



April 2017

A users guide to Knowledge Management audits



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This newsletter is a guide to the several different type of Knowledge Management Audit.

Auditing your KM program is always a good idea, but you need to know the purpose of the audit before you start, and have a clear idea of what you will do with the audit results. Only then can you be sure what sort of Audit you need.

Explore our user guide below to understand the audit options available to you.

The 6 types of audit

We describe 6 types of audit in this newsletter. These are as follows:

- An audit of your [Knowledge Management Framework](#) in order to identify the strengths and missing elements, so that you can put an action plan in place to close the gaps;
- An [audit of the KM culture](#), so you can develop a plan and strategy to strengthen the supportive cultural elements, and remove the blocking elements;
- An [audit of the knowledae itself](#). so you can identifv those knowledae

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topics in most need of attention, and so prioritise and focus your KM efforts where they will make most difference;

- [An audit of one or more Communities of Practice](#), so you can help them develop through a number of stages ;
- A high level KM maturity assessment of the organisation, to get a very quick overview of strengths and weaknesses;
- An audit against a KM standard, for accreditation purposes.



[Contact Knoco](#) for more guidance on the type of KM audit you may need.

Audit of the KM framework

Most organisations already do some elements of Knowledge Management, even before formal Knowledge Management implementation begins. KM is, after all, common sense, and people have often made a start without even calling it "knowledge management". However some critical elements of the Knowledge Management Framework are usually missing, and the elements which are present are often not joined up. Organisations usually commission a [Knowledge Management framework assessment](#) in the early stages of their KM journey, & to identify the gaps and to map out the actions for completing, and joining up, the framework.

A KM Framework audit will look at the following elements:

- The transfer of knowledge through discussion and conversation;
- The capture of knowledge, through recording, documentation and codification;
- The management of captured knowledge, through curation and

synthesis;

- Seeking and re-using knowledge;
- The roles and responsibilities which support the above steps;
- The processes which support the above steps;
- The technologies which support the above steps;
- The governance system which supports all of the above, and seeks to develop and maintain the required behaviours.

The audit is usually conducted through a series of interviews, or at a workshop. A typical Audit output will look at the status of all the component KM elements, identify strengths and weaknesses, compare the organisation to Best in Class, and recommend actions to implement the ideal solution for the organisation.

[Contact Knoco](#) to learn more about the KM Framework assessment audit



Participants at a KM Framework Audit workshop

Audit of the KM culture

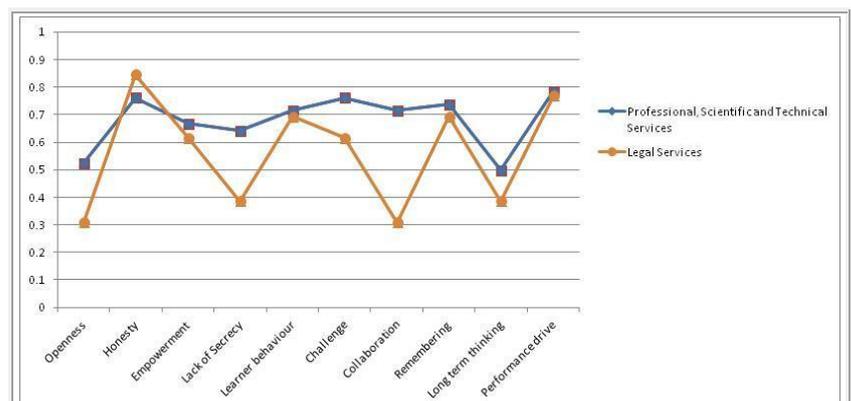
Culture is closely linked to KM implementation. A supportive culture will accelerate implementation while an unsupportive culture will slow or even block KM. However Knowledge Management is itself a culture change agent, and a complete KM framework will act to slowly change the culture. It's worth performing a [KM culture audit](#) in the early stages of your Knowledge Management Implementation in order to map out the specific cultural blockers and enablers in your organisation, and then running it again at regular intervals to map the progress of culture change.

A typical KM cultural audit will be based on a survey and focus group

discussions, and may address some or all of the following cultural issues:

- Openness vs. closed behaviours;
- Honesty vs. dishonesty - The extent to which people will filter knowledge and information when communicating with peers or seniors;
- Empowerment vs. disempowerment - the extent to which people feel able to act on knowledge, independent of approval from their leaders;
- Learner vs. knower. The extent to which people put a value on acquiring new knowledge as opposed to the knowledge they already hold in their heads;
- Need to share vs. need to know. The extent to which people offer their knowledge to others rather than keeping it secret;
- Challenge v Acceptance. The extent to which people seek to understand why things are the way they are;
- Collaborative vs. competitive. The extent to which people identify with and share in the success of others;
- Remembering vs. forgetting. This is the extent to which people acknowledge and incorporate the past when making plans for the future and the extent to which they consciously record decisions, judgments, knowledge etc. for future reference;
- Strategic patience vs. Short-termism. This is the extent to which people consider the 'bigger picture' and try to understand how their actions fit into the broader, longer term vision for their organisation;
- Relentless pursuit of excellence v complacency. This is the extent to which organisations acknowledge there is always room for improvement.

[Contact Knoco](#) to learn about the cultural audit, or [try a free online version](#).



Audit of the Knowledge topics

By Joaquim Carbonnel, [Knoco Spain](#)

There is no doubt about the value added by knowledge management to an organization. But knowledge management requires also an investment and an effort from the responsible roles. One imperative consideration at this level is to prioritise the Knowledge Management activities, and to focus them on the knowledge topics of highest priority.

