



Knoco Newsletter

May 2015

What KM roles will your organisation need?



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Other News



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Embedding Knowledge Management in your organisation requires embedding a series of KM roles and accountabilities into the organisation chart. Roles are one of the key enablers for Knowledge Management, although Roles often do not receive as much attention as Technologies and Processes.

But what roles will you need, and what do those roles entail? Read this newsletter to find out.



Roles for knowledge transfer

low-investment starter offers, for companies wishing to get started in KM.

These include quick and easy ways to

[Assess KM in your organisation](#)

[Build a KM Strategy](#)

[Scan knowledge topics, to find those most in need of attention](#)

[Gain engagement through a workshop](#)

[Understand your org. learning culture](#)

[Create a KM "proof of concept"](#)

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One of the main mechanisms for Knowledge Transfer in an organisation is through [communities of practice](#), and community roles often form a vital component of a Knowledge Management Framework.

The primary role is the **community leader** - the person who is accountable for ensuring the community functions as a knowledge sharing mechanism. This person is involved in the start-up and growth of the community, and in developing and maintaining the community processes. The choice of a good leader is crucial to the effective operation of the community. The leader often reports to a **community sponsor** - a senior manager who provides steer and support to the community leader - and may often work with a **core team** of senior community members.

In some cases, the leader appoints a **community facilitator** (in other cases, the leader also take the facilitator role). This recognised networker within the community facilitates the linkages and relationships between the members, as well as potentially stewarding any community output. A good facilitator leads from within, energises the community, and builds a feeling of trust and ownership among the community members. The main tasks of the facilitator include:

- Manage discussions in the community
- Maintaining activity and energy
- Managing relationships/contact brokering
- Setting the behavioural style of the community

A third role in Knowledge Transfer is the **meeting facilitator** - someone who can design and facilitate effective Knowledge Transfer meetings such as [Peer Assists](#), [Knowledge Exchanges](#) and [Knowledge handovers](#). Some of the key facilitator skills for KM process meetings

[Our facebook page](#)
[Our Linked-in page](#)
[Nick's blog](#)
[Tom's blog](#)
[Rupert's blog](#)
[Stephanie's blog](#)
[Vedalis blog](#) in French
[Ewa's blog](#) in Polish
[Knoco on YouTube](#)

are as follows:

- Ensuring balanced input from everyone;
- Identifying themes or common threads in a discussion;
- Clarifying confusing statements;
- Summarizing and organizing the ideas.

Roles for knowledge capture and documentation



There needs to be accountability for knowledge capture within the line organisation, so that individuals in the projects and departments know that they are accountable for ensuring that lessons and new knowledge are captured. Often the project manager or department manager is accountable, and they frequently call on the support of specialist KM roles to help them. Three such supporting roles are described below: the knowledge engineers, the lesson learned facilitators and the learning historians.

Knowledge Engineers are specific roles for capturing knowledge from experts, often with the intention of codifying the knowledge into expert systems. The task of the knowledge engineer is to:

- Assess the problem for which the knowledge needs to be acquired and packaged;
- Elicit the knowledge from the expert using a range of techniques;
- Structure the knowledge into an expert system, a database, a knowledge base or a knowledge asset.
- Validate the knowledge.

Lesson learned facilitators play a similar role to knowledge

engineers when it comes to [lesson-learning](#). The main tasks of the lesson facilitator are:

- To facilitate lesson capture meetings so that lessons are identified, high-graded and fully discussed;
- To ensure the lessons are expressed in a clear and usable way;
- To document the lessons, and (if appropriate) to enter them into the [lessons management system](#).

The role of the **Learning Historian** goes a little further, and involves creation of a [learning history](#) from a major piece of work through the following steps:

- Interviews and data gathering from participants in a project or activity;
- Distillation of knowledge, and establishing key themes and "plots";
- Creation of a learning history;
- Validation of the contents through reflective feedback;
- Dissemination of the learning history, application and transferring learning;
- Publication and Outreach.

Roles for knowledge ownership and organisation



Knowledge Owners are individuals who have the role of managing or stewarding company knowledge in one specific topic area, design area or product area. They are experts in their topic, within the relevant functional department. So the head of construction may appoint a Knowledge Owner for poured concrete, a Knowledge Owner for steelwork, a Knowledge Owner for foundation design and so on. The Knowledge owners are supported by **subject matter experts (SMEs)**, who can own, or steward, sub topics.

