practice. Innovation would be

discouraged, until the staff had built enough experience to know which rules can be bent, and which must be adhered to. Crowdsourcing is not a good strategy, and the "wisdom of the experts" trumps the "wisdom of the crowd".

This is one of the factors that KM must address, namely the amount of expertise in the company, and how widely it is dispersed.

Welcome to Knoco France.

This month we say hello to Didier Plegat and Catherine Boissonnet, our representative in France. Didier Plegat is the CEO of VEDALIS, the Social Knowledge Management software editor based in France.



Didier's background of 25 years as a Senior Executive in a large company and his practical experience in management consulting stand him in good stead in the modern day era to drive Knowledge Management (KM) with tangible business benefits.

Thanks to his team of IT developers and KM consultants, Didier helps private and public organizations to design & implement networking

solutions and knowledge management strategies.

Catherine Boissonnet, has been in charge of Process Department at VEDALIS since 2005. As a senior Social KM consultant Catherine is an expert in implementing networking solutions and knowledge management strategies.



Catherine has more than 15 years experience in networking management and bridge-building projects. She regularly undertakes executive seminars for Business and Engineering Schools (France and Algeria) which focus on Networking Management Projects, Communication, Change, Conflict & Leadership Management and Knowledge Management (KM).

Catherine has extensive experience as a project leader in several consulting firms in France. She has worked on IT Concepts and Document Management System Support at the INRIA (Research of Informatics and Automatic Institute). She has a Master's Degree in Social Psychology and a Master Thesis in Cognitive Sciences from the Polytechnique National Institut of Grenoble (INPG).

Welcome to the Knoco family, Didier and Catherine.

Agile KM – the early stages of strategy

Ian Fry, Knoco Australia

I first became aware of the “Agile” approach in the 1980’s. Up until then, the primary method for software engineering was described as “Waterfall” (Requirements – Specification – Detail Specification – Program – Test – Implement) We were looking for a more cost and time effective method, and with the development of better programming tools, it became feasible to undertake a series of rapid, small initiatives with constant and immediate feedback loops, so that the client was continuously involved and the client-developer association was enhanced. This has since developed into the “Agile” approach, and is also directly applicable to KM initiatives.

Isn’t this just chaotic? No – because all of these initiatives are still within an overall plan or strategy. Knoco has a definite philosophy of the utmost importance of a KM strategy and offers a [free guide](#). But that strategy will not necessarily have every step in full detail. And the key in the early stages – until KM has proved its worth – is to take very small steps – possibly as small as 30 hours of effort by the KM team. It takes courage and discipline to cut the steps back as far as you can. But rather than be a risky approach, it is actually safer.

By taking the piloting and proof-of-concept stage in small steps, often in parallel depending on resources and impact, the following advantages emerge

- Each step is able to be consumed by the organization. You are taking the people along with you, rather than imposing an untried “silver bullet” solution.
- Because the steps are small, they become safe-fail in that they are easy to reverse.
- It is feasible to trial multiple possible processes or approaches.
- Metrics can be used to monitor (and trumpet) success or choose alternative small steps
- Scope changes can be accommodated. These are seen as the bugbear of projects, but can be handled by taking an “Agile” approach. Even the assessment of the impact of a proposed change is possible with this method because it is feasible to do some partial experiments.

What tends to emerge is organic rather than cliff-face growth in KM. You are very much in tune with the Continuous Improvement regimes of the organization, because you are recognizing the ongoing self-generated change associated with the KM. This should also happen with the KM Project itself, where your feedback loop is an integral part of your methodology.

People will only appreciate the full impact of KM when they have had real positive experience, so give it to them early and often. From that positive experience, two things will emerge.

- They will suggest other areas for KM.
- They will be in a position to utilize other, possibly more sophisticated approaches.

This is why metrics are so important. Because you used a particular KM approach initially in one step, it is not necessarily sufficient to leave it at that. Down the track, it will be profitable for other approaches to build on this. For example, you may start off with a Knowledge Exchange, and use this to spark a Community of Practice. Or you may conduct a Retention interview, and use this as the basis of a Wiki. Your metrics should guide you to what is working and what the potential for expansion could be.

Once the concept is proven, and the metrics demonstrate real success, then you can move into the next stage, which is the large scale pilots and the company-wide transformation stage.

If you want to discuss this further, feel free to contact any of the Knoco team (see details on the last page).



Is your KM strategy going to keep you afloat?

Ian Corbett, Knoco S Africa

It often saddens me as a consultant to receive an email from a client or acquaintance announcing that their team has just been made redundant. Tough decisions are made quickly in times of crisis - especially if management perceives KM to be a "nice to have" rather than an essential part of business success because there is no clear evidence that your team is adding value.

The danger usually first comes to light when, as a consultant, you engage with people who are passionate about KM but clearly struggle to make the crucial connections between KM/learning-performance-benefit.



Here in South Africa people commonly enter KM with a background in librarianship or information management - from my perspective, managers or leaders seeking to implement KM who do this are potentially setting people up for failure because they have little or no practical insight into the actual business of the organisation. In such cases this also usually means that the

manager setting KM in motion also does not adequately understand how the link between KM and performance improvement is created and driven to achieve tangible business benefit. In these cases KM is then essentially being done more "as the right thing to do" than to deliver strategic value. If you are a Knowledge Manager that's potentially a dangerous place to be.

Business knowledge and insight are crucial when you are in the early stages of defining a KM strategy. This is when a Knowledge Manager needs to be capable of generating insightful questions about key areas of organisational performance and link it back to knowledge management in order to build a strong, practical, value adding business case. That person also then needs to have significant skill in change management in order to be able to manage the early stages of implementation to deliver "quick wins" that people always seem to want these days.

The key lessons?

- 1) If you want to ride safely through the storm make sure you align your KM strategy to organisational business strategy;
- 2) If you are responsible for creating the team; spend time on making sure that you get the right people to help you achieve real business benefit;
- 3) If you are responsible for a KM team with a weak background in the business,

make sure that you support them with people who can train and develop them whilst mentoring and coaching them in understanding link between KM and business performance.

How to build a KM strategy, in less than 50 words - a Summary

Decide what knowledge is vital for the organisation (A)

Find out who needs that knowledge (B)

Find out where that knowledge is now (and if it doesn't exist, where it will come from) (C)

Work out how to get A to B from C

- Routinely
- Systematically
- Effectively
- Efficiently



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