July 2019 edition

ISO standard 30401:2018, the KM standard.

What it is, what it does, and the implications for your KM program.

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Apologies for the gap since the last newsletter in September 2018; it has been a busy time at Knoco.

One of the most important things to have happened during that time has been the publication of ISO 30401:2018, the Management Systems standard for knowledge Management. This is a major change in the KM industry; for the first time an international body has published a standard that applies to Knowledge Management. Even if the standard only addresses the management system by which KM is governed, this is still a benchmark event from which many organisations can benefit.

However there is still a general lack of understanding of the standard and of what it does, and still a fair amount of scepticism and suspicion. This newsletter is dedicated to the standard, to removing much of the confusion over how it might operate, and to a discussion of how you might use it to support your in-house KM program.

What is ISO Standard 30401?

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ISO is an international non-governmental organisation which exists for the purpose of developing, publishing and selling international standards. The members of ISO are the national standards bodies of the member countries – 162 in all – and include bodies such as the British Standards institute (BSI), the Deutsches Institut für Normung (DIN), and the Association Française de Normalisation (AFNOR). All these bodies believe that in mature industries, standardisation aids international trade, and delivers improved efficiency and quality.

At the time of writing, ISO has published over 22654 International Standards, of which 63 are management system standards (MSS). ISO 30401:2018 is an MSS; a standard for how an organization manages the inter-related parts of its business in order to achieve its objectives in an area of managerial focus (in this case, a focus on knowledge). The famous ISO MSS standards are 9001, 14001, 18001 and 24001, and all of these follow the same format. The KM standard is no exception, and any organisation familiar with ISO 9001:2015, for example, will find ISO 30401:2018 very familiar.

It is worth "busting a few myths" and explaining what the ISO standard does and does not do.

- **The standard does not tell you how to do KM.** The details of the roles you apply, the processes you adopt and the supporting technology you use within your KM Framework are largely up to you. Every organisation has to do KM in a way that suits their purpose, objective and context. What the standard does is makes sure you have set up a good management system, to provide solid foundations on which to build your KM solution.
- **The standard does not mandate how you implement KM.** Top-down, bottom-up, middle-in-out, guerrilla KM, agile KM, or KM as a change program - implement it as you see fit and at your own risk. The standard describes requirements for the final product, not how you get there.
- **The standard is not just for big companies.** Standards are flexible enough to work for organisations of all types and of all sizes, in all sectors. If you have a KM program, the standard will apply to you.
- **The standard will not require you to be externally audited or certified.** It's primarily for your own guidance, using internal audit if you so choose. Only a small proportion of the ISO standards are regularly audited using external auditors, and 90% of audit work is against only 5 standards (9001, 14001, 18001, 27001, 45001); the other 58 MSSs mostly never get audited. Certification will not be possible until the certification industry decides that there

is enough of a business case to set up trained auditors from accredited agencies to cover SIO 30401 as well.

- **You can audit yourself against the standard.** There are 54 uses of the word "shall" in the standard, each of which marks a requirement which you should comply against, and you will need to see whether you comply with each of these. If you can demonstrate that meet each requirement, then you can claim that you are compliant with the standard.

How and why was the standard written?

ISO does not decide when to develop a new standard, but responds to a request from industry, from one of the member countries, or from other stakeholders such as consumer groups. In January 2014 ISO received just a proposal from the Standards Institute of Israel (SII) to develop a management system standard for Knowledge Management. The justifications provided by the SII for this proposal for new work included:

- An increasing recognition of the need for, and importance of, Knowledge Management;
- Ambiguity in the understanding of what KM is;
- Multiple and common failures of KM projects and initiatives due to an incomplete approach.

ISO could not approve this work alone - it needed to be approved through a vote of the member countries. ISO therefore sent the proposal to the various member bodies, who convened feedback from a number of experts

in the field of KM, some of whom, including myself, had been suggested in the SII proposal. By the end of March 2014, 36 countries had replied to the proposal, the majority were in favour of accepting the proposal for development of a MSS for knowledge, and 12 countries agreed to be involved in the work, including the UK.

