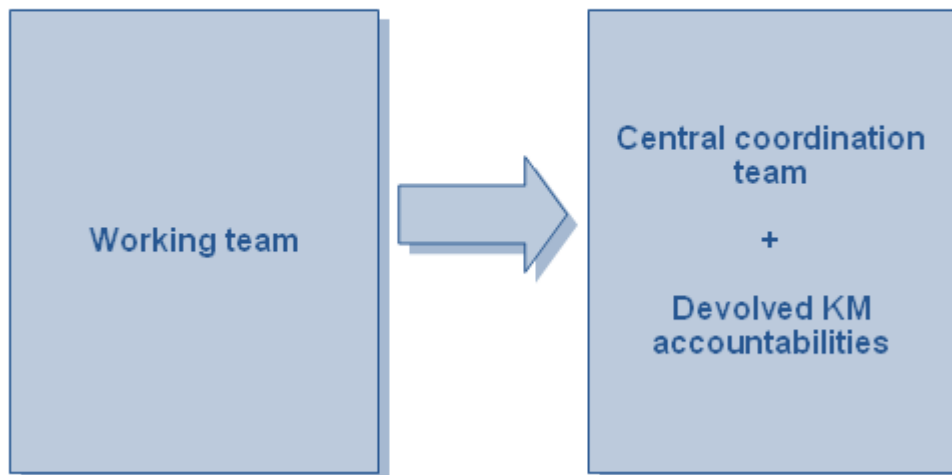# Selecting and setting up a KM Implementation Team

## White Paper

Creating a knowledge management organisation should be considered in two phases; an **implementation** phase (the phase of organisational change; transforming the organisation to one which is fully knowledge-enabled) and the **steady state** phase (once the transformation has been completed).



This document describes some issues concerned with selecting an **implementation working team** to support the Program Leader (CKO) in delivery of an implementation program for Best Practice/Knowledge Management (KM). This team of people reports to the CKO, and has collective responsibility for achieving the objectives of implementation. Selecting the right people for this team is crucial to successful implementation. The main questions you need to answer in setting up the team are

- How big should the team be?
- What skills do you need in the team?
- What areas of the business should be represented on the team?
- Should the team be co-located or dispersed (virtual)?
- How should the team be managed?

The life-span of the team depends on the time allowed for implementation, which will be a minimum of 2 years. So people joining the team need to realise that they are joining

something exciting, intense, and fairly short-lived. If the implementation program is a great success, then they will not only have had the honour of having successfully delivered a high profile change initiative, they will also have created a new career structure in the organisation, and be ideally positioned to capitalise on this. Choose people who will embrace this future wholeheartedly!

## Team size

The **size** of the core team depends on the scale of your organisation, and therefore the scale of the task of cultural change which faces you. A typical implementation team size seems to be one team member for every few thousand of your employees. For example;

- A small department used 1/3 of a person to cover 600 staff
- The BBC had a team of 4 to cover 20000 staff
- A European chemicals producer has a team of 2 to cover 5400 staff
- De Beers had a team of 4 to cover 30,000 employees
- A global insurance company had a central team of 2 for 55,000 staff
- BP had a team of 12 to cover 100,000 employees
- Hughes Space Corporation had a KMA (KM Approaches) team of 12-15 for 110,000 staff
- A large computer firm, also selling KM services, has a central group of 40 supporting a workforce of nearly 200,000

The size of the team may also be determined by representation considerations. If representation from each of 10 subsidiaries is required, then this sets the size of the team.

## Team Skills

The **skills** of the core team need to be varied. KM covers the area of overlap between IT, HR (or Learning and Development) and Organizational Practice, and so the team needs a blend of people who can cover these areas. Some of the following skills should be on the team

**Coaching and training skills.** If the aim of the team is to introduce new behaviours and practices to the organisation, they will need people skilled in training, coaching and mentoring. Look for people with skills as change agents and business coaches. One or more people with a training background should be on the team.

