



The KM Implementation Issue

The mechanics of Knowledge management have been fairly well established now for a decade, even though details of the toolkit are still evolving. However the issue of KM Implementation remains a thorny one. In our autumn newsletter we discuss how to introduce KM, and how to make it stick

What does "Implementing KM" really mean?

Despite its many unique factors, Knowledge Management is a management discipline, like safety management, or risk management, or quality management. Implementing KM means introducing this new management discipline, setting up the rules for how it will work, and embedding it into the existing company management framework.

Implementing KM means bringing in new tools, new processes and new roles, new behaviours, new attitudes and new values, and making "part of the way we work"

Implementing KM as an exercise in Change Management

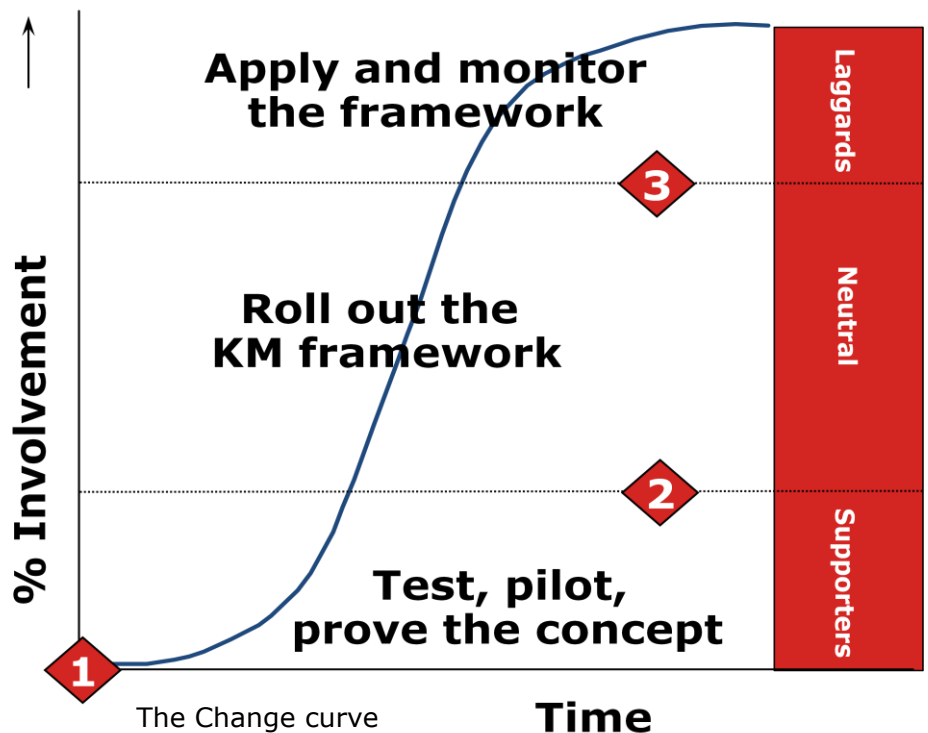
Implementing Knowledge Management is a change process - we all recognise this. We are changing attitudes as well as workflows and toolkits. We are changing attitudes towards knowledge; from seeing it as a personal attribute to seeing it as

collective, from seeing it as a source of personal power to seeing it as a source of company power, and from seeing it as something acquired in the classroom to seeing it as something of value we need to invest in every day to improve performance. If people can understand this with their heads and grasp it in their hearts, then we have made the culture shift, and implementation has been achieved. KM professionals, helping the organisation make the culture shift, need

to recognise that these hearts-and-minds shifts cannot be made wholesale. You need to do three things.

Firstly you need to recognise the dynamics of the change curve (below) and introduce KM in stages. Not everyone in the company will be equally supportive, and our implementation process needs to take account of this.

Secondly you need to plan a campaign of culture change. There are four weapons in your arsenal here -



stakeholder mapping, a compelling value argument, and case studies of successful KM, and actual examples of success in your own environment.

Thirdly you need a good communications strategy and plan.

Implementing KM in stages

We like to look at the implementation process not just as a change process, but as a set of corporate decisions. Each decision rests on a basis of necessary evidence, and three of the biggest decisions are shown as diamonds on the change curve on the previous page.

