



Knoco Newsletter

Sept 2014

What is your critical knowledge?



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[KM Survey report](#)

Visit our website to order a pdf copy of the full findings from our global KM survey.

"What knowledge do we need to manage?" is one of the fundamental questions to get right in your Knowledge Management program.

As consultants, the greatest Knowledge Management insight we bring to client organisations is often this - You don't have to manage it all! Just manage the 20% of the knowledge that makes 80% of the difference.

Why is this a great piece of news? Because it gives focus. We frequently find that when people start thinking about [Knowledge Management implementation](#), they start thinking about the company-wide solutions first. They may research technology, they may seek out some excellent processes, they may think about the roles and accountabilities the company will need, and they may contemplate the use of communities of practice, lesson-learning, and other solution sets.

However thinking instead about "What knowledge do we need to manage" allows you to focus your efforts, and apply them to the biggest and most urgent Knowledge issues within the organisation.

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Why Focus is important

Any [Knowledge Management strategy](#), system or approach should be based around, and focused on, the knowledge which is critical to the organisation.



If you focus your effort proactively on the knowledge of highest

business value - the business-critical knowledge areas - then your KM efforts will not only be easier, they will deliver far higher benefit. Focused KM systems add maximum value. By focusing on the 20% of the knowledge that delivers the 80% of the value, it maximises the rate of return on your KM investment. People are busy, time is precious, and so it makes sense to spend your precious time on the highest-value knowledge.

A focus on critical knowledge is particularly important when crafting your Knowledge Management Strategy, to ensure your strategy is targeted on the most important knowledge issues. For example [the Ecopetrol Knowledge Management strategy](#) was focused around the question "What knowledge do we need at Ecopetrol that we don't have?"

A focus on critical knowledge is needed, for example, when selecting [Knowledge Management pilots](#), so that you make sure you address the knowledge of greatest value first. Finally you need to think about the type of knowledge which is most critical, when it comes to developing your [communities of practice](#), as well as the structures and taxonomies that underlie your knowledge management framework.

Finding the strategic knowledge

The link between business strategy and knowledge management is provided by strategic activities. You make this link and identify the strategic knowledge through conversation with senior managers and by asking three



questions;

- What strategic activities do we need to do, in order to deliver our business strategy?
- What do we need to know, to be competent at those activities?
- How do we acquire, develop and protect that knowledge?

So you start with your business strategy, identify the activities needed to deliver that strategy, identify the knowledge needed to deliver the activities, and finally think about how that knowledge can be managed.

The activities and supporting knowledge could be at many levels in the organisation, for example;

- Knowledge of how to enter new markets
- Knowledge of how to sell products in existing markets,
- Knowledge of how to operate plants safely and efficiently,
- Knowledge of how to craft successful bids, or
- Knowledge of how to interact with governmental and regulatory agencies.

The knowledge can be new knowledge which needs to be acquired, cutting edge knowledge which forms your competitive advantage, or core knowledge which is needed to keep your income stream alive and to fulfil your commitments. It can even be knowledge which is supplied by your partners and contractors, but which is still vital to your business.

If you need help to identify your strategic knowledge, [contact us](#).

Finding the Urgent Knowledge

This is the knowledge which needs urgent attention from knowledge management. There are at least four cases where knowledge can be in need of urgent attention. These are as follows



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1. When knowledge is important to the company strategy, but you don't have it yet (or you don't have enough of it). Here the focus will be on the acquisition and development of knowledge - on innovation, knowledge creation, research and action learning.

2. Where vital knowledge exists in the company, but cannot be accessed because it is siloed, not shared, or otherwise not properly managed. Here knowledge is used inefficiently - advances in one part of the business are not shared with other parts of the business which need it. Multiple and inefficient solutions exist, where one or two best-in-class solutions would be better. Here the focus will be on the elements of knowledge sharing and knowledge improvement, such as [communities of practice](#), [lessons learned](#), and development of [knowledge assets](#), best practices, and standardisation.

