

Knowledge Management

Knowledge management (Enables and Requires) the (Sharing and Preservation) of (Knowledge Assets) in order to reduce (Costs and Risks) and improve (Business Performance).

- ↗ The **sharing** and **preservation** of an organisation's knowledge assets are clearly critical for the successful delivery of products and services.
- ↗ However, organisations must provide methods, structures and tools to **enable** this sharing and preservation. A few are described in this guidance note, including Communities of Practice, Yellow Pages and Wikis. However, knowledge management is also about culture change, and cultures generally need to be encouraged to evolve; core management processes should therefore be leveraged to **require** and incentivise individuals, projects and functions to both share and preserve knowledge. So, for example, a) project approval routes should check that searches have been carried out for knowledge that project's should import, and b) staff performance reviews should ensure that employees have been actively sharing their knowledge.
- ↗ **Knowledge assets** include individuals' expertise and experience, as well as codified knowledge in its many forms. It may make sense for an organisation to develop a knowledge strategy identifying those assets that are both mission critical and need to be the subject of management action to ensure their quality and ongoing availability. Such a strategy needs to be anchored in an understanding of the organisation's differentiating and enabling capabilities.

The following are signs that an organisation is effectively managing its knowledge assets:

- ↗ Employees at all organisational levels treat the management of knowledge as an integral part of their normal duties, proactively sharing knowledge before, during and after each non-routine task.
- ↗ Employees have access to, and understand how to use, the tools and processes needed to share and capture knowledge.
- ↗ Knowledge management criteria are embedded in the organisation's key decision making processes, so that business decisions are informed by a clear understanding of the alignment of available knowledge assets (and, of course, intellectual property assets) to business need.

Many mistakenly believe that knowledge management has a different (and conflicting) focus from intellectual property management; the former being driven by a need to disseminate, the latter a desire to control, information flows. However, in practice, intellectual property management can enable and facilitate the sharing of knowledge by, for example:

- ↗ Accurately defining - and hence minimising - the volume of information that needs to be treated as commercially sensitive and, consequently, its transfer controlled.
- ↗ Creating a contractual framework that encourages, incentivises, or even requires, the exchange of information with subcontractors.

- ~ Licensing intellectual property (both in and out) to enable the wider adoption / improvement of knowledge assets.
- ~ Using patents to facilitate the open release of valuable information, whilst maintaining control on its usage.

Furthermore, knowledge and intellectual property management both have an interest in improving the visibility of innovations created by the organisation, its partners and subcontractors, so that they can be shared, leveraged and protected as appropriate.

The following are a few of the many processes used by organisations to **Enable** and **Require** the **Sharing** and **Preservation** of **Knowledge Assets**.

Communities of Practice (CoPs) : A network of professionals with a shared interest in a topic, who work together to; share problems and solutions, develop methods, provide mentoring, etc. CoPs can make use of a number of communication media, including Wikis, Blogs and Peer Assists - as described below.

Wikis : Wikis are online articles/encyclopaedias where authorised individuals can add information or edit each others contributions. Their strength lies in a) the ability of a community to collectively develop/agree a description, and b) for related themes to be linked in a highly usable manner. An internal, intranet-based wiki is a flexible tool that can be used to simultaneously provide a mechanism for:

- ~ Projects and teams to capture their key problems, technical developments and lessons learned. These need only be described in sufficient detail to enable users to assess their relevance and identify contact points;
- and/or
- ~ Detailed technical information to be captured where necessary to assist in training or knowledge retention.

Post Project Reviews : A facilitated workshop which:

- ~ Synthesises the lessons learned during the course of a project.
- ~ Identifies action points that could impact on other activities or projects, and agrees a route for their dissemination.

Peer Assists : A meeting at which groups of colleagues (problem holders and peers) work together to:

- ~ Help explore and perhaps redefine the problem.
- ~ Offer possible solutions.

The process is designed to help premature switching into solution mode, and hence ensure problems are accurately defined.

Yellow Pages : A directory that indexes individuals', teams' and/or organisations' skills, knowledge, experience and expertise so that users can identify the sources of specific knowledge.

Knowledge Markets : A forum in which participants advertise their needs and expertise (problems and solutions) to identify:

- ~ Areas for future collaboration.
- ~ Knowledge gaps where expertise should either be sought externally or developed.