Establishing a Successful Knowledge-Driven Culture

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THE ESTABLISHMENT of a knowledge-driven culture should be considered the ‘holy grail’ of any knowledge management (KM) strategy. However, moving beyond a KM programme which nominally encourages knowledge sharing, and creating an environment whereby employees feel compelled to share information and expertise, represents a considerable challenge. Whilst many companies do have ‘superficial’ KM systems or document repositories in place, they are still struggling to embed knowledge-sharing behaviours within employee’s mind-sets and the DNA of the organisation.

Through a series of articles and case studies, this report explores what a knowledge sharing culture is, and the ways in which it can be established, fostered, and developed within an organisation. In order to consider these ideas in context, there is a discussion of what the different elements of an organisation’s culture are, and how these should be considered in order to establish an organisation’s readiness, capacity, and capability for knowledge sharing.

As people are at the centre of an organisation, establishing a knowledge sharing environment ultimately entails a behavioural change, and a shift in attitudes. One expert contribution in this report identifies the key behavioural factors which drive a learning culture, and explains how these have been developed into a means of assessing a company’s capacity for collaborative learning. Another draws on several of these behavioural factors as part of an exploration of what constitutes a knowledge sharing culture, in an analysis firmly rooted in a highly practical case study profiling knowledge sharing within the British Army.

One way of enabling such a behavioural shift is to focus on enablement of knowledge sharing, as opposed to management of knowledge. In the case study of A.T. Kearney, the importance of enabling access to, and exchange of, knowledge in order to create an environment where people are encouraged to learn and share freely, is explored. An attitude which acts as a barrier to effective knowledge sharing is the notion that KM is not part of an employee’s remit. Another insight uses examples from EC Harris and the Ministry of Justice to illustrate the importance of making knowledge management part of ‘the day job’, and illustrates the need to consider this cultural change from the point of view of both the ‘people’ value stream, and the ‘collective brain’ value stream; making knowledge sharing both part of an individual’s mindset and an organisation’s DNA. The importance of employee engagement with KM in order to establish a culture of knowledge sharing is considered through a practical analysis of an as yet unpublished research project undertaken within a global IT services company.

The importance of establishing an environment in which effective knowledge sharing and collaboration can happen is
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clearly paramount in the establishment of a knowledge-driven culture. This is discussed in another article, which explores the need for collaborative processes which encourage reciprocal exchange in order to effect a true cultural shift. Another contribution tackles the recurring challenge of ineffective communication, along with the possible approaches that could be adopted to tackle this problem. In order to reinforce and encourage a collaborative culture, there is a need not only to create an environment where knowledge can be shared, but where such collaboration is valued; this is also considered, along with a discussion of the role that branding, communication, and change management has in establishing such an environment.

Establishing a knowledge-driven culture will improve efficiency and decision making within a business; in the words of Jack Welch, ‘an organization’s ability to learn and translate that learning into action is the ultimate competitive business advantage’. For an organisation looking to progress from a KM system to a KM culture, it is therefore beneficial to look at case studies where knowledge sharing systems are already mature and well-established. The case study of Wood Group PSN illustrates the relationship between KM, innovation, and learning, and the way in which knowledge sharing results in improvement and innovation in relation to health and safety, efficiency, and cost savings. Another case study offers an analysis of the strategic implementation of a global knowledge sharing strategy at the British Council, and illustrates the way in which the programme, and the wider KM culture, has developed since it was implemented five years ago. The team at Fluor reflect on some of the critical success factors that have contributed to the success of their MAKE award winning 14-year old KM initiative, and the challenges the team now face in ensuring it remains ‘future robust’. This report also contains a contribution from MAKE award winners Woods Bagot, who consider the ways in which they have developed a knowledge approach which continues to adapt and mature, whilst remaining closely aligned to the company’s strategic vision.

This collection of expert insights and case studies will provide a framework for considering how knowledge management can be developed beyond a simple process or system to become part of the mindset of an engaged and collaborative workforce, and an integral part of the way business is done more effectively within a company.
About the authors

Helen Clegg is the knowledge team director within the Procurement & Analytic Solutions Practice of A.T. Kearney, an international management consulting firm (www.atkearneypas.com), where she develops knowledge-sharing solutions for procurement and analytic content including a regular podcast series, available on iTunes and YouTube.

