

# Inside Knowledge

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An illustration of two men, Jerry Ash and David Snowden, in a debate. Jerry Ash, on the left, has a brown beard and glasses, and is making an 'OK' hand gesture. David Snowden, on the right, has a grey beard and blue eyes, and is holding a black pen. The background is split into purple and orange halves with large, faint outlines of the men's heads.

## Is KM finished?

Jerry Ash and  
David Snowden debate

### CASE STUDIES

Arup demonstrates the importance of KM culture.

### MASTERCLASS

Stan Garfield reveals the secret of the 'ten commitments'.

### NEWS UPDATE

ISKO UK established...  
Fast acquires RetrievalWare...  
plus the latest events...

### THE KNOWLEDGE

Jerry Bowles gives five reasons why CEOs simply should not blog.

# Masterclass

## The ten commitments

The importance of securing high-level support for knowledge management is widely acknowledged, but little discussed.

By Stan Garfield



The importance of obtaining high-level commitment is referenced in all the best knowledge management (KM) guides, but very few detail how it should be done.

Yet such support is a vital part of KM. It will ensure that your organisation thoroughly supports the KM programme to be implemented – and a lack of support can sound the death knell of a KM initiative before it has even started in earnest.

You need to ensure that the top leader of your organisation sponsors the programme you intend to launch. The best way to do this is to create a springboard story to motivate the leadership team, using narrative to ignite action and implement your new ideas.

Look for a successful case of learning, sharing, re-using, collaboration or innovation that can serve as a good example of what you would like to see become institutionalised. Start by looking within your department or unit, then to other units within the organisation or enterprise and finally to other organisations. What you need is a simple example of how a KM principle was successfully applied to one of the

challenges or opportunities in your ‘top three objectives’ list with positive results.

Tell this springboard story to the senior executive and the leadership team. If you get a positive response, then present a brief summary of the top-three objectives, provide the ‘nine answers’ (see the ‘nine questions’, page 38) and the KM strategy that you’ve devised in order to prove that you have done your homework and are prepared to proceed upon approval.

Then, try to gain the sponsorship of your senior executive by persuading them to sign-up to the ten commitments. Securing these commitments from the leader of your organisation will give the best possible opportunity for your KM strategy to be implemented. The commitments are as follows:

1. Approve a reasonable budget for people and other KM expenses. You will need money and staff to launch and run the programme;
2. Ensure that all KM leaders have the time to do a good job in the role and are allowed to meet in person once a year. The KM team will need

assurances that they will be allowed the time they need and the ability to get together to build trust;

3. Learn how to give a KM programme overview presentation. If the senior executive is familiar with the details, this will underline its importance;
4. Learn how to use KM tools and use them to lead by example. To offer more than lip service in support of the programme, show everyone how easy it is to actually use the processes and technology;
5. Communicate regularly about how the organisation is doing with regard to KM. It should be on the agenda for all meetings, conference calls and webcasts;
6. Provide time during leadership team meetings and employee communication events for KM messages. The other leaders need to be reminded regularly of the importance of KM in achieving the organisation’s goals;
7. Ensure that KM goals are really set for all employees and are enforced. It’s not sufficient to communicate goals in a high-level message. They need to actually be assigned, monitored and achieved;



8. Inspect compliance to KM goals with the same fervour as for other key performance indicators. If KM indicators are reviewed along with the usual business metrics, it will be clear that they are equally as important;
9. Reward employees who learn, share, re-use, collaborate and innovate. Rewarding desired behaviours provides positive reinforcement, offers motivation and communicates to everyone how such behaviours are valued;
10. Ensure that time is allowed for learning, sharing, reusing, collaborating and innovating. Part of establishing a knowledge-sharing culture is allowing time for the necessary activities.

#### **Culture and values**

The ten commitments require that your organisation embody a culture with core values conducive to knowledge sharing. Culture and values illustrate the way things are done in an organisation and help identify what is considered to be important and/or taboo. Identifying the current culture and values of your organisation will help you to take advantage of those elements conducive

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to knowledge sharing and address those which are not, with the help of the senior executive's commitments.

Understanding how people interact with each other in your organisation, typical styles of behaviour, fundamental operating principles and the code of conduct is a necessary prelude to introducing a KM initiative. If the culture of the organisation does not include sharing and collaboration, a significant change-management initiative will be necessary to kick-start the required culture change. If it does, the KM programme will be adopted more readily.

Most organisations have codes of conduct, core values and ethical standards that are widely communicated. In the post-Enron world, there is considerable pressure to train all employees on expectations for behaviour and to repeat this training every year in order to firmly drum it in. Start by reviewing the published values and then compare these to the observed culture. If they are not consistent, your change-management initiative will need to address the task of aligning corporate culture to the stated core values.

Core values typically include some of the following: delight customers, respect others, achieve exceptional results, work collaboratively, be creative, act with integrity, embrace diversity, deliver with high quality and be decisive.