"If you look at the team more widely, rather than just the person leading it, far and away the most important thins are the interpersonal skills, and we have said whoever we are recruiting anyone for the team, that's the most important thing. We can teach them the knowledge management skills, they bring their own network with them, but they have got to have the interpersonal skills, because so much of this is about persuasion, You cannot coerce people into sharing their knowledge, you have to be able to entice and cajole and persuade them to do it " John Keeble, Chief Knowledge Officer, Enterprise Oil

**Writing skills.** The processes of knowledge capture and packaging are in some ways very akin to journalism. Interviewing, group interviewing (e.g. Retrospects), analysis, summary, right-up, presentation, are all part of the stock-in-trade of journalists. Make sure there is at least one person on the team with journalistic or writing skills, and preferably more than one.

**Facilitation/influencing skills.** The knowledge management implementation team has a hard job ahead of them, changing the culture of the organisation. They will be working very closely with people, often sceptical people, and they need very good influencing and facilitation skills. Secure facilitation training for the team members.

**Marketing and communication skills.** The early stages of implementing knowledge management are all about raising awareness, and "selling" the idea. The team needs at least one person who is skilled at presenting and marketing. This person will also be kept busy raising the profile of the company's KM and Best Practice activities at external conferences.

**Technology skills.** The team needs at least one person who is aware of the details of the current in-house technology, the potential of technology as an enabler knowledge management, and who can help define the most appropriate technologies to introduce to the organisation.

## Team background

The organizational backgrounds of the core team need to be varied. The team will be attempting to change behaviour, and embed knowledge management into the business process, across a large part of the organisation (or indeed the whole organisation). Ideally the team should contain people with good and credible backgrounds in each major organisational subdivision. This is really to establish as much credibility as possible. When members of the team are working with business projects, they want to be seen as "part of the business", not "specialists from head office who know nothing about this sector of the business". They have to be able to "talk the language" of the business - they need to be able to communicate in technical language and business language. They act as Best Practice champions within their area of business, and when the working team is over, may take a leading Knowledge Management role in their subsidiary.

The members of the team will also need to **be passionate about the topic**. The team members must be seen to be personally committed to best practice and knowledge management if they are to retain credibility. They need training in the skills and theories of KM and Best Practice transfer, and need access to books, conferences and forums on the topic They must be enthusiastic about applying knowledge management tools and techniques in their own business, and to their own work, in service of improving their own performance.

## Team roles

There are a few key roles that you will need to assign within the team.

**Team leader.** Someone needs to take on accountability for leadership within the team, maintaining the team spirit, delivering team processes, and ensuring that the team works towards a common vision and common objectives.

**Spokesperson.** Someone needs to take on accountability for spreading the word about KM and Best Practice Transfer, engaging the businesses, raising awareness in the organisation, and speaking externally (at conferences and in consortia) about your program. This person could be the team leader, or it could be another person chosen for their presentation and marketing skills.

**Project manager.** Someone needs to take on accountability for managing the implementation project; tracking progress, administering the budget, monitoring delivery against the objectives, and so on. It could be the team leader who takes his role, or they could delegate it to somebody with project management skills. It might be possible to outsource this role to a project management specialist.

**Knowledge manager.** Implementing knowledge management will be a very intense learning experience. The team will need to capture their knowledge as they go, both for their own benefit, and for the benefit of future knowledge management within the organisation. The team knowledge manager schedules and facilitates team knowledge capture events, and packages this knowledge as the resources for the team, the community and the business. The team knowledge manager may maintain the team web site.

**Coordinator for the KM community of practice.** If a knowledge management community of practice is created, the members of this community will be crucial allies for the knowledge management implementation team. This community needs to be built, energised, supported, and learned from. The facilitator for the KM community should be a member of the core implementation team, and it may make sense that the knowledge manager for the team to also take this role.

**Workers.** In addition to the roles above, the rest of the people in the team will go out and do the work - facilitate the knowledge processes, launch the communities of practice, set up and deliver pilot projects, actively engage the businesses teams and projects, and initiate the change to a Knowledge Management operation.

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