

Knowledge management survey of local authorities, 2006

Introduction

Knowledge management may not necessarily be used as a term within your organisation, but it probably forms part of what your organisation already does. While there are various definitions of knowledge management it is perhaps about having an organisational environment that supports the creation, sharing and reuse of knowledge to enable the organisation to make better decisions together (Sinclair, 2006).

This survey is part of an initial investigation into knowledge management within local government for an MSc dissertation at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen. Its prime focus will be on the Scottish context, but it is hoped that useful comparisons can be made between local authorities throughout the UK. The study is divided into four main strands looking at, levels of awareness, the emergence of knowledge management, what progress has been made and barriers encountered and whether measurement systems are in place to monitor and evaluate its impact.

It is intended that the results of this survey are made available to all those who participate in it. You may also want to put forward your organisation to take part in a case study analysis, which will build on the results of this survey and provide a more detailed picture of knowledge management within your organisation.

Section 1: Awareness

1.1 Construction/ definition of knowledge

Q1. Which terms denote knowledge in organisations? (please tick all that apply)

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Intellectual capital | <input type="checkbox"/> | Organisational knowledge | <input type="checkbox"/> | Core competence | <input type="checkbox"/> | Organisational learning | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Organisational memory | <input type="checkbox"/> | Information technology | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tools and methodology | <input type="checkbox"/> | Knowledge capture and dissemination | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Knowledge transfer | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | | | |

Q2. What are the elements of knowledge within the organisation? (please tick all that apply)

- | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Hard information | <input type="checkbox"/> | Soft information | <input type="checkbox"/> | Political issues | <input type="checkbox"/> | Personal experiences | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tangible issues | <input type="checkbox"/> | Cultural issues | <input type="checkbox"/> | Power values | <input type="checkbox"/> | Thinking | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Deciding | <input type="checkbox"/> | Education and training | <input type="checkbox"/> | Interchange with others | <input type="checkbox"/> | Experiences | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tacit knowledge | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | | | |

1.2 Embodiment of knowledge

Q3. Where is knowledge systematically captured in the organisation?(please tick all that apply)

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Senior management | <input type="checkbox"/> | Middle management | <input type="checkbox"/> | Team leaders | <input type="checkbox"/> | Employees | <input type="checkbox"/> | Daily experiences | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lessons learned through projects | <input type="checkbox"/> | Customers | <input type="checkbox"/> | Suppliers | <input type="checkbox"/> | Competitors | <input type="checkbox"/> | Benchmarked organisations | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Q4. How is tacit knowledge captured? (please tick all that apply)

Tacit knowledge is more know-how than know-what. It is the knowledge developed over time by an individual in the form of expertise, requiring little thought or time to bring it into play.

- Inductions Appraisals Interviews
Informal discussions Formal discussions Exit interviews

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Q5. The organisation facilitates knowledge sharing.

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

Q6. Dialogue is encouraged and facilitated.

- Strongly disagree Agree Disagree Strongly agree No opinion

Q7. Is knowledge management linked to employee advancement?

- Systematically Most times Ad hoc Sometimes Never

Q8. How satisfactorily does technology facilitate learning transfer and dialogue?

- Very satisfactory Satisfactory Unsatisfactorily Very unsatisfactorily No opinion

Q9. What is the driver for the technology?

- IT specialists exclusively Some input by the end users
Technology is seen as a key enabler People are the starting point

1.3 Dissemination of knowledge

Q10. How is knowledge sharing facilitated? (please tick all that apply)

- Face to face Workshops Forums Multimedia presentations
Divergent databases Convergent databases Mentoring and coaching Lessons learned from project groups
Creativity techniques Discussion forums Training needs analysis Learning processes

Q11. How satisfactorily does the use of technology facilitate learning transfer?

- Very satisfactorily Satisfactorily Unsatisfactorily Very unsatisfactorily No opinion

1.4 Use/benefits of knowledge management

Q12. What are the key future plans for know ledge management? (please tick all that apply)

- Increased know ledge sharing - suppliers
- Increased know ledge sharing - customers/clients
- Increased know ledge sharing - partner organisations
- Improved enabling technology
- Improved employee information sharing
- Increase business performance
- Other (please specify)

Q13. What are the sources of costly errors? (please tick all that apply)

- Vital know ledge lost
- Know ledge not available
- Duplication of errors
- Data not interpreted
- Process re-engineered
- Lack of competitor information
- Insufficient technology information
- Other (please specify)

Q14. What are the reasons for missed opportunities? (please tick all that apply)

- Organisation unaw are of information
- Inability to use information
- Insufficient organisation processes
- Insufficient employee performance
- Insufficient know ledge about customers/clients
- Insufficient know ledge about competitors
- Insufficient technology

Q15. What are the benefits from systematic know ledge management? (please tick all that apply)

- Improved efficiency
- New products/services
- Reduced operating costs
- Improved management learning
- Improved quality

Section 2: Emergence

2.1 Embryology of knowledge

Can you say how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Q16. Employees in my organisation are free to prioritise their own learning agendas.