3. Where crucial knowledge is at risk of loss (perhaps through the retirement of key members of staff). Here the focus must be on developing and deploying a [Knowledge Retention Strategy](#).

4. When critical knowledge is held by a contractor, partner or supplier, and they don't have Knowledge Management. Here the focus is on defining a [Knowledge Management Framework](#) for them to apply, to keep your knowledge safe.

We can aid you in [Finding the Urgent knowledge](#).

Finding the knowledge that most needs attention

The discussions above have mostly been about top-down identification of critical knowledge. However by using a [Knowledge Scan](#), we can identify our critical knowledge from the bottom up.

A knowledge scan takes a Topic view of an organisation, and asks

- Which knowledge topics are well managed?
- Which knowledge topics are at risk, through poor Knowledge Management?



- Which knowledge topics are at risk, through potential loss of personnel?
- What actions need to be taken to improve the management of these knowledge topics, and so reduce the business risk?

The topics to be scanned are identified through a workshop, through knowledge mapping, or through using your existing taxonomy of processes, products and knowledge areas. Individual interviews or small group interviews are used to identify the attributes of these topics in KM terms, such as the criticality of the knowledge, its level of documentation and ownership, and a number of other factors.

The knowledge scan spreadsheet then ranks the topics into a priority order of required attention. A series of cross-plots allows us to determine the KM interventions most likely to be needed to reduce the KM risk.

Through addressing each knowledge topic in their order of attention priority, you can make sure that your knowledge Management program is tackling the biggest problems first.

[Contact us](#) if you are interested in a Knowledge Scan.

KM Implementation based on critical knowledge

There are two alternative directions you can take with your [Knowledge Management implementation](#).

The first, which is a common but often unsuccessful approach, is to implement KM through rolling out your Knowledge Management framework across the whole organisation all at once. Here an organisation defines what framework elements Knowledge Management requires, develops these elements, and makes the framework available for the whole organisation to use, regardless of business need or knowledge priority. This company-wide roll-out can sometimes be a successful approach, depending on whether or not you are rolling out a complete framework. When you introduce only a few elements of the framework, this approach can be a disaster, as in the common but discredited "technology roll-out" strategy.

The second implementation approach, which is rarer but much more successful, is to implement KM through addressing a series of business problems. Tackling the critical and strategic knowledge areas one by

one, rolling out the framework in order to address critical business needs. Mars, for example, implemented Knowledge Management at a rate of two business knowledge issues a year. In this approach, the Knowledge Management Framework is preferentially applied in the areas of greatest business need.

In this approach, you look at specific business issues or problems, identify the critical knowledge, and introduce the Knowledge Management framework in order to solve those problems, prioritising those elements which will solve the problem fastest. Perhaps you have a business challenge which lots of people are addressing in parallel around the world, in which case a Community of Practice will be the solution. Perhaps you are starting a series of new projects and want to capitalise on the knowledge from each one, in which case a Lesson-learning approach will be the solution. Perhaps you want to standardise on a common "current best" approach, in which case you create and maintain a knowledge asset. Over time you build on these solutions and join them together, and soon your KM framework is complete.

The reason why the second approach is more successful is that, through this approach, Knowledge Management rapidly develops a reputation as a successful problem-solving tool. Every implementation step is a solved problem. You quickly get buy-in both from the knowledge workers and from the management.

If you are in the early stages of [Knowledge Management implementation](#), wondering which approach to take, try the second - it is more likely to succeed in the long run. [Contact us](#) if you need more details.

A KM Framework based on critical knowledge

A fully developed [Knowledge Management Framework](#) needs to be organised around the critical knowledge areas of the organisation. For example -

- Each critical knowledge area needs to be owned by a [Community of Practice](#)
- Each critical knowledge area needs to be covered by a [Knowledge Asset](#)
- Each Knowledge Asset needs a [Knowledge Owner](#)

- Lessons within the [Lessons Management System](#) need to be tagged according to the relevant critical knowledge area
- The structure of the wiki should match the critical knowledge areas, with one wiki section per knowledge area
- Other knowledge items need to be tagged according to the critical knowledge area

In some companies, the critical knowledge areas are related to Practice, in others they are related to Products.