The drafting of standards follows a well-defined ISO procedure. The actual drafting work is done by a technical committee of experts drawn from the member countries, who work on various levels of draft which are cycled through working teams in the member countries called "mirror committees" for edit, review and input at national level. This ensured that a maximum number of people are consulted through face to face meetings and discussion. Membership of mirror committees was open to anyone who was interested, and membership of the drafting committee was open to all members of mirror committees. ISO also works through the principle of consensus, which means that all concerned must agree with a text before it is finalised, and ISO applies this principle by ensuring all discussions are face to face or by video conference.

The first meetings addressed some of the basics, such as whether to develop a certification standard (one which an organisation can be certified against, and which defines the minimum requirements for a certifiable KM management system). It was agreed that a certification standard should be our aim. Slowly the standard took shape, with work in the countries alternating with meetings of the ISO working group in Galveston, Berlin, Singapore and London. At its maximum, the mailing list for working group members totalled 64 people from 15 countries, which gives some idea of the breadth of consultation. Obviously not everyone turned up to every meeting, but a typical working group meeting might include 20 people from 8 countries.

Eventually the committee draft was complete, and was published in late 2017 on several websites for public review by anyone who cared to comment. Readers were invited to comment on the text clause by clause, line by line, using the ISO commenting template. Altogether 350 comments were received on the British site alone, from 45 different people. Many comments were duplicates, particularly the editorial comments picking up on spelling and capitalisation. Others suggested changes to the mandatory ISO MSS text, and so could not be accepted. In yet other cases comments were contradictory – some people for example feeling that Knowledge Management culture cannot be separated from a wider Organisational Culture, and others feeling that this distinction was crucial. The vast bulk of comments were useful and helpful, adding to the clarity of the document.

By the time the comments passed initial review for rationalisation, a total of 420 editorial and technical comments remained which needed full discussion. The ISO working group met again for a marathon session in Paris to work through these comments one by one. All editorial comments were accepted, many of which were duplicate. All technical comments were discussed, resolved and accepted where possible. The French delegates in particular gave some very useful input to the final structure, and long discussions were had to ensure that the English words we chose could be translated into French, German and other languages. Finally the work was complete, and the final version of the standard was signed off and passed to ISO for proof reading and translation, prior to final publication at the end of October 2018.

An ISO technical committee working group session in Paris. Knoco's Nick Milton on the far right of the picture

What does the standard contain?

The ISO KM standard contains the following ten elements, in accordance with the ISO Management systems standard structure. All of these ten elements need to be included in any ISO management systems standard.

Clause 1; Scope. A very short section on the scope of the standard

Clause 2; Normative reference. This describes the reference for the structure of the standard, which was ISO 9001:2015.

Clause 3; Terms and Definitions. Many of the definitions in this section are standard ISO definitions, and cannot be altered. Any new definition had to be a single sentence, and had to be a definition and not a description. Many definitions are illustrated by "Notes to Entry" which give a bit of an explanation. The standard does not define terms which do not appear in the document. "Tacit" and "Explicit" are not defined, for example, as these don't appear in the document text.

Clause 4; Context of the organisation. Clause 4 describes why the system is needed. As part of the answer to this question, the organization needs to identify internal and external issues that can impact on its intended outcomes, as well as all interested parties and their requirements. It also needs to document its scope and set the boundaries and main components of the management system – all in line with the business objectives.

Clause 5 - Leadership. The new ISO MSS structure places particular emphasis on leadership. Top management now has greater accountability and involvement in the organization's management system. They need to integrate the requirements of the KM management system into the organization's core business process, and allocate the necessary resources. Top management is also responsible for communicating the importance of KM to heighten employee awareness and involvement.

Clause 6 - Planning. The planning clause looks at what, who, how and when risks and opportunities must be addressed. Particular focus is also placed on the objectives of the management system. These should be measurable, monitored, communicated, aligned to the policy of the management system and updated when needed.

Clause 7 - Support. Organizations will have to look at the support needed to meet their goals and objectives. This includes resources, targeted internal and external communications, as well as documented information about the KM Framework.

Clause 8 - Operational planning and control. Clause 8 addresses both in-house and outsourced processes, while the overall process management includes adequate criteria to control these processes, as well as ways to manage planned and unintended change.

