

## What is Knowledge Management?

We once heard knowledge management likened to herding cats. Stop for a minute and imagine yourself in a large room - or even a field - full of cats, trying to herd them towards one corner. Not going well, is it?

So if you can't *herd* cats, how could you get them to do what you want? You might suggest providing scratching-posts, saucers of milk, warm fires and balls of wool - components that go to make up the right environment.

That is exactly the view we take when thinking about knowledge management.

### **You can't manage knowledge - nobody can.**

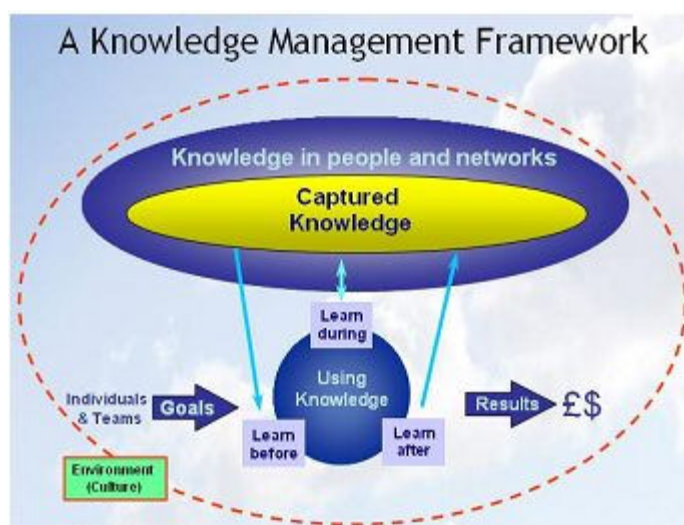
What you **can** do is to manage the environment in which knowledge can be created, discovered, captured, shared, distilled, validated, transferred, adopted, adapted and applied.

In order to create an environment within which knowledge rapidly flourishes we need:

- *the right conditions*: a common reliable infrastructure and an organisation willing be entrepreneurial;
- *the right means*: a common model, tools and processes;
- *the right actions*: where people instinctively seek, share and use knowledge; and
- *the right leadership*: where learning and sharing is expected and role-modelled.

Start with the way your organisation operates: People and teams agree a set of goals, and then use knowledge to deliver against their targets, ultimately creating value. So where do you begin to intervene with knowledge management?

Let's focus on the "using knowledge circle". What if you could inspire your organisation to learn before, during and after any significant activity. Simple learning processes like peer assists, retrospects (post project reviews) and after action reviews make their contribution here, and help to elicit new knowledge - knowledge which would have remained in the heads of the individuals concerned.



All this learning activity needs to be connected to some kind of knowledge "bank"; in order to learn before doing, you will want to make a withdrawal - and when you have lessons learned to contribute, you'll need to make a deposit.



That's where the ability to capture and distil knowledge becomes important. But that's not the whole story. You can't capture everything, so it's important to link to the people and network who hold key knowledge and insights, and to encourage them to own and update any knowledge which is made explicit - captured as information.

Surrounding this model is the environment or culture within your organisation, which is critical to get started and sustain knowledge-sharing. This will be reflected in the right leadership behaviours, and the way in which KM becomes embedded into core processes so that ultimately it becomes an "unconscious competence".

### How are you doing?

Why not do our KM Self assessment and see how you're doing against a set of key measure including: KM Strategy, Leadership Behaviours, Learning Before, During and After, Networking and Capturing Knowledge.

You can assess your own organization by first establishing your current level for these pillars, then determine what would be the desired level and finally highlight your priority area.



	<b>STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES</b>	<b>COLLABORATION MECHANISMS</b>	<b>KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND LEARNING</b>	<b>KNOWLEDGE CAPTURE AND STORAGE</b>
<b>Level 5</b>	Knowledge and learning are integral parts of the overall organisational strategy. A set of tools is available and well communicated, and the capacity to apply them is actively strengthened.	Managers and leaders recognise and reinforce the link between knowledge, learning and performance. Managers regularly apply relevant tools and techniques, and act as learning role models. Staff ToRs contain references to knowledge sharing and learning.	Collaboration is a defining principle across the organisation. A range of internal and external collaboration mechanisms operate, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities in terms of the organisational goals. Some have clear external deliverables while others develop capability in the organisation.	Prompts for learning are built into key processes. ... Programme staff routinely find out who knows what, inside and outside the organisation, and talk with them. A common language, templates and guidelines support effective sharing.	Information is easy to access and retrieve. Selected information is sent to potential users in a systematic and coherent manner. High priority information assets have multiple managers who are responsible for updating, summarising and synthesising information. Exit interviews and handovers are used systematically.
<b>Level 4</b>	A knowledge and learning strategy exists, but is not integrated with overall goals. A set of tools for knowledge and learning is available and understood by most staff.	Management view knowledge and learning as everyone's responsibility. Managers increasingly ask for and exhibit learning approaches. There are rewards and incentives for using such approaches.	Networks are organised around business needs and have a clear governance document. Supportive technology is in place and is well used. External parties are being included in some networks.	'Learning before, during and after is the way things are done around here.' Beneficiaries and partners participate in review sessions. External knowledge plays a role in shaping projects.	Key information is kept current and easily accessible. One individual acts as the guardian of each information asset, and encourages people to contribute. Many do.
<b>Level 3</b>	There are ongoing discussions about developing a knowledge and learning strategy. A wide range of tools are being used across the organisation.	Knowledge and learning is viewed as the responsibility of a specific role or roles. Some managers talk the talk, but don't always walk the walk!	People are using networks and working groups to get results. Peers are helping peers across organisational boundaries. Formal collaboration mechanisms are being created and recognised.	People can find out what the organisation knows. Some examples of sharing and learning are highlighted and recognised across the organisation. Some information translates across boundaries.	Specific groups take responsibility for their own information and begin to collect it in one location in a common format. Some is summarised for easy access by others. Searching information assets before starting activities is encouraged, as is sharing lessons afterwards. Some handovers take place.
<b>Level 2</b>	Many people say that sharing knowledge is important to the organisations success. Some people are using some tools to help with learning and sharing.	Some managers give people the time to share and learn, but there is little visible support from the top.	Ad hoc personal networking is used by individuals who know each other to achieve goals. This is increasingly recognised as vital to the organisation.	People learn before doing and programme review sessions. They sometimes capture what they learn for the purpose of sharing, but in practice few do access it.	A few groups capture lessons learned after a project, and look for information before starting a project. There is potential access to lots of information, but it is not summarised
<b>Level 1 (basic)</b>	A few people express that knowledge is important to the organisation. Isolated individuals begin to talk about how important – and difficult – it is.	Knowledge and learning viewed with scepticisms. Management think learning leads to lack of accountability. 'Knowledge is power' at the highest levels of the organisation.	Knowledge hoarders seem to get rewarded. There are few cross-cutting collaborations. Silos are hard to break down.	People are conscious of the need to learn from what they do but rarely get the time. Sharing is for the benefit of specific teams.	Some individuals take the time to capture their lessons, but do so in a confusing variety of formats. Most don't contribute to information assets, and even fewer search them. No exit interviews or handovers take place.