The accountability that goes with this role is to keep the knowledge base up to date in this topic, so that people in the business who need this knowledge can find it easily, and can know that it is valid, up to date, and presented in a usable format. They may provide internal consultancy on the topic, although their role is not to keep hold of the knowledge themselves, their role is to share it and to make it widely available. They monitor the state of knowledge of the topic, they build and maintain the knowledge base; constructing the wikis or reference sites and keeping them up to date. They validate and broadcast new knowledge. They make sure training in the topic is available and up to date. They are the go-to people for their topic.

The Knowledge Owners will need to be supported by a person or people who manage the online knowledge base - the **librarians or cyberarians**. Their role is:

- Determine the customer base of the online library, and carry out market research into customer needs;
- Work with the Knowledge Owners and SMEs to develop and maintain a structure for the online library;
- Work with the SMEs to develop processes for refreshing and renewing content and for removing old material;
- Monitor these processes, and prompting for compliance as required;
- Provide a help-desk service to users of the online library;
- Provide coaching in the use of online tools and the search engine.

Roles for Knowledge re-use



There needs to be accountability for knowledge re-use within the line organisation, and again the project manager or department manager is usually accountable for ensuring people seek for the knowledge

they need. In some cases, such as legal firms and governmental organisations, they call on the help of **researchers and analysts**.

Part of a knowledge analysts role will be to retrieve knowledge and information from various knowledge bases in order to prepare briefings for customer-facing staff. Typical tasks include:

- Assessing clients' knowledge needs;
- Synthesising knowledge from diverse sources of information;
- Gathering and organising information and resources, compiling data and preparing statistics;
- Training individuals and groups in use of knowledge management search technology and knowledge bases;
- Providing responses and briefings for queries by staff, managers and external clients.

Governance and support roles



Any Knowledge Management framework needs governance and support from a Knowledge Management team, and some sub-components of the framework such as the lesson learning system may also need dedicated support roles.

Every form of asset management has a dedicated support and governance team, whether this is financial management, people management or brand management. Knowledge Management is no different, and even after KM implementation is over, and the KM framework is designed and rolled out, you need a person, or a small **Knowledge Management Team**, to keep up the momentum.

Their main tasks will be

- Keeping the KM Framework maintained and upgraded where necessary;
- Monitoring and measuring application of KM;
- Crafting the longer term KM strategy;
- Training and coaching individuals and groups in the application of knowledge management;
- making any interventions needed to sustain KM.

The task of a **lessons support team** is similar, but restricted to the topic of lesson learning. The tasks of such a team would be:

- Supporting the lesson learned process through coaching, training and facilitation;
- Supporting the sharing of lessons;
- Supporting the embedding of lessons into process, procedure and guidance;
- Reviewing and disseminating inside the organisation pertinent lessons shared by others;
- Monitoring and reporting on the application of lesson learning;
- Setting up or improving the organisation's lesson learning capability.

Temporary KM roles



Knowledge Management implementation should be run as an implementation project, with the goal of designing and embedding a Knowledge Management Framework within the

organisation. Like any project, there are a number of roles and accountabilities associated with delivering the project objectives, including the KM leader, the KM implementation team, the KM sponsor, and a network of KM champions.

The role of the **KM project leader** is an absolutely crucial one. This person delivers the KM implementation, leads the implementation team and manages the budget. Their accountability is clear. They are accountable for delivering the project objectives, within the agreed time frame and to the agreed cost and standard. The KM project leader needs to be a respected member of the organisation, with a history of delivering organisational change.

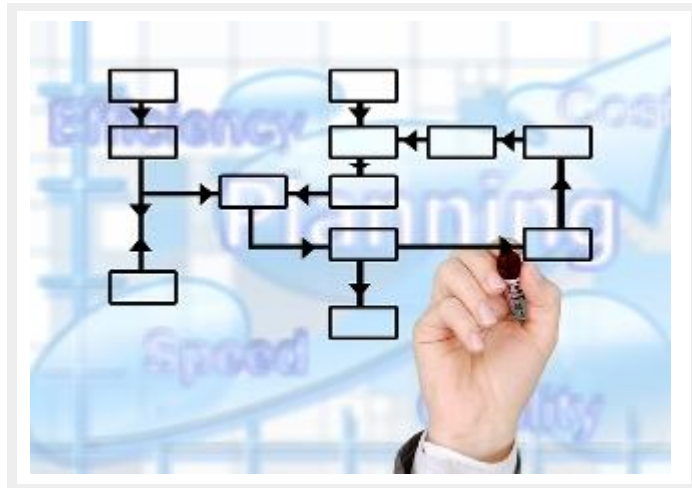
In anything other than a very small company, the KM project leader will need a **KM Implementation team**. The size of the team, and the specific roles within the team, will vary from company to company. It all depends very much on what you need to do, to get knowledge management up and running. See [our guidance on selecting a team](#).

