



Chapter VI

A Framework for Knowledge Management

6.1 Introduction

Previous chapters have discussed the importance of systems and knowledge management. This is especially important with the shifts from traditional, highly structured organisations, to more fluid businesses in areas as diverse as manufacturing, healthcare, entertainment, and education.

However, it would be idealistic and naïve to assume that knowledge management can somehow provide gain without pain. If knowledge management is to be considered seriously then the possible costs must be recognised. These may include the following.

- Suitable server and client hardware and upgrades of staff machines.
- Suitable system software to support a knowledge management application.
- Knowledge management software.

- Time.
- Training.
- Staff appointments.
- Consultancy.
- Other professional advice—legal, IS security, financial.
- Staff unrest (e.g., new ways, why share knowledge, what we know is best, why change?).
- Initial slowdown in activities whilst staff adjust to a new system, with possible initial customer dissatisfaction.
- Development of incentives systems.
- Development of a system of measures of achievements.
- Costs associated with the implementation of rewards (e.g., profit sharing).
- Ongoing dialogues with staff.
- The financial costs of all of the above, including loans and interest.

Considering all of the above and the trade-offs against, any gains to be made for knowledge management will take time, effort, and commitment. The investigation alone will require a shift in strategic thinking. It should therefore be clear that knowledge management does not provide a quick fix. Organisations that are serious about competing in the twenty-first century should consider KM as a long-term, ongoing strategy, with an initial implementation time scale of between three to five years. Organisations should be aware that the 80:20 rule seems often to be interpreted as 20% feasibility study and 80% technical implementation. This often results in “quick fix” failures. An 80:20 split in favour of finding out what is fit for purpose, what is feasible, and what is desirable would place greater emphasis on the finding out stages and would result in a far higher success rate of implementation and actual business usage of computer-based systems.

One of the most prominent knowledge management initiatives is the establishment of some type of corporate knowledge base or memory. This normally takes the form of a process of structuring existing reports, etc., and eliciting further information such as lessons learned, and making that available electronically. Some estimates suggest that 80-90% of information is unstructured and poorly represented on conventional structured databases. To develop a

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