Module Four: The Knowledge Management Life Cycle

Knowledge management is a cycle of identifying information that may or may not be useful knowledge, formatting it into usableknowledge, and integrating it into the organization.This module will teach you the basic phases in the knowledge management cycle.This information will help you communicate to those in your organization the components of knowledge management in a way that makes sense, creating more support for your project.
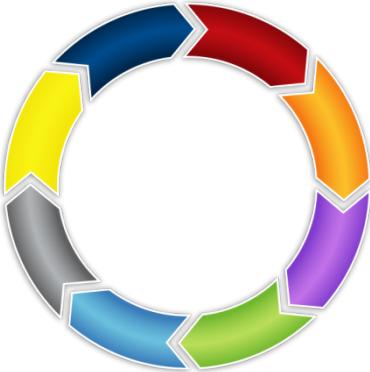
Understanding Episodes

Episodes of knowledge transfer come in many forms.Understanding that anytime a problem is realized or a new venture on the horizon, there is a good possibility that there is knowledge to capture.There are instances where episodes are planned.Here are some examples:

- A new product is being developed and rolled out

- Enteringinto a new market or territory

- Internal restructuring like a new division or enhancement of an existing department

- Implementing a new program like enterprise wide project management program

- Building a new facility

- Mergers, new partnerships, and take-over of another company

- Change in leadership at the top level like a new Chief Executive Officer

Some episodes may occur unexpectedly.For example:

- A recall of a defective product

- New government regulations

- Dramatic changes in the market

Here are a few ideas you can use to help deal with episodes whether planned or unplanned:

- What essential actions does the affected area have to take?

- What decisions people in the affected area must make to complete their job?

- What information is needed in order to make those decisions and complete their job?

- Is it explicit?Maybe is stored in a database.

- Is it tacit?Does this information have to come from a person?

Acquisition

The acquiring stage seeks to obtaininformation from both internal and external sources.It addresses tacit and explicit modes of knowledge and involves many techniques.Acquiring information or knowledge can be seen as two categories: capturing and creating

Capturing is acquiring information or knowledge that already exists and requires little adjustments to make it valuable to the organization.It can be internal information that is floating around the organization or external information or knowledge from outsides sources.

Creation is taking existing information or knowledge and combining it with other internal knowledge or information to produce new knowledge the organization can deem actionable.There may be some analyzing involved to make the new knowledge actionable for the organization.

Here is a brief list of tools and techniques that helps to acquire knowledge:

- Explicit information exists here and may be used in combination to form new knowledge and may be internal or external

    o Repositories with document information

    o Filing systems

- Tacit information exists between people or experts and stored information and may be internal and external

    o Experts sharing their ideas

    o Databases with information

- Internal tools for knowledge creation and capturing

- o   Interviewing employees

- o   Knowledge teams

- External tools for information or knowledge capturing

   - o   Data mining data warehouses

   - o   External expert opinion (i.e. consultant)

Once the knowledge is acquired, it must be organized so it can be easily integrated into the organization.

Knowledge

Remember that knowledge is information that is placed in context so that it becomes actionable.In order for this to happen, knowledge must be evaluated against the business goals and strategies.Knowledge that is deemed useful for the organization passes on through to the next cycle and integrated.
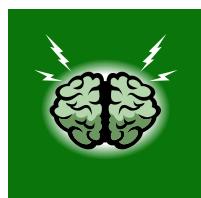
Evaluating information or knowledge requires comparison to the goals, vision, mission, and strategies of the organization.Failing to align the knowledge to these business strategies could render the knowledge management program ineffective.Here are some areas to consider when evaluating knowledge:

- What is the nature of your organization

- Organization vision

- Organization goals

- Strategy to achieve goals

- Current business environment

- Industry

Knowledge that is not ready for integration may be stored for later use.Here are some ways to evaluate knowledge for integration:

- Knowledge committees

- Knowledge forums

- KM software

Each of these tools would require representation from many areas of the organization.The goal here is to deem acquired information or knowledge useful to the organization.Not all knowledge acquired must be integrated.If this were the goal, the knowledge management system would become too burdensome and run the risk of not being used.

Integration

Integration is making knowledge known.There are several general methods to getting knowledge out throughout the organization.Here are several examples:

- **Broadcasting:** e-mails, announcements, newsletters, are some examples of integrating knowledge by broadcasting

- **Searching:** databases, portals, extranets, records, are examples of integrating knowledge by making it searchable

- **Teaching:** classroom, webinars, computer-based training, are examples of how training can help integrate knowledge throughout the organization

- **Sharing:** yellow page system, best practices system, community boards, are examples of how sharing knowledge helps to integrate it throughout your organization

The exact designs and process will depend on how your culture's view of these tools and their place in the organization.Other considerations revolve on costs.Later in this workshop, we will get a chance to discuss modest ways of implementing knowledge management in your organization.

Now that we have a better understanding of the knowledge management cycle, let us review past and present models.This will help you determine if in fact, you already have a knowledge management system in place, but it needs a little updating.

Case Study

Mark jeered at the changes. His company had done an about face and changed the rules of the game. Karen cheered to hide the snide remarks that escaped mark's lips. Mark couldn't make heads or tails of what had happened. Karen offered to help explain that the tides were changing and tried to get mark to jump on board. Mark fumed with anger. Smoke bellowed from his ears as he marched out of the meeting. Karen tried to get him to listen to reason and employed every tactic she knew. Mark couldn't see straight and covered his ears to avoid the message. Mark's head nearly exploded before the message rang loud and clear. He realized that change didn't mean disaster and that all would be well after all. Karen breathed a sigh of relief, glad that the crisis had been averted.