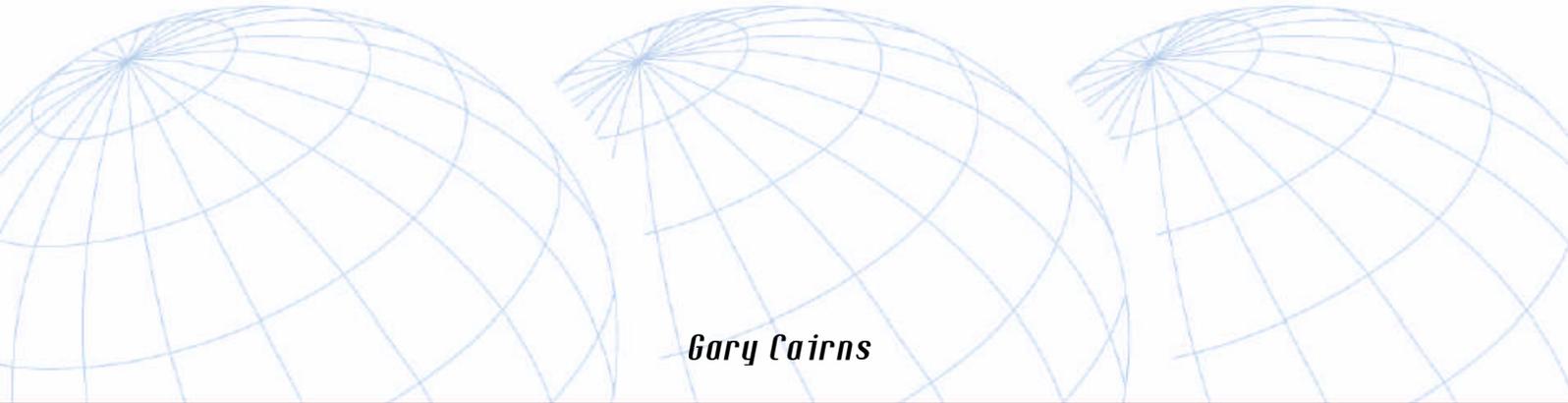




50 SECRETS

of successful knowledge management



Gary Cairns



Risktec Solutions Ltd

OUR COMPANY

Risktec Solutions is an independent and specialist risk management consulting firm with significant employee ownership. We assist clients in major hazard industries and commercial sectors to manage safety and business risk. Risktec has offices in Warrington, Aberdeen, London and Glasgow in the UK, in Houston in the USA and in also in Dubai. We have sister companies in The Netherlands and Malaysia.

OUR CONSULTING SERVICES

Risktec provides a professional consulting service in:

- Safety Risk Assessment and Management
- Business Risk Management
- Advanced Risk Engineering
- Knowledge and Competency Management

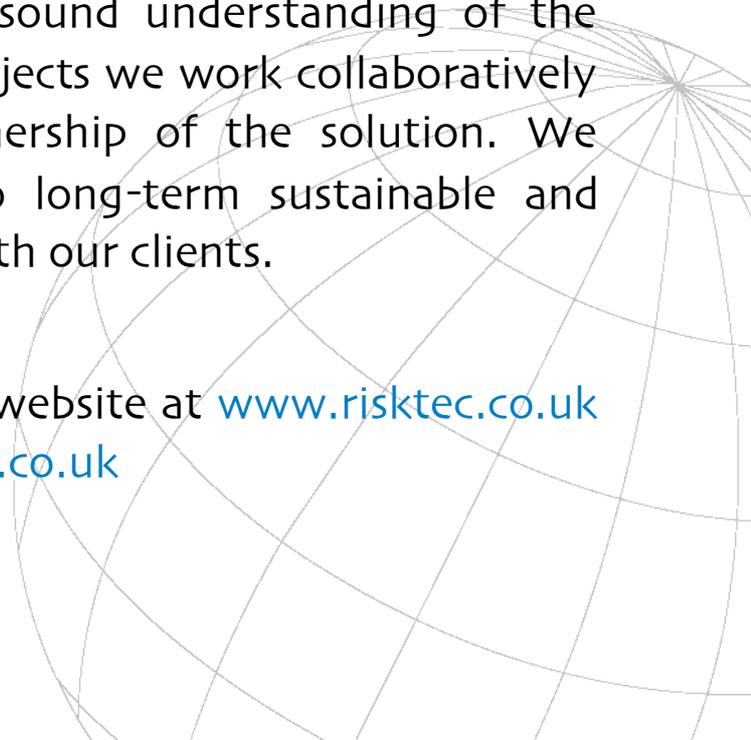
As an integral part of our total service, we design, develop and deliver training courses for our clients which span the breadth of our consulting services.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

We are committed to providing clients with complete and pragmatic solutions, built on a sound understanding of the client's business. Throughout projects we work collaboratively with our clients to ensure ownership of the solution. We believe this philosophy leads to long-term sustainable and mutually trusting relationships with our clients.

OUR CONTACT DETAILS

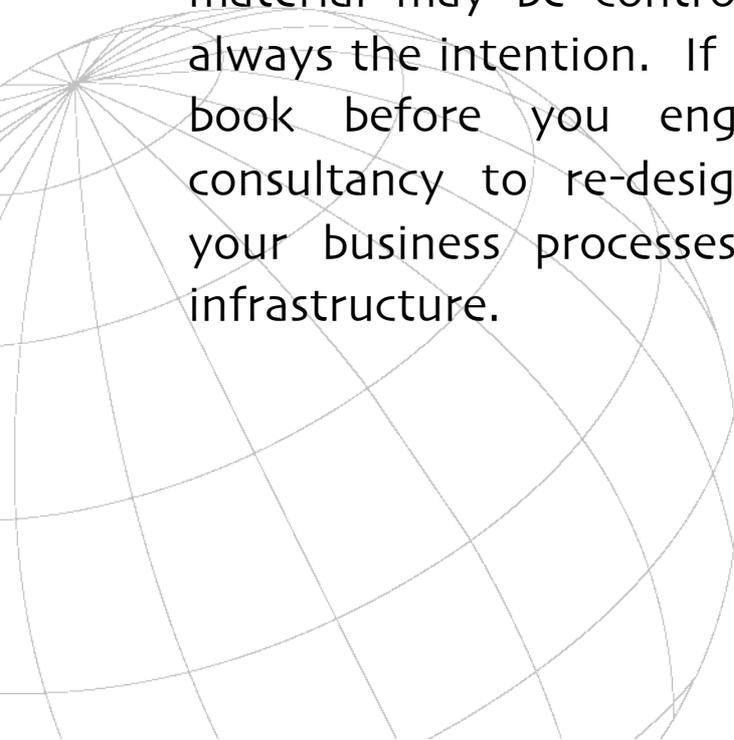
For further information visit our website at www.risktec.co.uk or contact us at enquiries@risktec.co.uk



This **50 SECRETS** guide has been published to provide a general overview of the concept of **Knowledge Management** (KM) and to illustrate how KM can be used pragmatically in organisations to deliver real business benefit. It is designed for business executives, managers or anyone else who is serious about implementing KM solutions.

Starting from some basic definitions, the guide provides a modern-day perspective on a subject that is often surrounded by mystery, hype and spin.

50 SECRETS provides a no nonsense summary of how to start a KM programme or project that delivers real value. Some of the material may be controversial, but that was always the intention. If nothing else, read this book before you engage a management consultancy to re-design your organisation, your business processes or your technology infrastructure.