Helen contributes actively to the global information and knowledge management community. She has presented on webinars and at conferences including FreePint, Online Information, KM World, Taxonomy Boot Camp and the European Institute of Purchasing Management. Helen is a regular guest speaker to MBA students at the Grenoble Graduate School of Management, London School of Business and Finance, and Johns Hopkins University, Carey School of Business. She has been published in Business Information Review, Information Outlook, Online, and the Montague Institute Review.

Helen has over 20 years’ international business research and knowledge management experience, gained working for strategic management consultancy Bain & Company in three European countries and Fortune 500 company RR Donnelley. She holds a BA (Hons) in French and German, a Masters in Library and Information Studies, a Professional Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing from the Chartered Institute of Marketing, and a Postgraduate Certificate in Sustainable Business from the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry. Helen can be contacted at helen.clegg@atkearney.com, and her Twitter handle is @HClegg.

Cheryl Cooper was the first knowledge manager recruited by the British Council and responsible for implementing the Global Knowledge Sharing Strategy.

An expert in organisational learning, communication and knowledge sharing, in 2007 Cheryl founded Applied Wisdom – an international knowledge-sharing consultancy, and a management training and executive coaching enterprise.

Cheryl uses her 25+ years of professional experience and skills to bring people together and create a new level of possibility and action. Her company offers knowledge sharing consultancy for strategic development and implementation, training in team leadership, virtual team-working and communication, as well as executive coaching for team leaders and senior managers.

As a European Commission official and later at the British Council, Cheryl worked around the world, fostering deeper understanding of how we can successfully work together and effectively learn from each other.

Now working with businesses, national and international organisations around the world, she also enjoys donating her skills to social enterprise, She has designed and moderated collaborative, knowledge sharing workshops for the Social Responsibility Forum at IE Business School, Ashoka at HEC Paris and other social enterprise gatherings.

For more information on creating and sustaining a knowledge sharing culture, please contact her on info@cherylcooper.co.uk
Dr Nancy Dixon, working with Common Knowledge Associates (a company she founded in 2000) has been instrumental in developing and delivering KM strategies, implementation plans, and training in a wide range of non-profit organisations (e.g. US Army, Defense Intelligence Agency, USAID, Save the Children, NASA) as well as corporate clients (Huawei, Bose, ConocoPhillips, Ecopetrol, Netherlands Railroad). She has a passionate interest in creating conversations that exploit the collective knowledge of an organisation in order to address difficult organisational issues and to spur innovation. Her research has focused on how to create psychologically safe environments for both large and small group conversations. In her consulting practice she facilitates learning events that involve cross-boundary stakeholders who are facing complex issues. She helps organisations move beyond a series of presentations to engage people in active learning processes. Her facilitation skills and processes are able to bring together disparate groups and individuals so that they can find common ground and achieve breakthroughs in performance. Dr Dixon’s writing includes over 50 articles and eight books including a seminal book on knowledge management, *Common Knowledge: How Companies Thrive By Sharing What They Know*. Her latest thinking on collective sensemaking can be found in her blog at www.nancydixonblog.com.

Rob Koene has worked as for Fluor since July 1989. In 2002 he became the knowledge manager of the Engineering Management, Electrical & Control Systems Communities and is finding this one of the most rewarding jobs he has ever had. Fluor worldwide is packed with people who have highly valuable knowledge and experience and it is an excellent challenge to make this available company wide. Fluor’s mission of successfully delivering projects in a safe, efficient, and economical manner is where effective knowledge management plays a major role.

Prior to becoming knowledge manager, Rob mostly functioned as lead engineer (control systems and electrical) on chemicals and oil/gas projects. Before joining Fluor, he worked for Elf-Petroland (a French oil company), Tebodin, and some smaller Dutch engineering companies. Rob can be contacted at rob.koene@fluor.com.

Rupert Lescott served as an officer in the Light Infantry (now The Rifles) for ten years, deploying to Northern Ireland, the Balkans, Sierra Leone, Cyprus, Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan. On leaving the Army, he worked as an operational risk analyst at an investment bank in the City of London before becoming a lessons analyst in the British Army’s Lessons Exploitation Centre (LXC) from May 2009 to May 2012. He is now an associate director of Knoco Ltd, advising organisations on how to develop and enhance their capacity for learning.