The knowledge of an organization tends to "infinite", and it is not possible to manage something as big as the total sum of organizational knowledge. Sometimes the management of knowledge simply fails because the prioritization exercise has not been done and there cannot be an agreement on which are the most important knowledge topics for an organization or even for a functional area. We use the concept of "critical knowledge": the knowledge topics that are essential to achieve corporate goals. As even this knowledge could be hard to manage, we must prioritize it following some agreed criteria. It is helpful to consider some of the following questions:

- The current importance of the topic;
- The future importance of the topic;
- The level of documentation on the topic;
- The current level of diffusion of the knowledge,
- The required level of diffusion;
- The maturity of the topic;
- The organisation's level of expertise on the topic;
- The required future level of expertise;
- The ease of replacing the knowledge if it were lost;
- The risk of knowledge loss.

A useful recommendation in this case is to implement a [knowledge scan](#). Its aim is to high-grade the knowledge topics that needs more attention. The knowledge scan (or audit) helps you focus Knowledge Management where it brings the highest value to the organization (or where it reduces the risk of losing the knowledge). To keep Knowledge Management "fit" as the organization priorities change over time, we strongly recommend carrying out this exercise whenever the main goals change. It will help keep our framework updated and people and KM tools fully operational.

[Contact Knoco](#) for help in Knowledge Topic audit



A Knowledge Topic audit workshop in Sweden

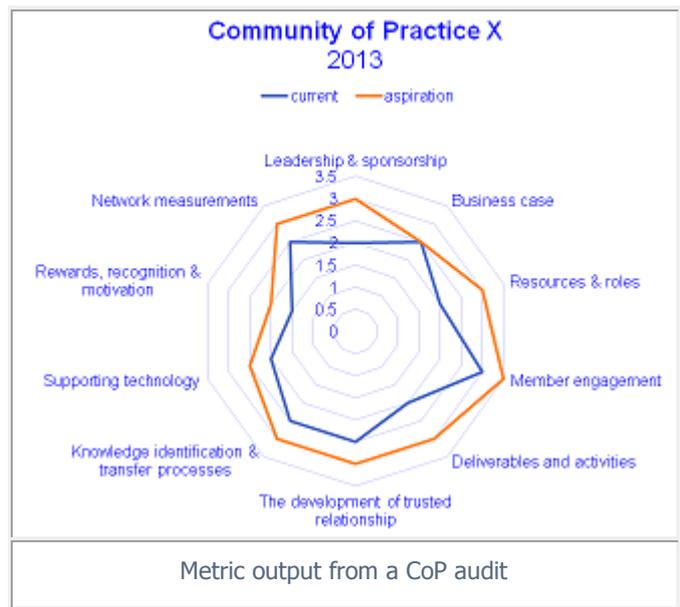
Audit of the CoPs

Many companies introduce Communities of Practice as part of their Knowledge Management Framework. Communities are not an instant solution - they grow over time, and pass through several stages as they mature. A CoP audit allows you to track the development of the Communities of Practice, and the output from the audit can be used to plan the next stage of CoP development.

CoP audits review a number of dimensions related to the CoP, for example the list below

- Leadership and sponsorship
- Business case
- Resources and roles
- Member engagement
- Deliverables and activities
- Trusted relationships
- Processes
- Technology
- Rewards and recognition
- Metrics

Outputs like the one shown below can help identify which of these dimensions the CoP needs to work on to reach the next level of development.



[Contact Knoco](#) for advice on CoP audit.

KM maturity audit

KM maturity audits are common as a quick-look review of the current state of KM. At Knoco, we think these maturity audits are OK as a general guide, but believe that you need more detailed audits in order to draw any firm conclusions. Knowledge Management is more of a step-change than a maturation process, and using a maturity index for anything other than a single KM component such as a Community of Practice can be misleading.

However is all you need is a quick-look review, then [try our free online KM maturity audit](#).

Audit against a KM standard

At the moment, there is no international standard for Knowledge Management which you can be audited against. However an ISO standard is under development and should be released for public review later this year. Once this standard has been reviewed and published, we will at last have an internationally agreed management standard for KM which will provide the basis for internal and external audit. Until then, watch this space!

Invitation to take part in our Knoco Global Survey of Knowledge Management

Take part in our 2017 survey of Knowledge Management, and we will give you a free copy of the 2014 results, as well as the 2017 results.

In 2014 we organised [one of the most comprehensive surveys of global knowledge management ever devised](#). The results were fascinating, with insights about the maturity of KM by region and sector, the size and composition of KM teams, the value delivered by KM, the technologies, processes and governance processes applied, and details of communities of practice, lesson learned systems and best practice approaches.

This year we are running the survey again, to see what has changed in the last 3 years. Anyone who takes part will be rewarded with a link to a free copy of the 2014 results, as well as being sent a set of 2017 results when the survey closes.

Would you like to take part?

If you can answer on behalf of an organisation that does KM, or has done KM, or plans to introduce KM, then please [follow this link](#) and take the survey. Bear in mind that the comprehensive nature of the survey means it may take up to an hour to complete, but this also means the results are equally comprehensive and rich, so your time is well worth investing.

Feel free to [take the survey now](#), and/or forward this newsletter to any of your colleagues.

News from Knoco

Some updates from across the Knoco family are listed here.

- Knoco Indonesia will conduct the 2nd Indonesia KM Summit in Yogyakarta, Central Java - Indonesia on 8-9 August 2017. [Contact Sapta](#) for details.



Delegates and speakers at the 2015 Indonesian Summit

- Nick Milton will be taking part in [KMUk](#) in June
- In May, Rupert Lescott and Don Dressler will be running the Bird Island workshop at the [KA Connect Conference 2017](#) - a KM conference aimed specifically at the Architecture, Engineering and Construction industry

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