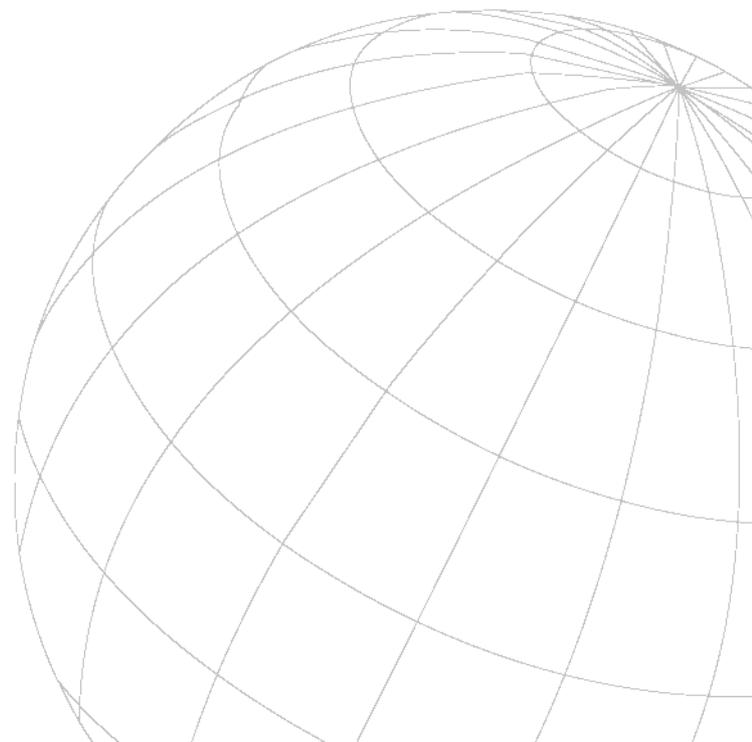


Acknowledgements

I would like to start by acknowledging the many people in different organisations with whom I have worked with over the years. Without your input and encouragement I would not have written this little book.

Closer to home, I acknowledge the enthusiasm and contributions from my Risktec colleagues Andy Reynolds and Steve Pearson who have helped create something very presentable from my primitive first drafts.

Gary Cairns
Risktec Solutions Ltd
2006





*of successful knowledge
management*

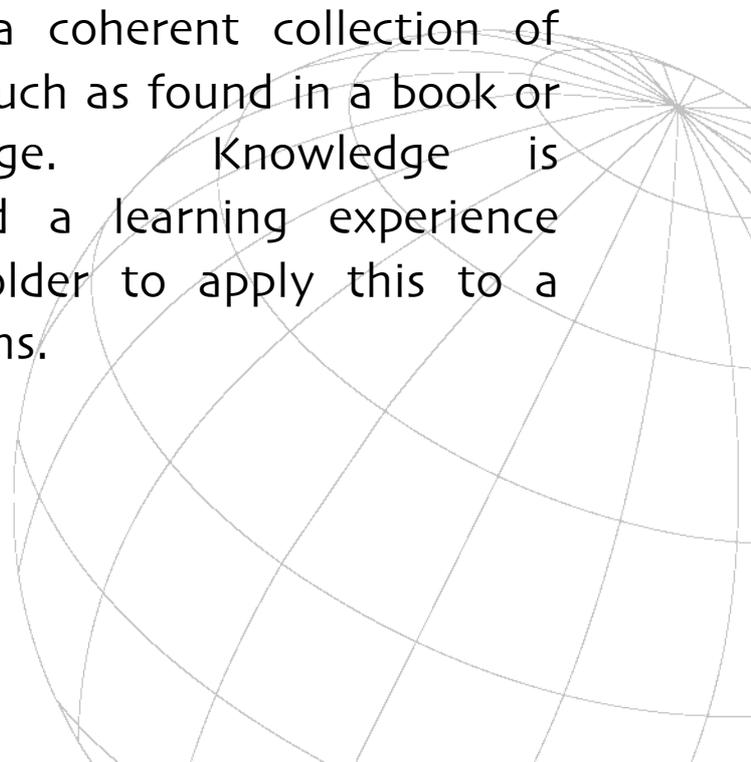
-  Understanding Knowledge Management
-  Getting Started
-  Identifying KM Areas to Work On
-  The Top 10 KM Initiatives
-  Running Successful KM Projects
-  The Holistic Approach to KM
-  Where is it All Leading? ... The Future of KM



Understanding what KM is about can be hard. There is no universal definition of what KM actually is – but there lies the opportunity ...

So long as there is logic in your approach and it leads to real business benefit then you're on the right track!

1. Knowledge management is not new – it's been around for 1000s of years, even before mankind could read or write. Story telling was used as the first knowledge management tool.
2. Knowledge management is not the latest IT fad so don't go and invest a fortune in the latest software. Technology can be a great tool or enabler but it doesn't in itself represent a KM solution.
3. Knowledge is different to information. Information is a coherent collection of processed data such as found in a book or verbal exchange. Knowledge is information and a learning experience enabling the holder to apply this to a range of situations.



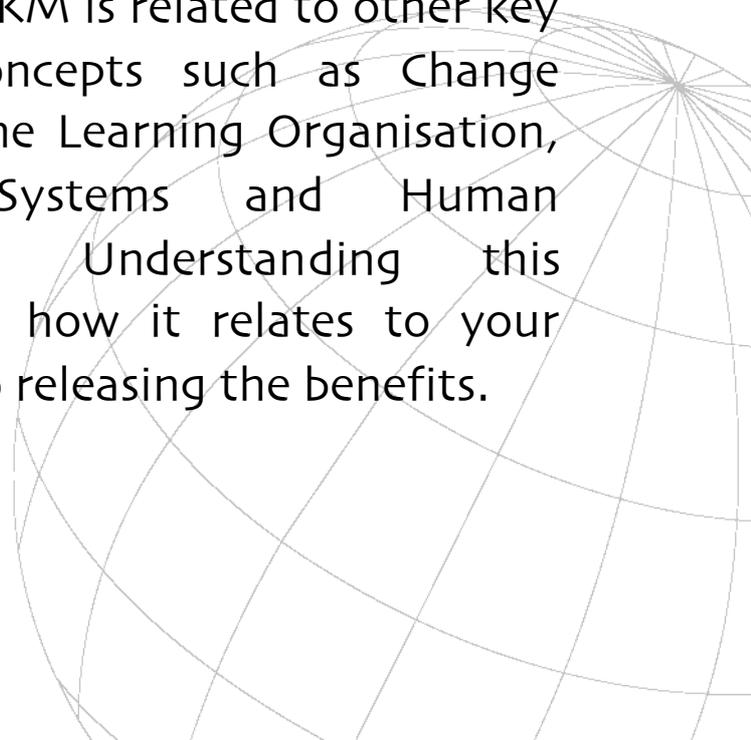
4. KM is different from knowledge. Knowledge is about applying information through learning and experience, whereas KM is a set of methodologies, approaches, processes or principles used to address a strategic objective where knowledge is a key asset.
5. Although there is no agreed definition of what KM actually is, one of the best definitions around comes from David Gurteen:

"Knowledge Management is a business philosophy. It is an emerging set of principles, processes, organisational structures and technology applications that help people share and leverage their knowledge to meet their business objectives."

6. KM takes advantage of an organisation's most valuable asset: the collective expertise of its employees, clients, suppliers and partners.