Alice MacGillivray is an independent consultant based on Gabriola Island in western Canada. She had the privilege to study ethnography with Matt Hamabata and Jim Spickard as part of her doctoral studies. Alice first encountered the field of knowledge management in the 1990s through her interests in leadership and complexity, and it quickly became a passion. Her clients have included public, private, and not-for-profit sector groups. Alice worked with an advisory board at Royal Roads University to develop the first MA in knowledge management, which launched in 2002. The programme emphasised strategic, social, and cultural elements of knowledge work. It also included the first full course on communities of practice, which dovetailed with the international www.cpsquare.org foundations workshop. In 2009 she completed a PhD in Human and Organizational Systems from Fielding Graduate University. Alice is currently a consultant (www.4KM.net), program head for the MA
in learning and technology at Royal Roads, co-chairs the Fielding Alumni Council, is a Fellow with the Institute for Social Innovation at Fielding, and is on the editorial board of the International Journal of Complexity in Leadership and Management.

**Felicity McNish** is the global knowledge manager for Woods Bagot. Based in Adelaide, Felicity is responsible for the knowledge management and research activities of the company. She has worked in the business information and knowledge management area for over 15 years in Australia and the United Kingdom.

Woods Bagot is a leading global architecture, design, and consulting firm, with 850 people working across Asia, Australia, Europe, the Middle East, and North America. The firm’s unique ‘Global Studio’ philosophy drives unprecedented knowledge sharing and true collaboration across time zones.

**David W J Millar** has 11 years’ experience of developing, implementing, and maturing best in class global knowledge management strategy, policies, procedures, and supporting toolsets to ensure everyone is better connected to share, learn, innovate, and improve globally.

David is currently the business improvement manager at Wood Group PSN where his key roles include developing, implementing, and maturing innovation, improvement, and learning behaviours, policy, process, tools, and training for the organisation. He has held similar positions in BP, eni, BizBites and Vetco Gray (Now GE Oil and Gas).

David holds two degrees from the Robert Gordon University (RGU) in Aberdeen: MSc Knowledge Management, BSc (Hons) Environmental Science and Management. David is also an Associate Lecturer at RGU and supporting them with development of a new MSc course in Organisational Learning for delivery in 2014. David has plans to start a PhD (part time) with them in 2014 in the field of organisational learning.

**Dr Nick Milton** is director and co-founder of Knoco Ltd (www.knoco.com). Working with Knoco Ltd since 1999, Nick has been instrumental in developing and delivering KM strategies, pilots, implementation plans, change programmes, and KM services in a wide range of different organisations across the globe. Knoco’s clients come from the engineering, oil and gas, manufacturing, pharmaceutical, FMCG, IT, mining, nuclear, and public sectors. He has a particular interest in lessons learned systems, and has managed major lessons capture programmes, particularly in the area of mergers and acquisitions and multi-million dollar engineering projects. He is the author of The Lessons Learned Handbook (Woodhead publishing, 2010) and Knowledge Management for Teams and Projects (Chandos Publishing, 2005), and co-author of The Knowledge Managers Handbook, (Information Today 2013), Knowledge Management for Sales and Marketing (Chandos Publishing, 2011) and Performance through Learning – Knowledge Management in Practice (Elsevier, 2004). Prior to founding Knoco Ltd, Nick spent two years at the centre of the team that made BP the leading KM company in the world, acting as the team knowledge manager, developing and implementing BP’s knowledge of ‘how to manage knowledge’, and coordinating the BP KM Community of Practice. Nick blogs regularly at www.nickmilton.com.

**Rosemary Nunn** has a wealth of experience helping organisations improve operational performance and achieve growth targets, via the design and leadership of knowledge management and the associated change programmes.
With a background in economics, and following an interim appointment at Ernst and Young, her first key role as the strategic economist for the UK Aerospace and Defence Sector saw her designing and implementing processes to gather, analyse, and share sector knowledge across multiple stakeholders, including C Suite leaders, senior government officials, and military personnel.

This experience led to a fascination with the use of knowledge, and subsequent roles in organisations such as Lockheed Martin and Dow Chemical, provided the opportunity to deliver strategies to optimise the use of knowledge for performance improvement and winning business.

