



ON THE BRINK

Quick Scan Knowledge Management

WHY SHOULD YOU GET INVOLVED IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT?

For organizations operating in a dynamic environment, learning and adapting is crucial. Knowledge management facilitates this process. Knowledge management helps to improve organizational performance.

KNOWLEDGE = MONEY

Because the revenues of knowledge management are hard to quantify, management is often reluctant to initiate the necessary changes in the way of working. However, other companies do profit from knowledge management: Xerox saves 5 - 10% on labor and parts costs by describing the 'lessons learned' of their technicians and making it available to others. Buckman Labs enabled employees to find colleagues with expertise and ask questions: this brought the response-time to customer inquiries down to hours instead of days.

AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH PEOPLE EXCHANGE THOUGHTS AND SOLUTIONS WITH EACH OTHER

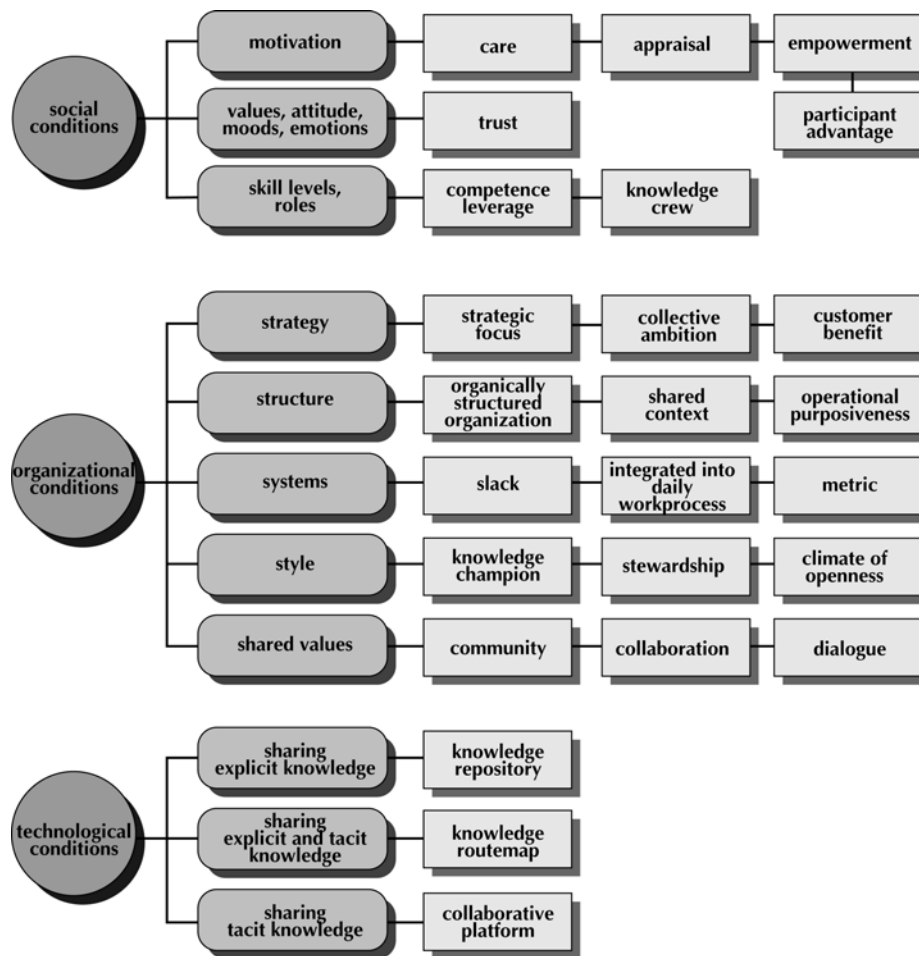
When you have decided to get more involved in knowledge management, there are a couple of things worth paying attention to. First of all: save yourself the trouble if you do not care sincerely for the people in your organization. Because knowledge sharing between people cannot be enforced, an organization can only provide a facilitating environment in which people can collaborate, trust each other, and share ideas. Information and communication technology functionality is supportive in connecting people with each other or to give access to needed information. In practice however, it is hard for organizations to create and maintain such an environment.