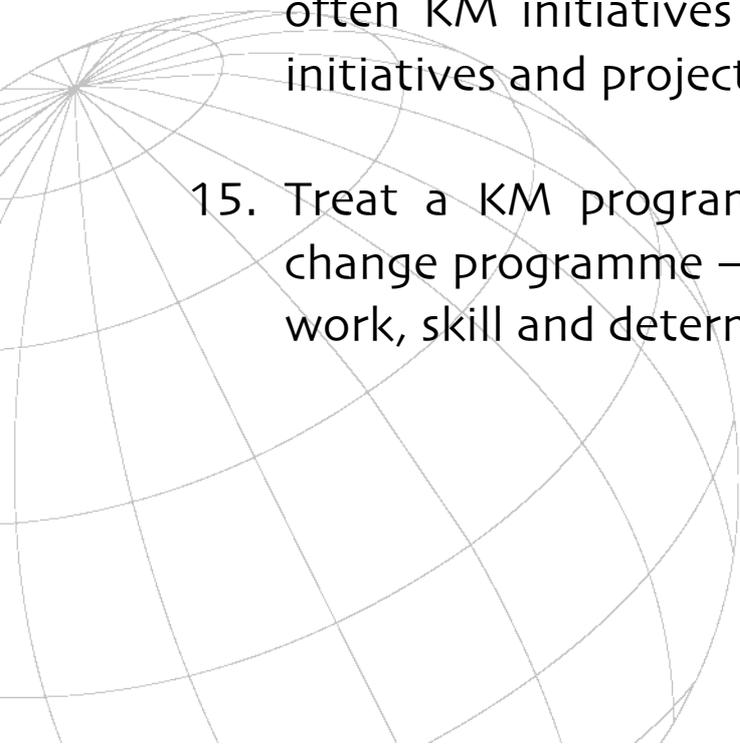


7. KM requires an integrated approach for people, process and technology areas. To be successful in an organisation it must focus on business objectives and address improvement.
8. No organisation on the planet has fully mastered KM. To prove this, ask any financial director to precisely identify (or even estimate) the cost and return on investment on KM initiatives in his organisation. He could give the cost of office cleaning to the nearest penny but the cost/value of KM is elusive.
9. Knowledge is of little use (at least in most organisations) unless it is turned into products, services, innovations, or process improvements.
10. By its association with people, processes and technology, KM is related to other key management concepts such as Change Management, The Learning Organisation, Management Systems and Human Performance. Understanding this relationship and how it relates to your business is key to releasing the benefits.

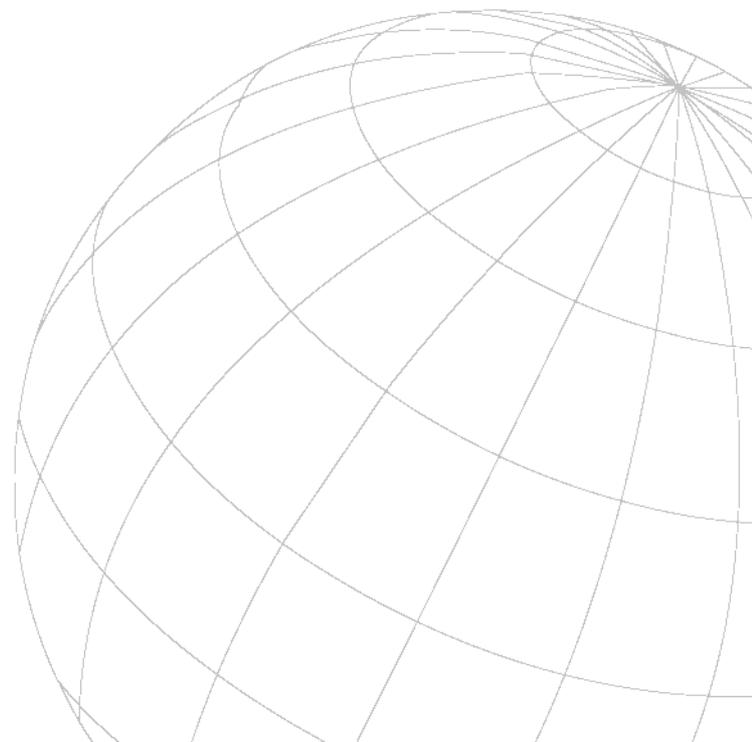


Organisations must focus their KM initiatives on realising real business benefit. Not to do so would be a total waste of money and effort resulting in missed opportunities.

11. Always have an end goal in mind when implementing any KM initiative. This goal must align with the overall vision and strategic objectives of the organisation.
12. A costed business case is extremely beneficial (but not essential) to sell a KM strategy to business leaders in an organisation.
13. Ensure that all stakeholders are consulted before developing a KM strategy. Before implementation begins consult again and communicate the benefits to all.
14. Real ROI claims are difficult because very often KM initiatives are masked by other initiatives and projects.
15. Treat a KM programme as you would a change programme – to succeed takes hard work, skill and determination.

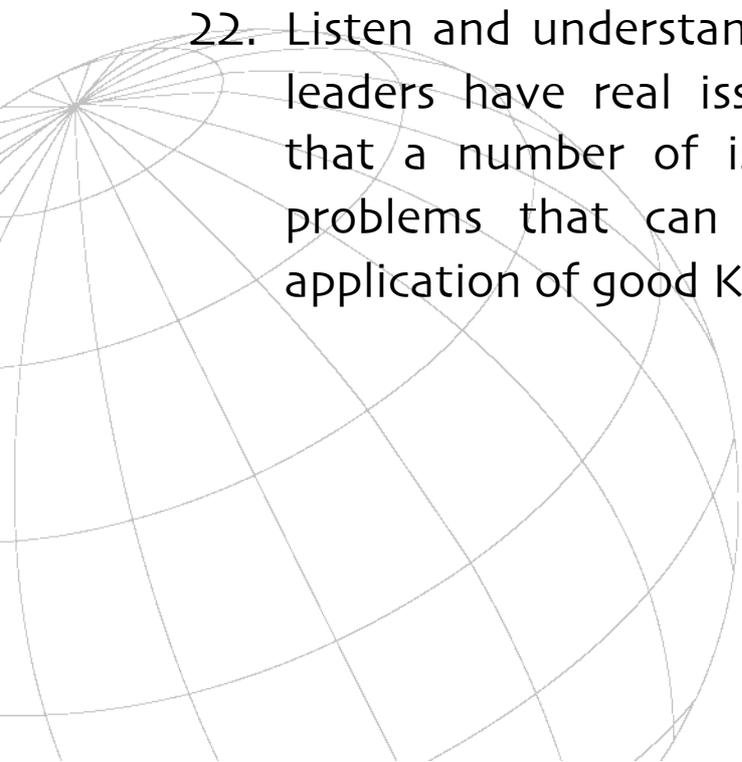


16. Don't be afraid to get your customers involved in your KM initiatives. After all, the benefits you derive will ultimately affect the service you provide to them.
17. To make real progress and gain business benefit, your organisation needs a formal joined up approach to KM. Take time to consider the wider picture and provide your Executive with a formal strategy paper, explaining the benefits via presentations and/or workshops.
18. Ensure you understand the drivers for implementing a KM strategy. Ask yourself "why am I doing this" and fully understand the motives and benefits that such a strategy will bring.

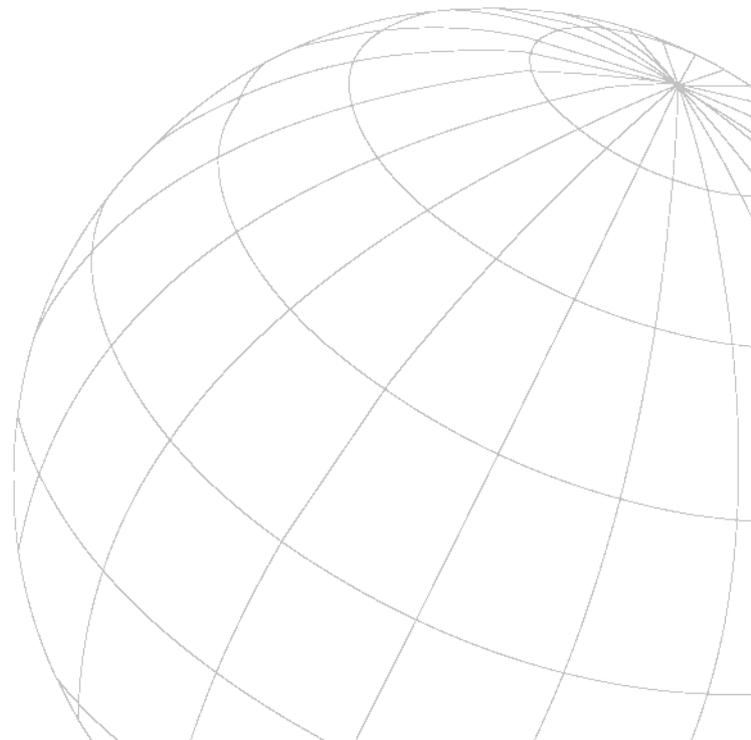


Making a start is often quite difficult especially given the confusing terminology involved and the many different opinions you will receive. Here are some suggestions to get you going and ensure you are hitting the right areas.

