

What is knowledge management?

Knowledge as a resource

Organizations have lots of resources, including people, money, buildings, computers, relationships – and KNOWLEDGE.

- ❑ **Knowledge:** the insights, understandings and practical know-how that is (1) possessed by each member of your organization; (2) located in your files; and (3) held by members of your organization as a collective.

Your organization's knowledge is a very important resource; what you know or don't know determines what your organization focuses on, what it achieves, and what its identity is. Knowledge is essential to action, performance and adaptation. But like any resource, you can't make good use of knowledge unless you are taking good care of it. Taking good care of your knowledge resources is called **knowledge management**.

- ❑ **Knowledge management:** the collection of processes that govern the creation, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge.

Keep in mind that knowledge management is not always about a lack of information. On the contrary, many organizations struggle with **information overload**. The internet has created a knowledge explosion, with an overwhelming number of websites, email groups, list serves, online newsletters, videos and streaming. While it is exciting to have so much freely available, it can also be very difficult to sort through the clutter and find information that is reliable and accurate and that your organization really needs.

Do a knowledge audit

The first step to effectively managing your knowledge resources is to sit down as a management body and ask:

- ❑ What are our **sources** of knowledge? What other sources are available?
- ❑ Are our knowledge sources **useful**? Appropriate? Well-utilized?
- ❑ How does information **flow through** our organization? Can we map the movement of information from source to point of use?
- ❑ How do we **capture our experiences** and the experiences of others?
- ❑ How can we **develop** our knowledge?
- ❑ Where do we **store** our knowledge?
- ❑ How do we **retrieve, share** and **apply** knowledge?
- ❑ How is knowledge **lost**? How is it **retained**? What do we do when staff leave or enter our organization; how do we keep and use their knowledge after they are gone?

A knowledge audit highlights the sources and functions of knowledge. It identifies potential bottlenecks that hinder knowledge flow. It protects intellectual assets from

decay. It seeks opportunities to enhance decisions, services and products through increasing intelligence, value and flexibility.

The dimensions of knowledge management

Knowledge management depends on:

- Strategy:** The KM strategy must be in line with your organizational strategy.
- Organizational Culture:** The organizational culture influences the way people interact, the context within which knowledge is created, the resistance they will have towards certain changes, and the way they do or do not share knowledge.
- Organizational Processes:** The processes, environments, and systems that enable knowledge management implementation.
- Management & Leadership:** Competent and experienced leadership at all levels.
- Technology:** Systems, tools, and technologies that fit the organization's requirements.
- Politics:** The long-term support to implement and sustain knowledge management systems.

Knowledge management tools

There are many tools that can help your organization better *access, use, and retain* information. Here are some new *IT-based* tools that your organization can try:

- [Learning Management Systems](#):** Create your own e-learning courses, including content management, assessment, learner certification and more.
- [Social networking software](#):** Social network software enables teams and organizations of all sizes to collaborate, create and share together. Some software is available on a free trial basis.
- [Prezi](#):** Create and share presentations that are much more appealing and collaborative than Powerpoint. Membership is free and presentations can be viewed online or offline. Millions of presentations are available for inspiration.
- [Drop Box](#):** Free and easy-to-use document sharing platform that stores your documents in the “cloud.”

To strengthen inter-personal knowledge management (*not based on IT*), you can try:

- Cross-functional project teams:** Bringing together people from different parts of the organization can create new knowledge, share knowledge across teams, and create informal knowledge networks.
- Mentoring:** Linking experts to aspiring experts transfers and retains knowledge within the organization.

For more information

- [KMT: An Educational KM Site](#)
- [Knowledge Management Definition and Solutions \(CIO\)](#)
- [Knowledge Management World](#)
- Video tutorial on using _____