Codes of conduct will usually address how to conduct business, treat customers, work with partners, deal with competitors, avoid conflicts of interest, handle confidential information and intellectual property, care for assets, interact with local communities and treat the environment.

Actual culture will encompass both positive and negative elements. If the culture of your organisation includes primarily positive elements, a KM initiative will fit in well with the prevailing behaviour modes. If it includes mostly negative attributes, you will have your work cut out. Culture change will be a critical success factor to embracing the new ways of working and behaving needed to support KM. If the culture is a mixture of positive and negative elements, you will want to use the positive ones to support your efforts and use a change-management process to address the impact of the negative ones.

People in your organisation will support, ignore, or undermine a new initiative. Your goal is to attract as many supporters as possible, while watching out for, and neutralising, detractors.

Search for supporters to embrace KM, including connectors – those with wide social circles who connect people to each other; mavens – knowledgeable experts who connect people through their unselfish sharing of knowledge; and salesmen – charismatic people with powerful negotiation skills who use knowledge to engage and persuade.

Be vigilant for those who will oppose, delay, or stall the KM programme, including naysayers (those who are negative, contrary and pessimistic), whiners (those who complain about anything and point out defects, flaws and obstacles – real or imagined), and snipers (those who attack new ideas, are threatened by others and who actively oppose change).

When detractors are identified, try to engage them constructively. If that fails, contact their leaders to coach them

to improve their behaviour. If all else fails, be prepared with responses to the most typical objections, criticisms and complaints.

### Ensuring that the ten commitments are kept

- Submit a reasonable budget for people and other KM expenses;
- Submit a proposal for the first annual meeting;
- Schedule an event at which the senior executive will give the KM programme overview presentation;
- Subscribe the senior executive to an appropriate threaded discussion and ask them to post or reply to a question;
- Prepare a communication to be distributed to all members of the organisation;
- Request time during a leadership team meeting and the next employee communication event for a KM message to be presented;
- Prepare a communication setting KM goals for all employees;
- Request that the organisation's balanced scorecard or equivalent performance indicator reporting be updated to include compliance to KM goals;
- Submit a proposal for a recognition programme to reward employees who learn, share, re-use, collaborate and innovate;
- Prepare a document defining how time is allowed and can be reported for learning, sharing, re-using, collaborating and innovating.

Ensure that you follow up periodically to update these actions as required.

To help create a culture dominated by positive elements, get your senior executive to endorse, communicate and exemplify the following credo:

- I will practice and reward caring, sharing and daring – caring for others, sharing what I know and daring to try new ideas;
- I will insist on trust, truth and transparency in all dealings – earning and respecting the trust of others, communicating truthfully and openly, and demonstrating and expecting accountability;
- I will look for opportunities to help, thank and praise others;
- I will eliminate criticism, blame and ridicule in all interactions with others.

In *Thirteen Myths of Knowledge Management*<sup>1</sup>, Steve Denning provides an example of culture and values in action:

“Mindtree Consulting launched a persistent multi-year effort to establish five values as the dominant values of the organisation:

- Caring – requires empathy, trust; needed to enable sharing and individual push of knowledge;
- Learning – required for individual pull of knowledge;
- Achieving – high performance requires resourcefulness and heavy reliance on knowledge;
- Sharing – active cooperation; requires fair process, openness, transparency;
- Social responsibility – an outward extension of all the above values.

The focus on values greatly facilitated the implementation of KM in the firm.”

### Summary

If you don't get approval of the ten commitments, you will need to revisit the earlier steps. Return with a more compelling top three objectives list, a more relevant KM strategy or a better

### The nine questions

1. Which people in your organisation need to participate in the KM programme?
2. Is the programme targeted for specific departments, groups, business units, or functions?
3. Which job roles will participate?
4. Will the experience or rank of employees matter? Does the programme apply only to entry-level, junior, intermediate, advanced, or senior people?
5. Is the programme for certain supervisory roles or levels only?
6. Does expertise level count? Should only novices, veterans, experts, masters, or gurus participate?
7. Will the programme address specific areas of responsibility?
8. Is the initiative for a certain type of team location?
9. What are the different roles that participants will need to play?

springboard story. If you do gain the ten commitments from the senior executive, you need to ensure that those commitments are kept.

*Stan Garfield is the worldwide knowledge management leader at Hewlett-Packard Services, Consulting & Integration. Garfield is also the author of one of Ark Group's latest reports, Implementing a Successful KM Programme, from which this masterclass is extracted. To purchase a copy of this fast-selling special report, please contact Adam Scrimshire@ark-group.com. To contact Stan, please e-mail stanley.garfield@hp.com. ■*

### Reference

1. Thirteen Myths of Knowledge Management – [www.stevedenning.com/slides/SIKM-MythsOfKM.pdf](http://www.stevedenning.com/slides/SIKM-MythsOfKM.pdf)