19. Benchmark your Company against the best KM practices. Include other (diverse) sectors in addition to your own. Don't just copy but understand the drivers that led to those practices.
20. Initiate a KM audit. This can then form part of a gap analysis to compare you with others and with best practice.
21. Look where your organisation stands on a KM standard maturity model. There are several available – some can be downloaded free from the Internet.
22. Listen and understand what your business leaders have real issues with. It's likely that a number of issues revolve around problems that can be solved with the application of good KM practices.



23. QA and business improvement functions usually have some initiatives that are related to KM. Check these out, offer to help and add these to your portfolio.
24. Still having problems knowing where to start? Have a look at the top 10 initiatives as described in the next section.



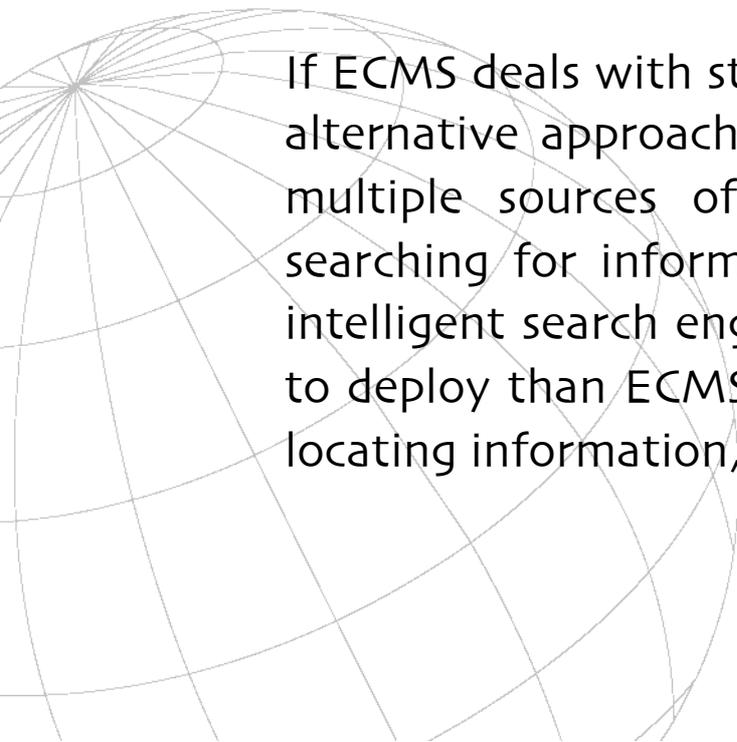
What are the most common KM initiatives? Here is a simple list of what organisations are doing with a brief description of each.

25. Content/Document Management

Most large organisations have undertaken initiatives involving the introduction of Electronic Document and Records Management (EDRM). Include e-mail, correspondence, web information, drawings etc and the EDRM system becomes an Enterprise Content Management System (ECMS). These are large, expensive projects that take considerable effort to establish and roll out. Don't focus solely on the technology but address changes to working practices and people issues.

26. Unstructured Information Searching

If ECMS deals with structured data then an alternative approach involves maintaining multiple sources of electronic files and searching for information and links using intelligent search engines. These are easier to deploy than ECMS and very effective in locating information, but need careful



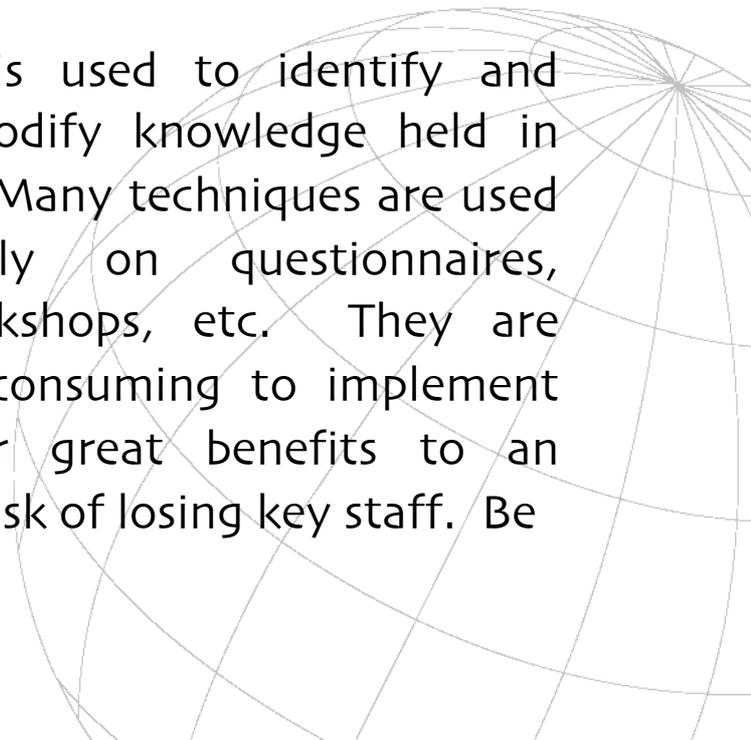
thought in terms of security and personal information issues.

27. Communities of Practice

At the heart of most organisations' KM strategy, Communities of Practice (CoP) represent the bringing together of like-minded people to discuss common issues and problems and to share knowledge on relevant topics. There are several styles of CoP ranging from a simple coffee room chat to a more structured approach that may involve remote discussion forums, web casting or wiki's. These involve little capital expenditure, are quick to establish but need dedication and time commitment to succeed.

28. Tacit Knowledge Capture and Transfer

This approach is used to identify and sometimes to codify knowledge held in people's heads. Many techniques are used but most rely on questionnaires, interviews, workshops, etc. They are generally time consuming to implement but can deliver great benefits to an organisation at risk of losing key staff. Be



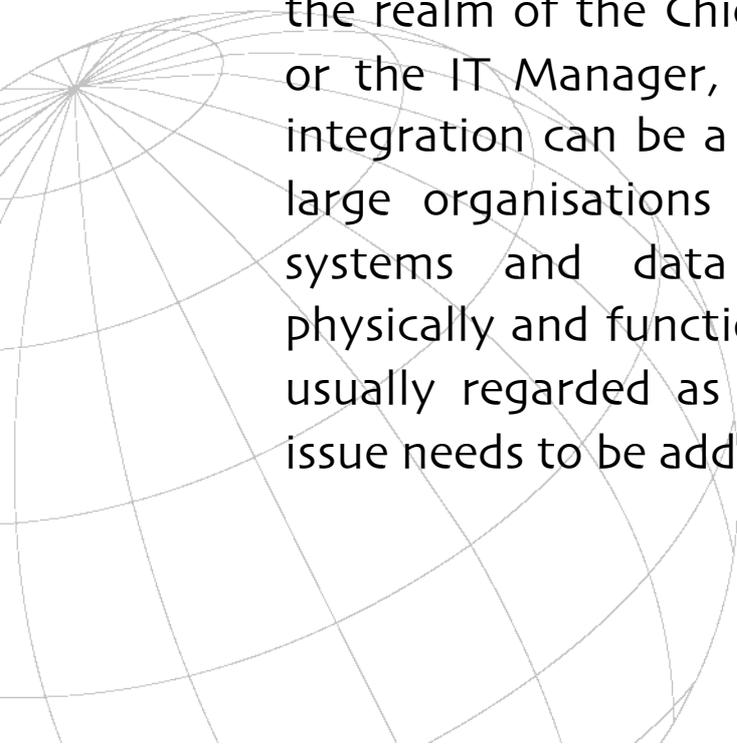
wary of software vendors offering products to do this – at the end of the day success relies on asking the right questions and motivating staff to provide the right information.