Clause 9 - Performance evaluation. Here organizations need to determine what, how and when things are to be monitored, measured, analysed and evaluated. An internal audit is also part of this process to ensure the management system conforms to the requirements of the organization as well as the standard, and is successfully implemented and

maintained. The final step, management review, looks at whether the management system is suitable, adequate and effective.

Clause 10 - Improvement. Clause 10 looks at ways to address non-conformities and corrective action, as well as strategies for improvement on a continual basis.

In addition the standard contains some introductory material and Appendices, but it is the 10 Clauses above that define the requirements for the KM standard.

How should the standard be used?

There are probably 3 main ways in which you can use ISO 30401, the ISO MSS for Knowledge Management.

You can ignore it.

Just because there is now a KM ISO standard, there is no need for you actually to do anything. Quite a few organisations will do nothing different now that the standard is published. In a recent survey, 25% of respondents who had heard of the standard had no plans to use it.

You can use it as a start-up guide.

If you are just starting in KM, you can purchase the standard to act as a guide. It should tell you what is different about KM, give you some of the principles, tell you where to begin, what you need to consider and what to put in place, and therefore help you to avoid some of the common pitfalls. In the survey, 33% of respondents who had heard of the standard planned to use it as a guide .

You can use it as a check on your KM program.

Using internal or external auditors, you can go through the standard and check whether you fulfil all the requirements. You look for evidence against the 54 "shall" requirements within the standard, by interviewing people and reviewing documents. If you believe you are compliant, then you document why you think this is the case. You identify any areas of non-compliance, and define the work that needs to be done in order to reach compliance. In the survey, 38% of respondents who had heard of the standard planned use it to audit their KM program.

There are 5 stakeholder groups who might be interested in your level of compliance;

- Your team, to understand what more they need to do to deliver compliant KM.
- Your management, to understand what more **they** need to do to deliver compliant KM.
- Your organisation; compliance with the standard shows KM is a "real discipline" being done in an approved way.
- Your clients; if you manage knowledge on behalf of a client, for example by providing a critical service to them, then compliance with the standard will show you handle knowledge responsibly.
- Your potential clients. For example, if you can show compliance with the standard as part of a bid package, this will demonstrate to the potential client that you handle knowledge responsibly.

You cannot (yet?) use it to get certification from an accredited body.

Many people, when they think of ISO standards, think of certification, and of the issue of a certificate of compliance by an accredited certification body. This level of certification is not yet possible with ISO 30401, and may never be. Certification bodies do most of their work against 4 to 8 of the 60+ MSSs, and it remains to be seen whether ISO 30401 is "big enough" for the certification bodies to be interested. Also the accreditation agencies such as UK's UKAS, accredit certification bodies against only 16 standards. Whether they will provide accreditation for auditors to audit against ISO 30401:2018 is a business decision for UKAS.

This may well be a good thing. A lot of time and money is spent chasing certificates, just in order to get certificates. It might be better if we spend our time and energy in using the standard to ensure our KM programs are built on a solid footing.

What next for the standard?

The standard has now entered a period of unchanged use, prior to a full review in 2023. ISO will not support the standard during this time, but the various national standards bodies may be interested in gathering data about the application of the standard, and ways in which it might be improved. Then, shortly before 2023, the 30401 standards committee will be reconstituted to consider the next update to the standard.

In the meantime the committee is working on a KM vocabulary as a companion volume to the standard. Both Ian (Australia) and Nick (UK) are engaged with this.

Knoco and the standard

It is worth making the point that Knoco's service offerings are all entirely compliant with the standard.

Nick Milton was a core member of the international technical committee that developed the standard, and both Nick's work with the standard and Nick's development of Knoco's offerings are based on the same experience of working with KM in multiple settings over the past 27 years. It would be indeed surprising if the standard and Knoco's KM models and approaches were not fully aligned, and all our strategy and framework services are entirely compliant with the new standard.

Contact Knoco to let us know about your plans to work with ISO 30401:2018, and whether you would like any help and support from us.

News from Knoco

Some updates from across the Knoco global team are listed here.