An organisation that most wishes to improve its internal practices - a sales or services organisation, for example, - should use Practice as its knowledge dimension. Because practice improvement is important, a focus on practice knowledge is critical. They should appoint practice owners, communities of practice, and use practice-based taxonomies.

An organisation that most wishes to improve its products - an automotive or aerospace company, or a manufacturer of mobile phones - should use Product as its knowledge dimension. Because product improvement is important, product knowledge is critical. They should appoint product owners, communities of product, and use product-based taxonomies.

Whatever the structure of your critical knowledge turns out to be, this should be reflected in your Knowledge Management Framework.

[Contact us](#) for more details on Knowledge Management Framework structures.

Knoco News

Welcome to Knoco Houston!

We are pleased to welcome [Knoco Houston](#) to the global Knoco brand.

Knoco Houston is headed by Andrew Barendrecht. Andrew has over 20 years' in knowledge and information management, performance improvement, collaboration and virtual working. Andrew's Career has largely been with Shell, as a Knowledge Manager, and as lead for portal technology, intranet design and records management.



[Andrew Barendrecht,](#)
[Knoco Houston](#)

In 2007 Andrew became the KM/IT manager responsible for compliance, KM, Information and data management in Shell research, and also advised Chevron on their global SharePoint Design and deployment.

Andrew has a bachelor degree in information management and collaboration from the Haagse Hogeschool in the Hague the Netherlands.

Welcome to Knoco Egypt!

We are pleased to welcome [Knoco Egypt](#) to the global Knoco brand.

Knoco Egypt is headed by Hani Abdel-aziz. Hani has extensive management experience from leading ICT Companies in the Middle East. Hani has a background as General Manager, Regional Sales Manager and Systems-Engineering manager with Cisco Systems & Sun Microsystems (now, Oracle) in Egypt, North Africa, and the Levant countries.



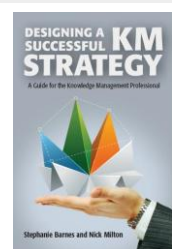
[Hani Abdel-aziz, Knoco Egypt](#)

Hani is trilingual. His native language is Arabic, and has very good command of French and English languages. He earned both his B.Sc. degree in Communications Engineering and M.Sc. degree in Computer Networks from Cairo University. He holds an additional MBA degree in Marketing Management from Maastricht School of Management/ RITI; and published a Case Study in Knowledge Management & Organizational Memory retention.

Other news

We have been busy with lesson-learning work recently in the UK and in Myanmar, with KM requirements for a US pharma company, and with a KM Assessment for a multinational chemicals company.

Stephanie and Nick are in the final stages of completing their book "[Designing a successful KM Strategy - a guide for the knowledge Management professional](#)". This will be published by Information Today, and released in time for KM World at the beginning of November. Stephanie will be at KM world to deliver a workshop and book signing. Our next edition of the newsletter will be based on the contents of the book.

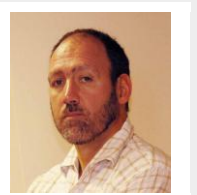


Knoco France have received some excellent feedback from a client following a pilot of [the Vedalis AKH](#) software at AXA Corporate Solutions. The head of the Operational Performance Management Board reported that "The ease of use of the AKH tool and the efforts made by Vedalis teams to fit our context and our problems have helped to make our experiment a success."



[Knoco France](#)

Javier has some upcoming activities in Chile. Thursday, September 4th sees a new edition of the course "[Knowledge Management, main concepts and tools](#)" that we deliver with the School of Engineering at the Catholic University ([contact Juan Gonzalez for details](#)). On 16 and 17 October we will participate in the [7th International Conference on Learning, Education and Neurosciences](#) organized by the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Chile, and on 4 and 5 November we will be in [Expolearning](#) to be held in Santiago de Chile organized by AEFOL.



[Knoco Chile](#)

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