Decision 1 – the decision to set up a KM program

Decision 2 – the decision to roll out KM company-wide

Decision 3 – the decision to close down the KM program, and fully embed KM in business process.

So we can think of KM implementation as a series of stages which allow these decisions to be made.

Assessment stage

The first step is to assess your current status of KM, to see where the gaps are, and to see what needs to be done. Get a competent external assessor to fully review your current KM capability.

Strategy and Implementation Planning stage

Once you understand your strengths and weaknesses, you need to develop a strategy, to understand what your focus areas will be, what your deliverables will be, and what business benefits will be delivered. The combination of the assessment results and the strategy allows you to develop an implementation plan, with a timescale and budget, and to take Decision number 1 – the decision to launch your KM program.

Proof of concept and piloting stage

This stage involves small KM trials, to make sure that the processes and procedures and technologies for KM will work in your context, to develop and understanding of what a complete KM system will look like for you, and to generate success stories for your communication program. It also involves creating buy-in and support from senior management, through demonstrating the value that KM will bring.

Based on the learning from the pilots and proof of concept exercises, you are ready to take

Decision 2 – the decision to roll out a tried-and-tested KM framework.

Roll-out stage

Roll-out means the introduction of the holistic system of roles, processes and technologies you will have tested in Stage 3, and the introduction of a governance system to ensure these are used, and people are recognized for using them. You will now have worked with elements of your organisation and have an early indication of the level of buy-in. However, the picture could still be relatively patchy and incomplete – you need to clarify the “buy-in landscape” as you move forward. Be aware that the level of buy-in is likely to vary by level within the organisation. Lots of training will be needed and you will probably need to change some structures and accountabilities, and you will need to create new roles in the business.

If buy-in is lacking at the appropriate level you are likely to experience difficulty in reaching decision point 3, although senior managers can play a key role here.

Decision 3 comes when the roll-out is complete, and involves the decision to stand down the KM implementation team, and hand over to a KM operations and maintenance team.

Visit the downloads page on the knoco website www.knoco.com for a free template communications plan



KM roll-out training

At this point, KM implementation is over and we move to the next stage

KM operation stage

In this stage, the KM system has been introduced, but its use needs to be monitored, it needs support in the form of training and provision of services, and it may need regular update and refresh. KM implementation is over, but maintaining KM as a core discipline has just started.

Re-launching KM

What if you are part of the way through your KM implementation, and are wondering how the staged implementation model applies to you?

Can thinking about change management and staged implementation help you?

We believe that even if you have started with KM, the staged model can still help; if you are stuck, if you are

grappling with the issues of Embedding, or if you need to reassess and re-launch your program.

Are you stuck?

Implementation programs often reach a certain stage of success, and then find it hard to make further progress. This is often the case with bottom-up KM implementation; once you have engaged the 20% of people who naturally support KM, it can be very hard to break through to the 60% who don't care and just want to get on with their work (not to mention the remaining 20% who really don't like the idea of sharing). Here you are stuck in the piloting stage, and need to have a hard conversation with senior management to ask if you can progress to roll-out.

Do you need a re-launch?

You have been working with KM for a while, and are reasonably happy with the

way it is progressing, but something seems to be missing. The tools are not delivering the value you expected. Communities are quiet, wikis are empty, lessons are not being acted on. Here you probably need to move back to the first stage, and reassess your KM approach. Find out what is missing, and re-launch Km with the gaps addressed.

Are you grappling with embedding?

Perhaps you have tested a whole toolkit of KM tools, and delivered some good successes, but you still can't seem to get traction. You still can't seem to deliver the culture change. Again you are probably in the piloting stage, and are lacking the governance framework to really make KM stick. Talk with your senior people, look to identify the governance issues of expectations, accountabilities and incentives. Introduce these, pilot these, then move on to roll-out.



Knoco Indonesia – a new addition to the Knoco family

We are very pleased to announce the birth of a new franchise – Knoco Indonesia. The Indonesian KM and IT company **P.T. Mitra Tri Atma** will be acting to deliver Knoco products and services in Indonesia.

We welcome P.T. Mitra Tri Atma to the growing Knoco family, and look forward to

growing and serving the Indonesian KM market together.