29. Expert Yellow Pages

Expert Yellow Pages are usually used in conjunction with the Company intranet to provide details of the skills and competencies of technical experts in the organisation. This should be easy to establish once the experts are identified and content is available.

30. Information and Data Harmonisation

Many organisations still struggle in providing the right information to the right people at the right time. Normally in the realm of the Chief Information Officer or the IT Manager, information and data integration can be a big problem for some large organisations given the myriad of systems and data sources distributed physically and functionally. [Although not usually regarded as mainstream KM, this issue needs to be addressed.]

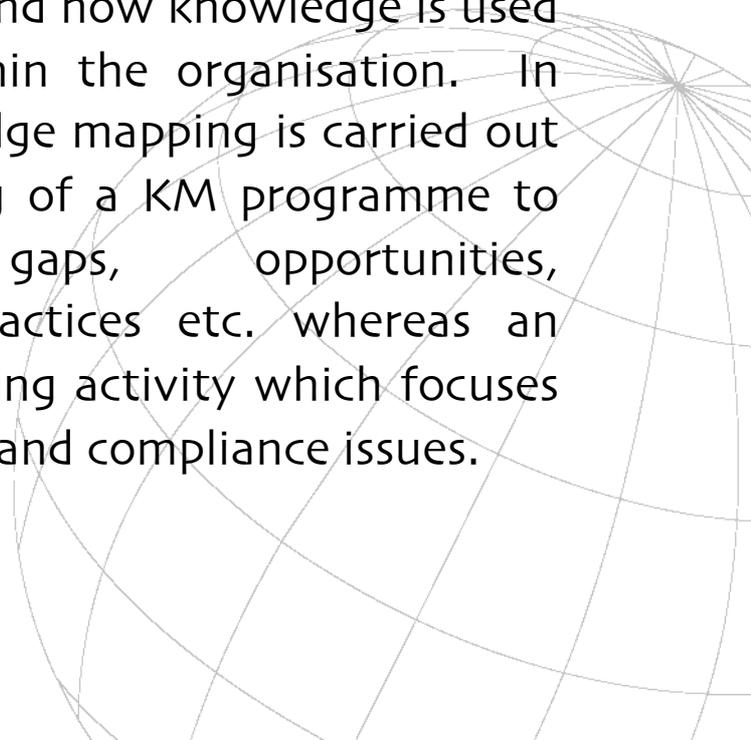


31. Intranet Development

Although old-hat now, intranet systems still provide one of the key tools to support KM activity. They are often the launch pad for other KM initiatives and if nothing else provide a communication channel that is key for success. If your organisation, however small, is considering introducing a KM strategy, then this is a must. Larger organisations, where an intranet is well established, could consider local intranets and ensure that time is allocated for development and content update.

32. Knowledge Audits and Knowledge Mapping

These terms are often used synonymously to describe the process of interaction with staff to understand how knowledge is used and shared within the organisation. In general, knowledge mapping is carried out at the beginning of a KM programme to understand gaps, opportunities, collaboration practices etc. whereas an audit is an ongoing activity which focuses on conformance and compliance issues.



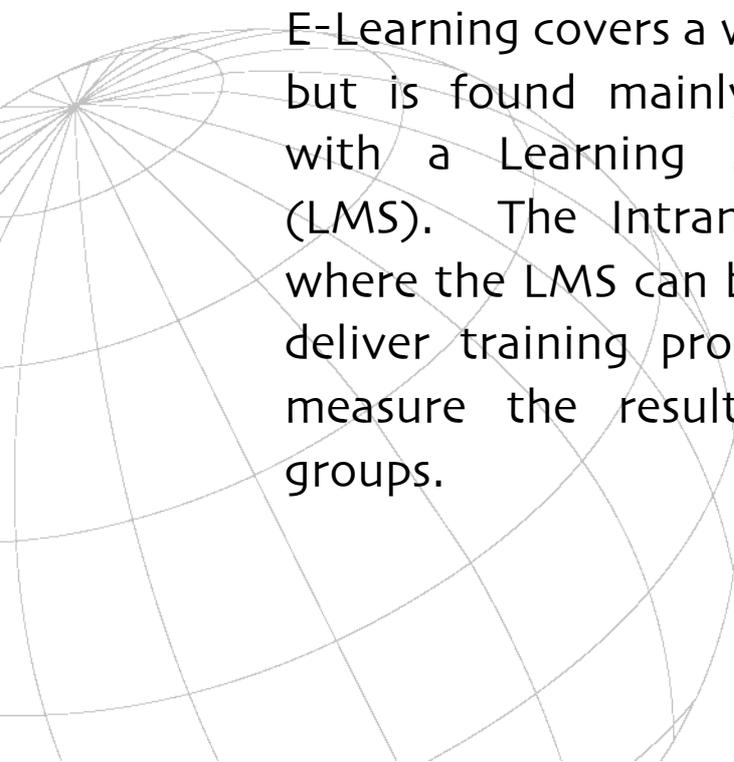
Knowledge mapping and audits are valuable exercises used to measure and evaluate the intellectual assets of an organisation.

33. Learning from Experience

Learning from Experience (LfE) is a managed set of approaches that enable capturing, sharing, and transferring individual experiences in order that improvement is possible in future situations. Lessons-learned feedback is included in the broader definition of LfE and these initiatives are often used in parallel with project, programme or lifecycle management tasks.

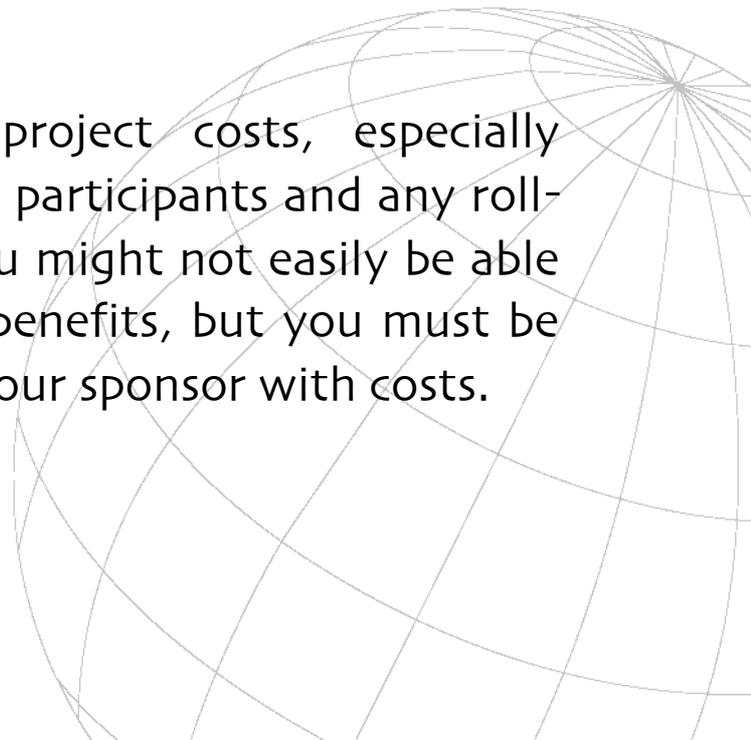
34. E-learning

E-Learning covers a wide range of activities but is found mainly in training, usually with a Learning Management System (LMS). The Intranet is often the tool where the LMS can be accessed by staff to deliver training programmes on-line and measure the results for individuals or groups.