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

Q17. Which parts of the organisation are engaging in this type of activity more than others?

Q18. Employees in my organisation are free to self-organise into knowledge making groups (communities of knowledge, interest or practice).

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

Q19. Which parts of the organisation are engaging in this type of activity more than others?

2.2 Politics of knowledge

Q20. Who gets to make new knowledge that is eventually used in your organisation? (please tick all that apply)

Councillors Senior management Middle management Team leaders Employees
Clients/customers Suppliers Contractors Consultants Self-organised groups

Q21. Does your organisation take deliberate steps to recruit people who bring with them divergent views, experiences and interests?

Systematically Most times Ad hoc/ occasionally Sometimes Never

2.3 Connectivity

Q22. Are existing knowledge groups (communities of practice or interest) currently supported by technology tools? Yes No

Q23. Which of the following tools are used within your organisation? (please tick all that apply)

Email Instant messaging Web-based learning Workgroup software Project management software
Web or intranet portals Blogs Virtual-learning classrooms Wikis Knowledge repositories
Knowledge maps/directories Expertise locators Best practice catalogues Lessons learned databases
Others (please specify)

Q24. How effective are your current Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in supporting the transfer of knowledge:

Q24a. Between your organisation and your clients/customers? Very effective Effective Ineffective Very ineffective No opinion

Q24b. Within your organisation? Very effective Effective Ineffective Very ineffective No opinion

Q24c. Between local authorities/partner organisations? Very effective Effective Ineffective Very ineffective No opinion

2.4 Influences

Q25. How has knowledge management emerged within your organisation? (please tick all that apply)

- As part of the community planning process As part of a change management programme
- As part of the service planning process As part of a corporate knowledge management or other strategy
- As part of a grass roots or bottom-up process As a side effect of another initiative (name)
- As a supporting mechanism to an existing business process Other (please specify)

Q26. What external factors or agendas have influenced the emergence of knowledge management in your organisation? (please give any details below)

- Transformational/modernising government Efficient government agenda Shared services agenda Availability of funding
- Legislative requirements Criticism from external agencies Demands for more openness/transparency from stakeholders Other external factors

Q27. Please provide any additional details on specific external factors here.

Q28. What internal factors or agendas have influenced the emergence of knowledge management in your organisation? (please give any details below)

- Best Value Reviews Benchmarking exercises with other organisations An organisational culture that values and supports sharing and re-use
- An organisational structure which facilitates knowledge sharing and re-use The availability of social networking software Future demographic changes in the workforce
- Other internal factors

Q29. Please provide any additional details on specific internal factors here.

Q30. Please describe any particular examples of knowledge management programmes or initiatives in your organisation.

Section 3: Progress

3.1 Knowledge management maturity

Q31. Which of the following knowledge management maturity levels best describes your organisation?

- Default 1. Complete dependency on individual skills/abilities.
Organisation's knowledge is fragmented in isolated pockets and stays in people's heads.
Belief in formal training as sole mechanism for learning.
- Aware 2. The organisation shares knowledge purely on a need basis.
Routine and procedural knowledge is shared.
Able to repeat basic business tasks of the organisation.
- Reactive 3. Beginnings of an integrated approach to managing knowledge life cycle.
Enterprise wide knowledge propagation systems are in existence (awareness and maintenance are moderate).
The organisation collects and understands metrics for knowledge management.
Managers recognise the role of and encourage knowledge sharing.
- Convinced 4. Enterprise wide knowledge systems are in place - quality, currency, utility, usage are high.
Organisational boundaries breakdown as knowledge barriers.
High ability to leverage internal and external sources of expertise.
The organisation realises measurable benefits through knowledge sharing.
- Sharing 5. Culture of sharing institutionalised, sharing becomes second nature to all.
Organisational boundaries are irrelevant.
Streamlined process for leveraging new ideas for business advantage.
Knowledge return on investment is integral to decision-making.

3.2 Barriers encountered

What are the main barriers to successful knowledge management in your organisation?
Please list them under the following headings.

Q32. Individual barriers

Q33. Organisational barriers

Q34. Technology barriers

Section 4: Measurement

Q35. Does your organisation have a system in place to measure the impact of knowledge management?

Yes No

Q36. If your organisation does have a measurement system in place, is it based on any of the following?

Balanced scorecard EFQM Excellence Model Six Sigma Intellectual asset monitor
Skandia navigator Return On Investment Locally derived performance indicators
Other (please specify)

Q37. Are they measures that support organisational objectives?

Systematically Most times Ad hoc Sometimes Never

Q38. Is it used as management information?

Systematically Most times Ad hoc Sometimes Never

Q39. Has your organisation undertaken any form of knowledge management audit? Yes No

Your details

Q40. Name

Q41. Job title

Q42. Organisation name

Q43. Department

Q44. Phone

Q45. Email

Case study nomination

Q46. Would you be willing for your organisation to be used as a case study? Yes No

Q47. Can you suggest people in your organisation who may be interested in taking part?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Please return your questionnaire to:

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