Knowledge Management 10 point checklist

"Knowledge Management is a conscious strategy of getting the right knowledge to the right people at the right time and helping people share and put information into action in ways that will improve organizational performance."



1. Find out who needs to know about what

- [ ] It is surprising how many people ignore this simple and straightforward starting point. Perhaps because the technology required is too simple. All you need is a whiteboard and a group of knowledgable and attentive employees. We have used Relationship Mapping (also called 'Customer Supplier Mapping') and Flowcharting very successfully to explore this territory. We have used these techniques to conduct 'Knowledge Audits' – a methodology we have implemented to develop knowledge management strategies.

2. Capture and communicate as much as you can in writing

- [ ] With the advent of networks and Web technology, written information is now very cheap and easy to distribute. This means an organisation can get enormous leverage by communicating as much as possible in writing. All the organisation's essential reference knowledge should be made available. The major challenge is to capture it and make sure that it is well written and accurate. There is no point distributing information quickly that only confuses and misleads.

3. Identify those things that can only be communicated person-to-person

- [ ] Much of an organisation's knowledge is difficult to put in writing (although not as much as most people think). To share this knowledge, strategies need to be devised to connect people using such things as physical forums, moderated electronic discussion groups, Intranet-based 'knowledge yellow pages', and developing corporate policies and processes that support a culture of knowledge sharing.

4. Leverage your databases and information processing systems

- [ ] This is about leveraging electronic data repositories and communication networks to: mine data for new knowledge in the form of hitherto undiscovered relationships or trends (data mining) connecting your customers, suppliers, or employees, and their transactions, directly to 'expert systems' that 'know' about users via the databases they run with (this covers pretty much every buzzword beginning 'e-').

5. Make knowledge easily accessible

- [ ] Simply putting knowledge on-line, particularly reference information, is not enough. It needs to be carefully structured in a logical whole tailored to the user's needs and equipped with good navigation aids. Often, putting information on-line only is inappropriate – it needs to be published on paper for those who won't or can't take a computer with them to their workplace.

6. Keep knowledge quickly and continuously accurate and current

- [ ] Document Management Systems and Groupware Systems facilitate this, but before you implement them you need to put management processes and disciplines in place. If not, they will fail.

7. Enable multiple stakeholders to work together on the same body of knowledge

- [ ] The same tools apply as for point 6, but the right management processes and disciplines are even more important in this case, particularly when integrating compliance management systems (such as ISO 9000, AS 14000, etc).

8. Measure or value what your corporate knowledge is worth

- [ ] Measuring the value of 'Intellectual Assets' in order to ascertain the true value of an organisation's future earnings potential is developing into a field of its own. It is almost becoming a new branch of Accounting. (See the Skandia organisation's efforts for a good insight into this). More directly relevant, however, is the concept of measuring the 'cost-of-ignorance'. This process attempts to quantify this perennial 'hidden cost' to organisations in order to quantify the net benefits of investing dollars in Knowledge Management initiatives.

9. Connect your knowledge capture, communication, and sharing processes with your change, innovation, and improvement processes

- [ ] If innovation activities are too isolated in the organisation then their benefits will be low. Processes need to be in place to spread 'skunkworks' across the organisation using electronic networks. When the time comes for an innovation to come out of its closet, processes need to be in place to spread it widely throughout the organisation.

10. Determine the organisational skills and infrastructure needed to support all of the above

- [ ] Knowledge Management won't happen without dedicating people to the task and giving them the organisational power, resources and context to get the job done. Here is a quote from an article called "Looking through the knowledge glass" by American academics Wendi Bukowitz and Ruth Williams: "The growing focus on knowledge as a source of value will be accompanied by a corresponding demand for 'infomediaries',

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