

School of Information Studies – Knowledge Management Fact Sheet



“NASA is working on sending a manned flight – either back to the moon or to Mars. They assumed that they could build on the success of the 1969 moon landing, which made use of the Saturn rocket blaster – only to find to their dismay that they had to reengineer their own work! While an enormous pile of documents exists about the moon landing and the rocket blaster, these alone were not enough to manufacture one today. The people who worked on the project have long since left NASA – taking with them their valuable knowledge, know-how and expertise.”

What is the cost of: Not sharing knowledge? Not finding knowledge that exists? Not finding the right knowledge? Not knowing it even exists? The keys to finding what we know, who knows what, who knows how to find the person who can... these are lost if we do not manage organizational knowledge.

KM is more than “book knowledge” – it is not just a how to manual – it is a how to manual full of post-its and scribbled notes in the margins represented the actual collective experience of everyone who tried doing this within the company. KM is about knowledge and knowledge is not always documented



KM is about **connecting people to valuable content and to knowledgeable people** in order to make use of what was learned the hard way – so everyone who works in the company can access the accumulated experience of all who passed before – to apply better ways of doing things (“**Best Practices**”) and to avoid making the same mistakes again (“**Lessons Learned**”). The major functions are to: identify valuable knowledge, document it, make sure it is widely shared and accessible to all within the company, preserve for future reuse and gather feedback from everyone in contact with this particular knowledge item in order to continually update, improve (and, as required, remove) from organizational memory.

KM is the process of capturing a company’s collective expertise wherever it resides: in databases, on paper, in people’s heads – and distributing it to wherever it can help produce the biggest payoff

Knowledge Managers can work in **any type of organization** (pharmaceutical, not-for-profit, government, library, university...) where knowledge work takes place. Typical roles and responsibilities include (with a list of organizations where our alumni have or are working):

- **Taxonomist** (putting order into organizational content and “selling” the idea to users to establish consensus) in places such as the United Nations, Yellow Pages.
- **Content manager** (establishing how content will be contributed, gathered, how it will be described, how it will be preserved for future reuse in e.g. an intranet, and how users will be able to easily access and make use of this valuable content) e.g. . Pentagon library, World Bank.
- **Knowledge journalist** (identifying where valuable experiences exist that should be documented, writing a history of the organization with all the key milestones, interviewing experts to model their knowledge and their experiences in the form of organizational stories to help others learn from them, debriefing project teams at the end their mandate to document what worked well and what can be improved in the future) e.g. Hydro Quebec, Oxfam Quebec.
- **Community of Practice facilitator** (helping informal often virtual networks of professionals to better share knowledge with one another, to harness their collective intelligence to help improve their profession, solve tough problems and help orient new members) e.g. Community of Practice of Emergency Room Nurses, Hatch Engineering Community of Practice.
- **Knowledge Support Office** (offering a “help desk” for knowledge; evolution of the Special Library).

Some of the KM courses offered include: Knowledge Management Foundations, Knowledge Taxonomies, Communities of Practice, Intellectual Capital Management, Competitive Intelligence, and Business Information.