Nick Milton and Rayanti Binawan sign the franchise agreement



Knowledge Management for the dawn of the Post-Recession

For many people, 2009 is a year that they will want to forget. For those brought up in an environment of growth it was a challenge to have to manage in recessionary times. One sales director recently shared with us how his organisation had twelve years of growth, then suddenly their sales fell off a cliff and flat lined for two months. They could see everything that they had worked for evaporating in front of their eyes.

Your situation might not have been as dire but I am sure that you found it a challenging time.

The news media and politicians tell us that the end of the recession is in sight. So perhaps you might want to consider how to use KM to position your organisation for the post-recession business world. The following set of prompts will help you reposition your organisation as it moves from recession to growth.

Past knowledge and skills

What were the goals and objectives of your organisation? What knowledge and skills do you have currently that you will no longer require? What will you have to retain and which will bin?

Future business goals

What is the direction in which you wish to take the business? Will it be into new markets or new products? Perhaps it will be a revised model of an existing product or service? What new knowledge will you need and where will that knowledge come from?

Protecting your knowledge and skills

"You might want to consider how to use KM to position your organisation for the post-recession world"

As the economy starts to accelerate, skilled human resources will be in great demand. What steps are you taking to protect the corporate memory? Or are you assuming that staff will stay with you indefinitely?

Rapid onboarding

The pace of growth of the economy could be substantial, and you need to be able to grab opportunities before the competition. How are you going to get new recruits rapidly up to speed, to deliver these opportunities?

Knowledge of competitors

What has the recession done to the capabilities of your competitors? Have they laid off key staff? Has their relationship with key suppliers suffered due to late payment of invoices? Have their relationships with key customers suffered due to lack of engagement? Are they prepared to accept work at lower margins? Assuming that your competition hasn't changed or that they are in the same shape as they were before the recession began could be a fatal assumption.

Training

One of the earliest causalities in any recession is the training and development budget. What are you doing to prepare your staff for the change of environment?

The end of the recession will bring opportunities for those who are prepared. Perhaps in now the time to start to think about what knowledge your organisation needs after the recession, and how to leverage the knowledge you already have.



Will your business take off when the recession is over? KM can help

Nick's book in Japanese

Nick's book, "Knowledge Management for Teams and Projects", has now been translated into Japanese. Or should we say

プロジェクト・ナレッジ・マネジメント

Loosing Balloons: Letting knowledge go when you don't mean to.

Ian Corbett, South Africa

A highly experienced KM professional in one of the UK's foremost technical group of companies recently said to me "Ian, when you stop making something be very careful you know what knowledge you're saying you don't need any more!"

We were talking about the unintentional impact poorly-informed management decisions have on the retention of key knowledge. Part of the problem here is that very often, like children playing with balloons, you only realise what you've lost when it's too late!

Our family, like many others has been affected by events in Zimbabwe - the thing that most struck me was how rapidly a flourishing economy could decline. Consultancy assignments over the past 2 or 3 years has shown me that knowledge is no different - in fact it vanishes with frightening speed if conditions allow it to

The lack of accountability attached to decisions leading to poor management of knowledge should be addressed effectively as part of any KM implementation strategy. In practice, this is often easy to say but hard to do - especially where leadership appreciation of the value of knowledge and learning leaves a lot to be desired, but it is even harder if the organisation simply lacks significant capability in leading and managing change.

Warning bells ring for me, for example, when I see a



leader breeze in to open a KM intervention, issue a "Ra-Ra" statement, and promptly leave, never to be seen again. If this sounds familiar, spend some time working out what's happening - and make sure you get beyond the superficial level. The success of your KM implementation might depend on it. It may be a simple buy-in issue, but it is more than likely a deeper issue related to the ability of the company to change. If this ability is very low you will need to consider ways to strengthen your change management approach considerably, because you might be in an organisation surrounded to balloons just waiting to fly!

Three Knoco clients in the 2009 MAKE awards

Congratulations to the BBC, BP and Mars, all of them major Knoco clients, voted finalists of the 2009 "Most Admired Knowledge Enterprise" awards - the Oscars of the KM world.

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