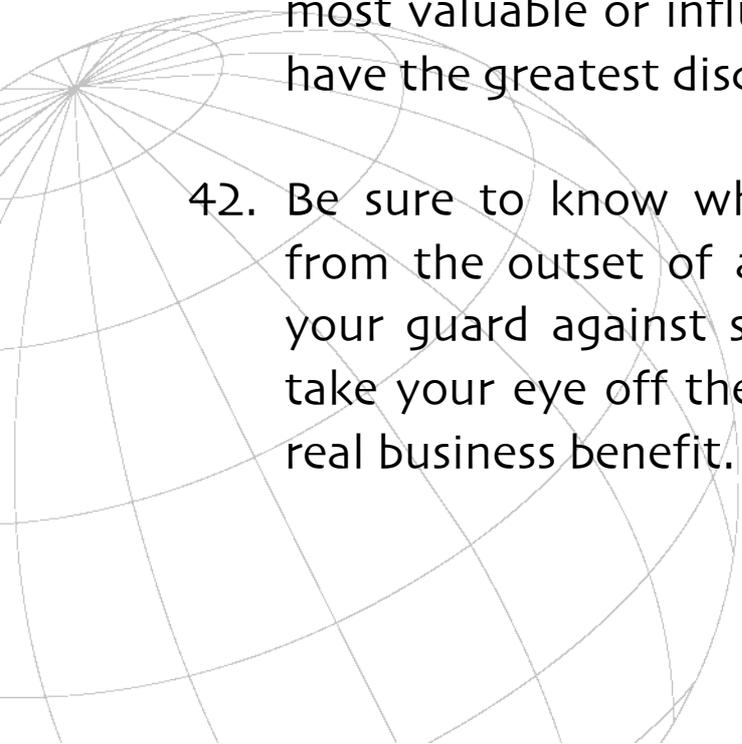


KM projects are not simple to manage - you will need funds, time and determination to make them a success just like any other project.

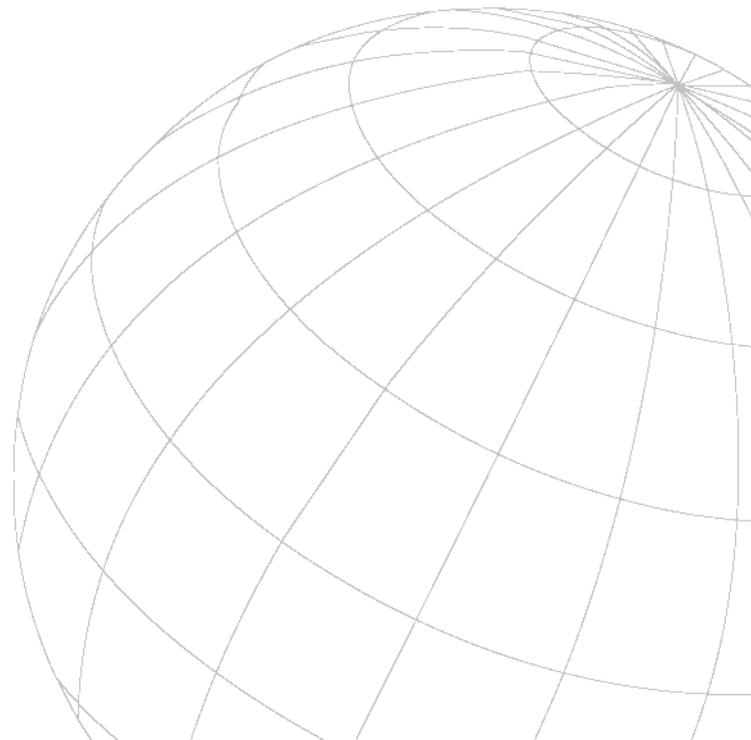
35. Run your KM initiatives like you would projects for external clients. Some believe that there is too much cost in running an internal project as you would an external job. Think like this and you will probably fail.
36. Don't be tempted to take short cuts such as neglecting planning, risk analysis, budgetary control etc. in executing KM initiatives.
37. Any successful project starts with an executive sponsor, a project manager and representatives selected from all business areas. Try to surround yourself with the best people when it comes to technical support.
38. Always record project costs, especially effort costs from participants and any roll-out training. You might not easily be able to quantify the benefits, but you must be able to provide your sponsor with costs.



39. Seek expert help in areas you are unfamiliar or have little implementation experience. A bit of money spent up-front can help mitigate many of the downstream problems.
40. Leadership skills (as compared with pure management skills) in delivering a project often make the difference between success and failure. Always think passion, communication, determination, persistence and focus. Gantt charts, risk schedules and process compliance are important but are not the overriding success factors.
41. It is normal to encounter cynics when implementing KM projects. Tread warily here as they can damage your best made plans. Aim to convert these people rather than marginalise. Remember that the most valuable or influential employees can have the greatest disdain for KM.
42. Be sure to know what success looks like from the outset of any initiative. Be on your guard against scope creep and don't take your eye off the goal – i.e. delivering real business benefit.

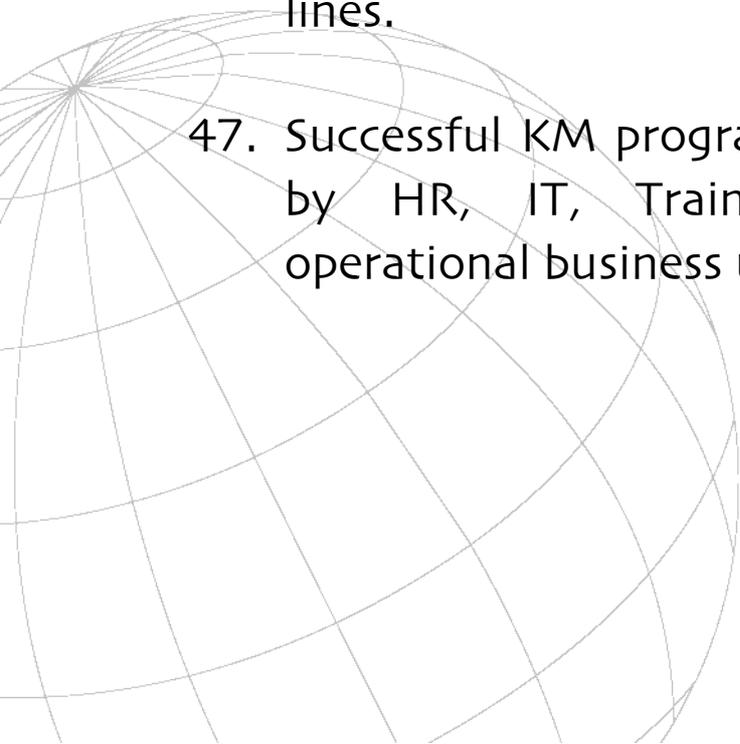


43. If possible, get your clients in on the act and communicate to them the benefits of what you are trying to achieve. If successful this will be a massive boost to overcome inertia and resistance to change in your organisation.
44. A portfolio approach of running several parallel KM initiatives ensures that a wide range of KM improvement areas are addressed but can result in slow progress. Try to ensure that you deliver quick wins in any managed programme.

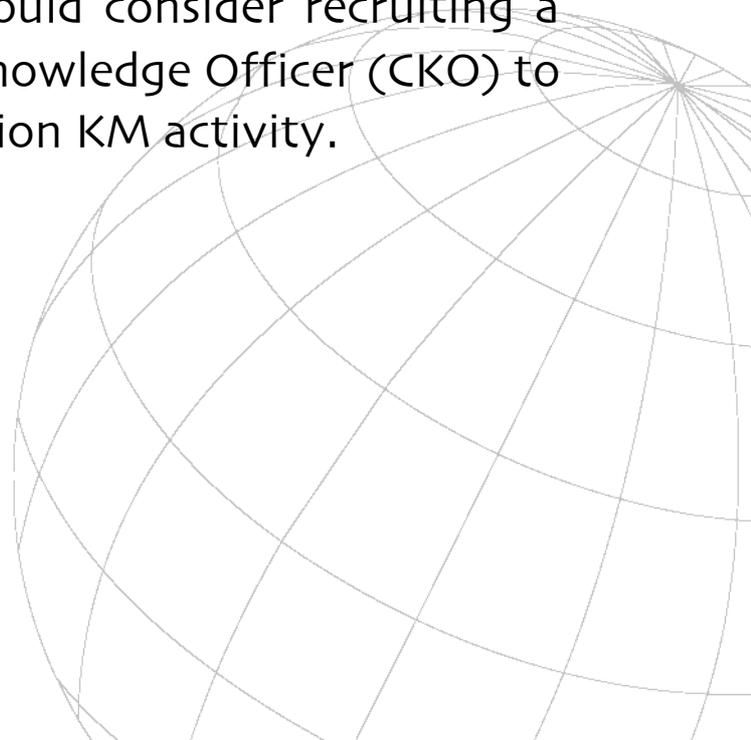


Most organisations operate in 'silos' and this can often limit the effectiveness of KM, which is a multi-stranded subject involving process, people and technology. Where to fit KM into an organisation often causes confusion and if not handled sensitively can lead to disillusionment and ultimate failure.