We argue that knowledge management in an organization is embedded in the way of thinking and in the way of working, and that it can be enabled and improved by stimulating the right social, organizational, and technological conditions.

A METHOD TO IDENTIFY AND IMPLEMENT ACTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Based on scientific research on knowledge management we developed a method (the *Quick Scan Knowledge Management*) that helps organizations to determine their best next steps in facilitating and stimulating knowledge management. In addition, this method provides an indicator of the effectiveness of (one or more) actions taken, and may help in steering knowledge sharing efforts.

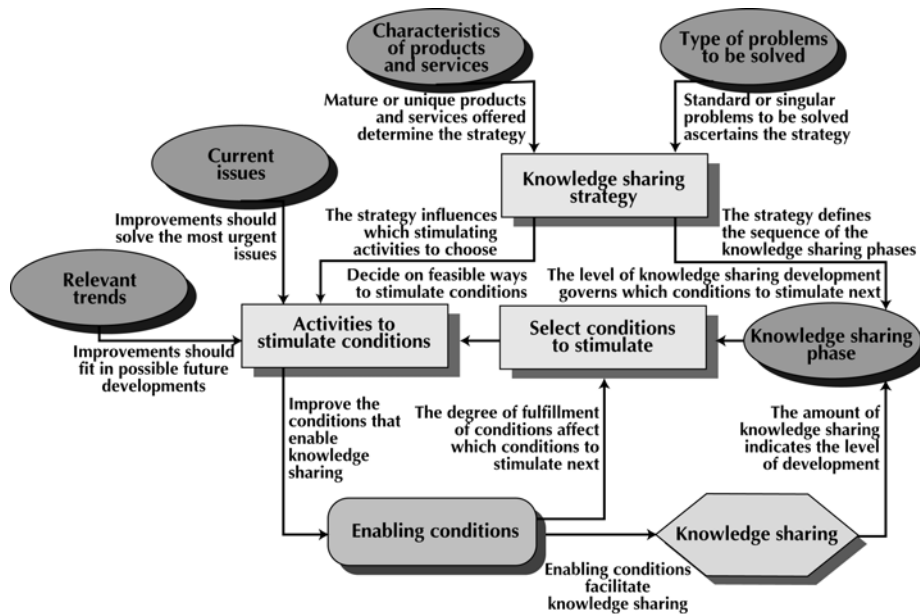
The method is based on the — in our opinion most relevant — conditions that facilitate knowledge sharing in an organization. These conditions are structured into social, organizational, and technological factors (see the figure below).







The method assesses the degree of fulfillment of the 25 enabling conditions. This enables us to obtain an indication of the level of knowledge sharing in an organization. Given the type of knowledge sharing strategy deployed, this level of knowledge sharing allows us to derive, for the organization at hand, the applicable knowledge sharing phase.

Related to each phase are conditions that are the most appropriate to stimulate. Based on the identified knowledge sharing phase and the degree of fulfillment of its related conditions we decide whether to enhance the current knowledge sharing phase or to facilitate a transition from the present into the next knowledge sharing phase.

When we correlate current issues or problems of this organization with possible, relevant trends we can determine the most viable way to realize stimulations of these enabling conditions (see the influence diagram on the next page). The effect of these stimulations can subsequently be assessed and can give rise to further action.



Type of nodes used:

-  A decision variable that you have the power to control
-  A change variable that cannot be controlled directly
-  An objective variable that you are trying to maximize
-  A variable that is determined by the quantities it depends on

APPROACH

The method is executed in three phases. In the first phase, interviews are being held to assess the degree of fulfillment of the enabling conditions in your organization. The second phase identifies the level of knowledge sharing and activities to stimulate the most appropriate conditions. The third phase is a workshop in which the results are presented and priorities are given to the identified stimulation activities.

CONCLUSION

This method is based on scientific research, has proven practical applicability, and is tailored to the organization under study. The execution demands only a minor investment on your part but it delivers useful and effective results.

CONTACT

Would you like to know what this method could mean for your organization? Please contact Dr. Paul van den Brink MBA, phone +31-6-50.438.437 or e-mail think@onthebrink.nl to enquire about its added value.