The **KM sponsor** is the person to whom the KM project leader reports. The sponsor acts as the internal customer for knowledge management implementation, on behalf of the organisation. They set the agenda for change, they give the mandate for change, and they represent the project at the decision-making level of the organisation. The sponsor often can make use of a **steering team** of senior players, whose role is to ensure that the knowledge management framework that the implementation team designs is fully compatible with existing business structures.

KM Champions have three main roles in support of KM at an operational level. Depending on the stage you are at and the projects you are rolling out, their responsibilities can be any mix of these three:

- Advocacy - spreading the KM message;
- Support - acting as local department level representatives for KM implementation activities, providing coaching and advice on KM issues;
- Knowledge Brokering - linking their department colleagues to knowledge and information resources outside their immediate context.

Example role structures



Through the three examples below, we can see how a set of KM roles can be established within an organisation. [Contact us](#) for help in designing your own KM organisation.

In **Tata Steel** (widely recognised as one of the leading KM companies in the world), the KM team supports a KM organisation of

- 500 SMEs identified by the communities who validate the accuracy and reliability of all the good practices being submitted;
- 25 champions for the various communities;
- 250 practice leaders, who lead the sub-communities;
- 250 conveners who help manage the communities and sub-communities;
- 200 experts who help others over the discussion databases to resolve problems;
- 50 KM coordinators; and,
- 1000+ part-time KM champions. (Figures from 2009)

The **US Army** KM organisation contains:

- A full-time Centre for Army Lessons Learned
- An owner for every Doctrine (Best Practice)
- Knowledge Management officers in every brigade
- Lessons Learned Integrators in every battalion, as well as the training centres
- Combined Arms centre staff who run the Battle Command Knowledge Centre
- Facilitators and core teams for the Communities such as companycommand.mil, platoonleader.mil etc
- Hundreds of trained AAR leaders
- Content managers etc.

The **Wipro** KM organisation contains:

- A full time functional team of 32 in Wipro Technologies (45 in consolidated Global IT Business).
- More than 400 part time KM Primes/Champions across various groups - typically committing 10-15% of their time to KM activities for the group.
- A full time team of 15-20 to support and enhance IS platform for KM.

Other News



Tom Young to retire in September

Tom will step down as Chairman of Knoco Ltd at the end of September and retire from the company.

Tom says he will split his time in retirement between sharing what he knows and learning new things. He intends to expand his role as Business Mentor with the Chamber of Commerce with a focus on high potential and start up companies. He has also been approached to serve on the board of a not for profit organisation. Tom also intends to write popular fiction, or he put it "I have spent a large part of my life reading poorly written books to pass the time at airports and in hotel rooms, perhaps I should try writing a good one!"

We wish Tom well, he is sure to find something interesting to pass his time with.

Nick's new book

Nick has started work on his new book, to be entitled "The Knowledge Manager's Handbook: a step by step guide to embedding effective knowledge management in your organisation" which he is co-writing with Patrick Lambe.



**[Ian Fry, Knoco E
Australia](#)**

KM in Tight Economic Conditions

We are all facing the position of low global commodity prices in metals and oils and this is affecting many businesses which traditionally embrace KM, and also their supply chains.

This is not a time for KM to be seen as a "luxury" or "nice to have". As businesses try and cut back two important and relatively easy aspects of KM come into focus. Knowledge Retention - typically there will be staff cutbacks. It may not be possible to focus on Knowledge Retention immediately, but plans can be made in the event of any further need to cut experienced staff Lessons Learned - profit bleeds whenever mistakes are repeated. Repeated mistakes are highly visible to all staff and frustrating for senior management.

When there is less room for error, the need to avoid repeating mistakes is paramount. Knoco can help with these during this downturn and they will have lasting ongoing benefits in better times.

Knoco at TED

Javier will be speaking on Knowledge Management at a TED conference in Chile in July - watch for notification of details.

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