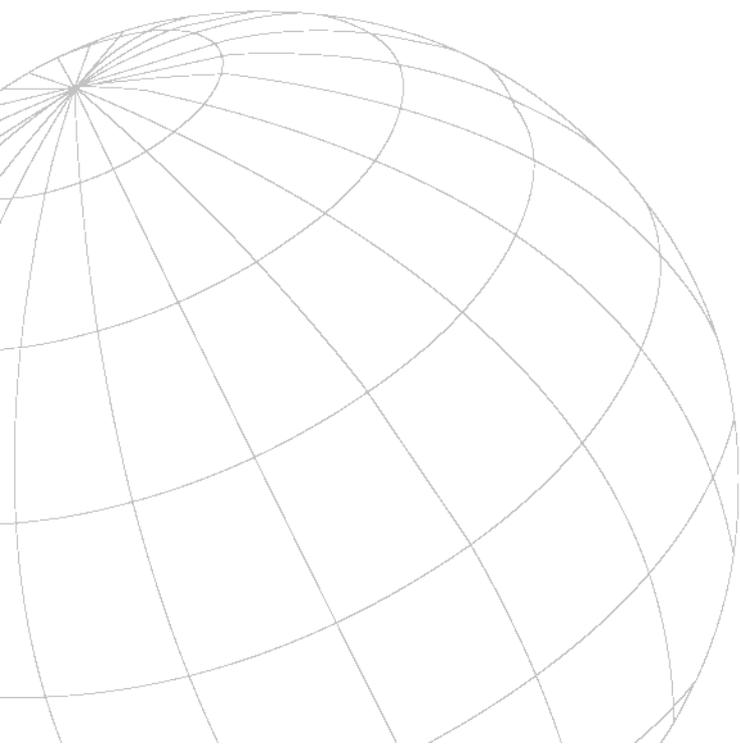
45. Many organisations are now implementing aspects of a KM programme but might not realise this or call it KM. It is important that these initiatives are understood, in terms of business benefit, and not undermined by the introduction of a bigger initiative called knowledge management.
46. Fitting KM into an organisation can be done by creating a business plan which addresses the needs and benefits of KM. This is not the same as creating yet another organisational silo with staff and reporting lines.
47. Successful KM programmes have been run by HR, IT, Training, QA or other operational business units taking the lead.



48. One useful approach worth considering is to identify KM initiatives that are not currently being addressed or co-ordinated elsewhere in the organisation and formulating a business plan addressing the benefits of implementation. Audit and benchmarking studies are important here to identify these opportunities.
49. Managers should be proactive and take ownership of their organisations KM programme at every opportunity.
50. Knowledge management works best when the people who generate the knowledge, are the same people who store it, explain it to others, and coach them as they try to implement it.
51. If there are no takers for leading KM from within the organisation then larger organisations should consider recruiting a full time Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO) to focus and champion KM activity.



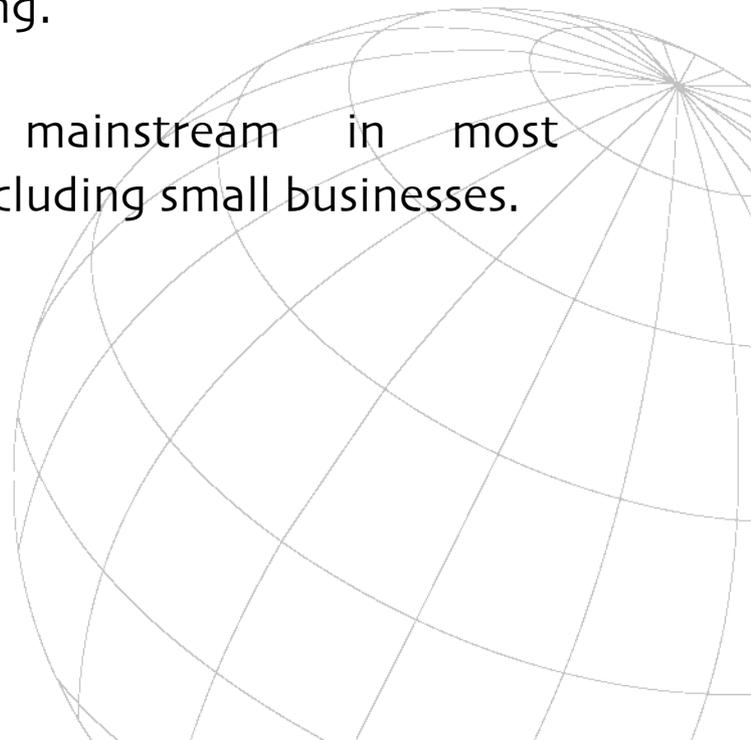
52 The biggest indicator that you have a successful KM implementation is when you can eliminate the expression from your processes and procedures. When you can integrate KM practices into your everyday activities, you don't have a KM manager but can explain to others your KM strategy, then you will have come full circle.



A light-hearted attempt at crystal ball gazing over the next 10, 25 and 100 years.

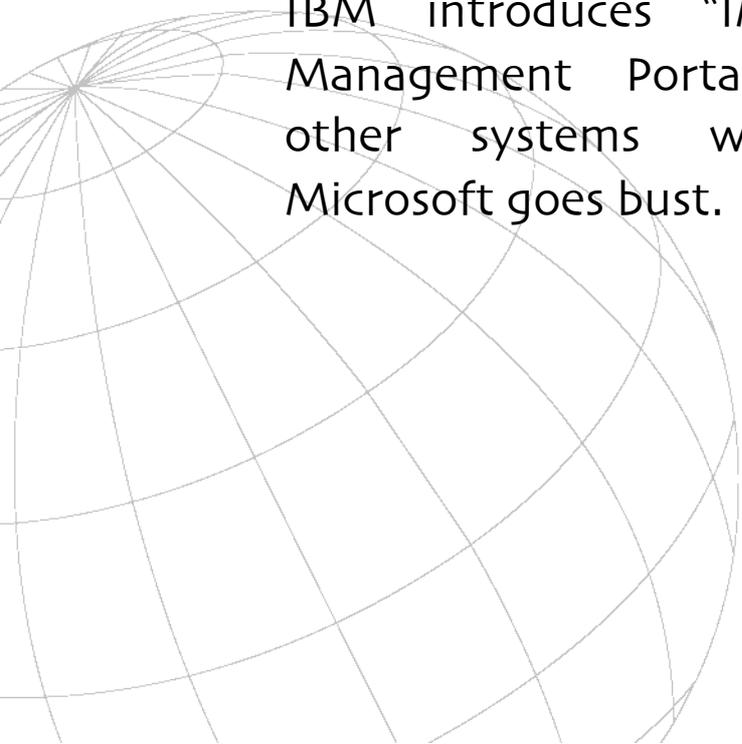
Within the next 10 years:

- ★ Microsoft outsources its KM development programme to IBM recognising that true data and information harmonisation is still decades away.
- ★ All US and European organisations with greater than 250 staff have CKOs (Chief Knowledge Officers) with terms of reference that exceed the authority of CFOs.
- ★ KM surpasses IT as the top subject taught in universities.
- ★ Andrei Popilov receives the Nobel Peace Prize for his contributions to international knowledge sharing.
- ★ KM becomes mainstream in most organisations, including small businesses.