Knoco Benelux

The Knoco Netherlands team

Welcome to Bas, Peter and Anton, who will be representing Knoco in the Netherlands and the Belgian speaking Benelux countries. Together these three ex-Shell staff form the Knowledge Management Alliance, offering the full range of Knoco services. As they say "The dynamic process of knowledge creation is at the heart of our Alliance Members businesses"

Welcome on board Guys!

Knoco Greece

Kostas

Knoco Greece is represented by Seven Sigma Innovation, a consulting firm based in Athens, Greece, and headed by Konstantinos (Kostas) Kokkinoplitis. Kostas and his team of accomplished consultants work with organizations to outflank their toughest innovation and knowledge challenges, skyrocket their performance and ultimately boost their competitiveness and profitability. His consulting network expands across the globe in the fields of creativity, inventive problem solving, change management and knowledge management. He also works with a large number of academic and research institutes – operating across a wide spectrum of domains – that can contribute their knowledge to addressing your challenges.

Welcome to the Knoco family, Kostas and colleagues!

Knoco UAE

Dr Abdulhameed, of Knoco UAE, has recently led an international team delivering a KM strategy and framework for a local client, with input from Knoco Indonesia and Knoco UK.

Knoco Chile

Our Chilean colleagues are busy with a KM assessment and framework project for a local mining client, a KM model for the construction chamber in Chile, a critical knowledge map for a gas company in Spain along with a KM model for a public cooperation foundation. On August 27 in Santiago (Chile) Javier and colleagues will participate in the II International Congress of "Organizational Management Attitude" in the panel of the Look from the People, organized by the Autonomous University of Chile.

Knoco Australia

Knoco Australia will be participating in the Lessons Learned Forum in July. This brings together all Lessons Learned personnel from the Military and Emergency Services across Australasia. They will be exhibiting at the AIPM conference and exhibition in Melbourne in October. The next release of LMH

(Lessons Management Hub) software from Knoco Australia in July will include the ability to undertake Risk Rating by Categories (Financial, Personnel, Reputation etc)

Knoco Malaysia

Sanath was recently involved in a policy and engagement session with the Public Works department of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Delegates at Sanath's engagement session in KL

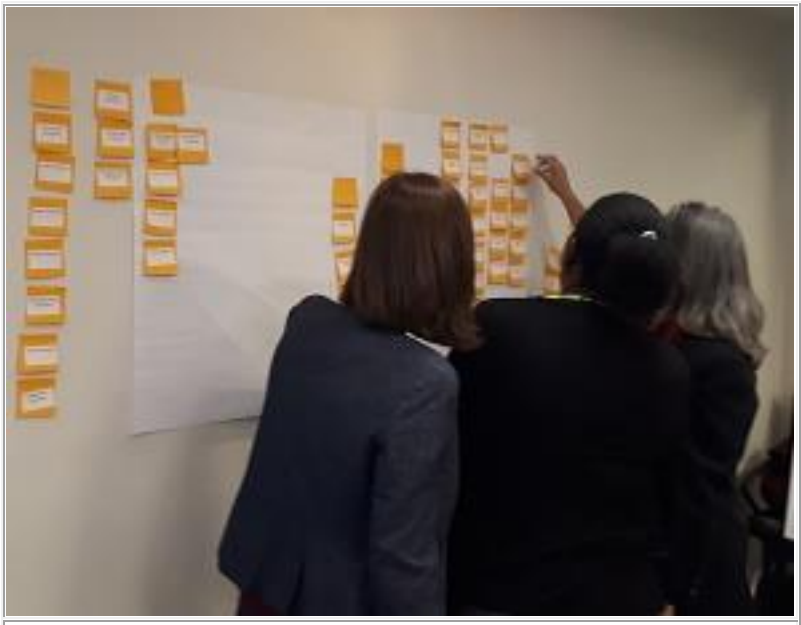
Knoco Netherlands

Knoco Netherlands was recently involved in providing training to a local port authority. As always, the Bird Island exercise proved very successful.

Delegates at the KM training course in the Netherlands, enjoying the Bird island exercise

Knoco UK

Nick has been busy with a large contract in Europe, but took time out last month to deliver a set of three training courses for a client in Washington DC.



Delegates in Washington DC working on a Taxonomy exercise

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