Rosemary currently leads the application of knowledge management in both EC Harris LLP the Built Asset Consultancy, and the Ministry of Justice Estates Directorate. Please connect with Rosemary via LinkedIn.

**Dr Madanmohan Rao** is a KM author and consultant from Bangalore. He is the editor of five books (*The Knowledge Management Chronicles*, *The Asia Pacific Internet Handbook*, *AfricaDotEdu*, *Global Citizen*, and *World of Proverbs*) and he is the co-founder of the Bangalore K-Community, a network of KM professionals. Madan was formerly the communications director at the United Nations Inter Press Service bureau in New York, and vice president at IndiaWorld Communications in Bombay.

Madan’s KM consulting engagements have included Fortune 500 companies such as Perot Systems and Philips, and Indian IT services pioneers such as HCL Technologies. He has also conducted KM workshops for MNCs such as Capgemini and government agencies such as the Karnataka Knowledge Commission. Madan is a frequent speaker on the international conference circuit, and has given talks and lectures in over 80 countries around the world. He has spoken at KM World in California, KM Russia in Moscow, KM Asia in Singapore, KM Challenge Australia in Sydney, and InfoVision/KM India in Bangalore. He is on the board of editors of the journal *Electronic Markets* and the *Journal of Community Informatics*, and was on the board of the journal *Convergence*. Madan is also adjunct faculty at the International School of Information Management, where he teaches KM courses at the master’s level. He is active on blogs and tweets ([http://km.techsparks.com](http://km.techsparks.com); @MadanRao).

**Alexander Schauer** is a final year doctoral candidate at the University of Sheffield, England. A core component of his PhD was to undertake knowledge management consultancy work involving a large scale project to investigate the knowledge sharing culture in a global IT services organisation. The research comprised of 24 in-depth interviews across China, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In addition to the interviews, an online survey was planned, developed, and executed across the four countries. More than 1,400 completed responses were analysed and the results were presented in a tailored knowledge management strategy report.

In Australia, prior to his PhD, Alexander worked as a business solutions and project manager at the Paragon Australasia Group. Before that, he worked at Allianz Global Assistance for five years, specialising in insurance implementation and maintenance. After completing his academic degree, Alexander seeks to return to the industry to apply and develop his skills in knowledge management.

**Susan Stewart** has worked in professional services firms for over 15 years focusing on communications, strategy, marketing, business development, and change management. In her role as the global strategic development and change manager at Woods Bagot, Susan works closely
with leadership and peers to articulate and implement vision and organisational initiatives, providing change, culture, and communications advice and strategies.

**Jon Thorne** spent 15 years running his own research company that looked at how people socialise online in some of the biggest, most complex organisations in the world.

Then all the issues with his young children came to a head. Jon felt the price his children had to pay to ‘fit in’ at school was too high. After trying other schools Jon gave up work to home school.

While home schooling, Jon replaced the problem of poor communications between departments with poor communications between families. These families, including Jon, were determined to find a way forward for the benefit of the children. Four years of deep emotions triggered by talking about children helped Jon to work out a way to create a bridging culture between departments. A different way to teach strong-willed young people how to be good innovators. Jon also took on his own goal to not spread badwill and has written a book sharing the techniques he uses to achieve his goal…

Jon is always happy to chat.

**Mirelle Walker** is the internal communications manager at Woods Bagot, responsible for developing and designing the bespoke communications for internal strategic initiatives, in addition to the firm’s corporate communications and daily stories and feeds. Mirelle has worked in design firms for over ten years in the areas of marketing, client relationship management, and digital media.

**Darryl Wing** joined Fluor in 2000 as a software developer for the knowledge management (KM) core team. For over a decade he worked on developing and enhancing Fluor’s flagship knowledge-sharing system, Knowledge OnLine™. During that time he witnessed Fluor’s communities of practice flourish and provide a one-stop shop for engineers to get their questions answered by subject matter experts, and download valued practices. Fluor’s KM programme has received numerous accolades over the years, including multiple awards for the Most Admired Knowledge Enterprise (MAKE).

In July 2013 Darryl assumed responsibility for the KM team at Fluor, and is currently working to drive an evolved vision of KM within Fluor. Daryl can be contacted at darryl.wing@fluor.com.