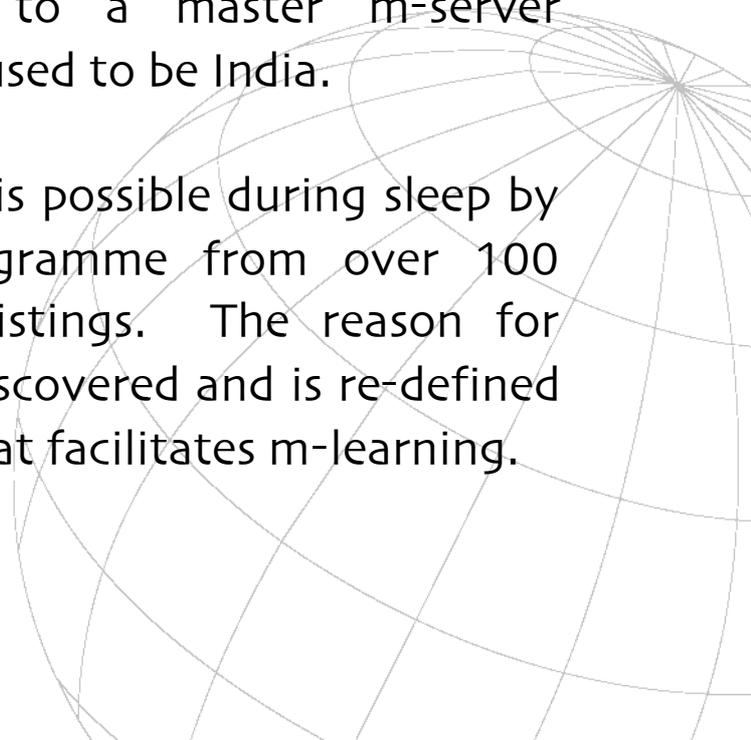
Within the next 25 years:

- ★ Staff in their 70s and 80s are recognised as having the most to offer organisations and are highly sought throughout business. KM techniques are used from day one to capture knowledge from these individuals following recruitment.
- ★ KM is hailed as the greatest advance of the 21st century as man reaches Mars using 60's technology and experiences captured in legacy NASA computers.
- ★ Nuclear fusion reactors provide 90% of the world's electricity thanks to collaborative knowledge sharing techniques that have accelerated innovation, R&D effectiveness and halved construction timescales.
- ★ IT integration issues are finally solved as IBM introduces "IMP" (its Integrated Management Portal) marginalising all other systems within 12 months. Microsoft goes bust.

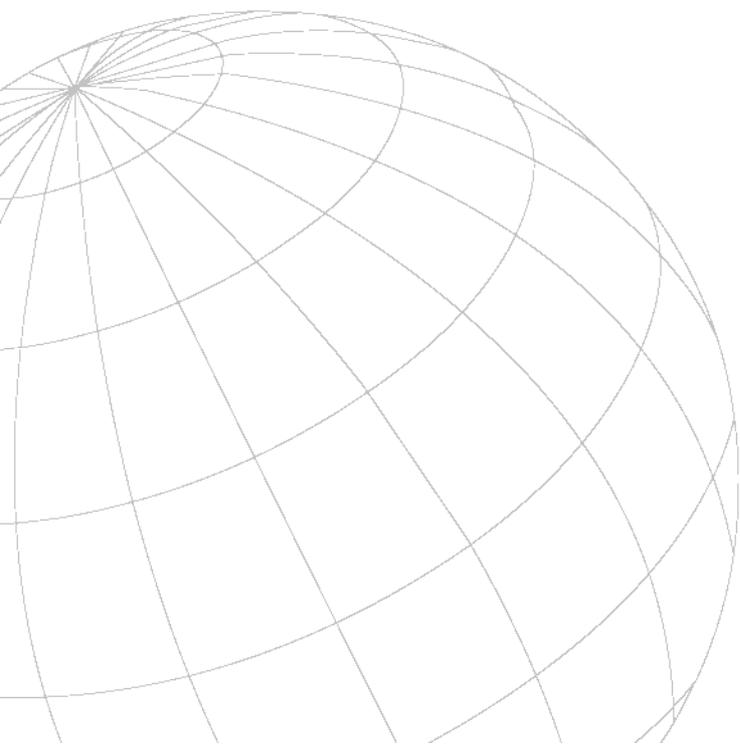


Within the next 100 years:

- ★ No Year 2100 bug is uncovered in 2099 when the world tests its legacy, processor-driven computers. However, “m-waves” (m for mind) are discovered in 2099 and within 12 months are successfully integrated into quantum computers to provide the ultimate hands-free interface.
- ★ Formal education in schools and universities is no longer required. E-learning is replaced by m-learning.
- ★ Everyone can find anything they want by thought alone, interacting sub-consciously with implanted m-wave transponders.
- ★ Lessons-learned capture begins from day one at birth by the implantation of m-probes capturing all human experience and uploading this to a master m-server located in what used to be India.
- ★ Instant learning is possible during sleep by selecting a programme from over 100 billion subject listings. The reason for sleep is at last discovered and is re-defined as the process that facilitates m-learning.



- ★ Knowledge sharing between individuals is such that famine, war, crime and football need no longer exist.
- ★ Knowledge trading surpasses other business activities. Traditional internet business collapses.
- ★ There still is no formal definition of what KM actually is, but the old nagging suspicion that somehow it might lead to business benefit is finally laid to rest.

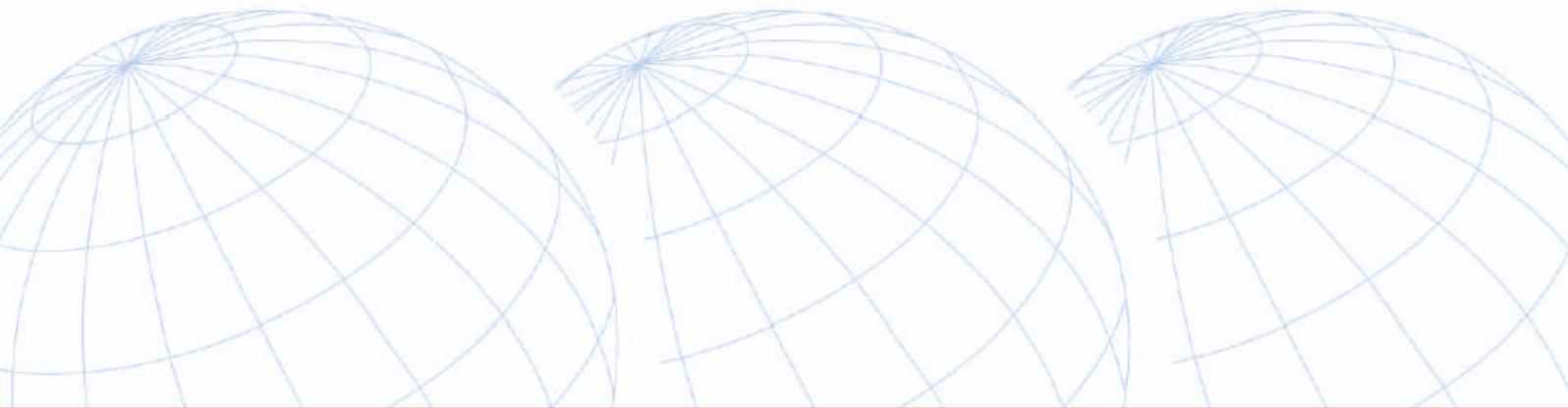




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