
Knowledge Management, CKO, and CKM: The Keys to Competitive Advantage

By John M. Leitch and Philip W. Rosen

To compete well in the emerging economy, it is imperative that firms improve the effectiveness of their knowledge processes. Knowledge management, the chief knowledge officer, and the certified knowledge manager are the tools with which to improve these processes.

Knowledge Management Saves Lives!

The following story appears in *Working Knowledge* by Tom Davenport and Larry Prusak:

In 1996, teams of leading heart surgeons from five New England medical centers observed one another's operating-room practices and

exchanged ideas about their most effective techniques in a collaborative learning experiment.

The result: a 24 percent drop in their overall mortality rate for coronary bypass surgery, or 74 fewer deaths than predicted.

This story highlights the use of several knowledge management concepts: knowledge sharing, trust, and the use of best practices to achieve the ultimate return on investment—saving lives. In addition, the use of knowledge management initiatives increased the surgeons' market share by giving them a competitive advantage over surgeons with a higher mortality rate.

Knowledge management initiatives can bring that competitive advantage to **your** organization.

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Philip W. Rosen is a former Merrill Lynch executive where he spent 17 years delivering progressive technology-based business solutions. Prior to that, he spent 10 years in the telecommunications industry. Due to his passion for knowledge management, he is pursuing a career where he can use his extensive experience as an innovative business technology leader to help organizations achieve competitive advantage through the effective use of their knowledge. He developed a Web site, www.kmadvantage.com, to share information that is critical for businesses committed to achieving competitive advantage. Phil can be reached by phone at (732) 572-1418 or by e-mail at pwrosen@kmadvantage.com.

What Is Knowledge Management?

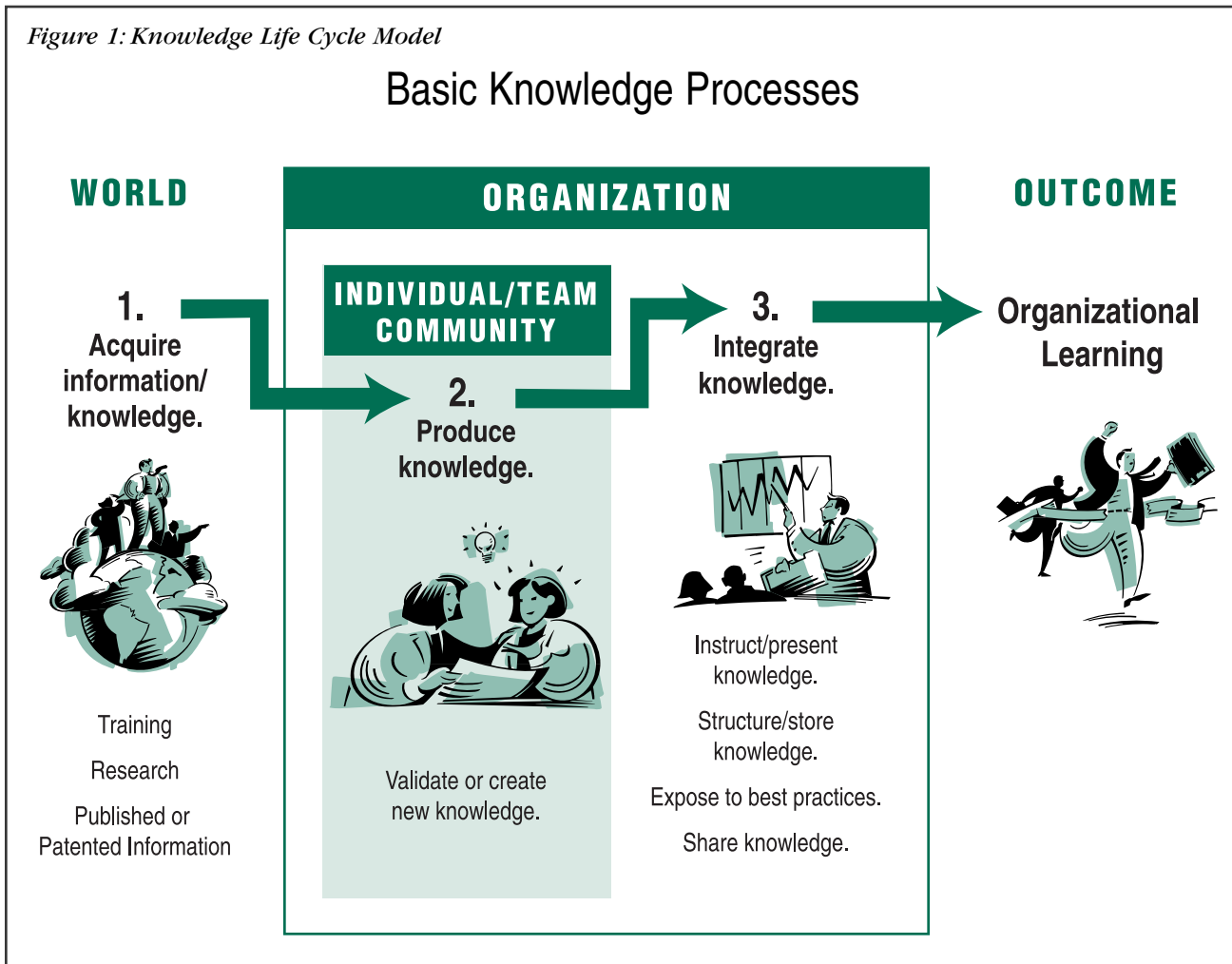
Knowledge management is a misnomer. A working definition of “knowledge” is: understanding gained from experience. Most knowledge is tacit, in people’s heads. Consequently, most knowledge cannot be managed. What can be managed are an organization’s knowledge processes. Knowledge processes are embedded throughout the enterprise (e.g., strategic planning, decision making, marketing, hiring personnel). Every person in an enterprise participates in knowledge processes. Knowledge managers help the organization improve the effectiveness of their knowledge processes.

Several professionals, under the sponsorship of Knowledge Management Consortium International, developed the following three-phase Knowledge Life Cycle model (Figure 1):

1. Acquire information and unverified knowledge.
2. Produce new, validated knowledge from the acquired information and unverified knowledge.
3. Integrate the new knowledge into the organization for improved effectiveness.

Understanding and optimizing these KM processes can give your organization a competitive advantage regardless of your market segment.

Innovation, which comes from the creation of new knowledge, is the most important knowledge process for achieving competitive advantage. To gain maximum benefit from the new knowledge, it must be integrated into the organization. The knowledge life cycle is con-



tinuous. Understanding and optimizing these KM processes can give your organization a competitive advantage regardless of your market segment.

The Need for Knowledge Management Now!

As businesses continue to forge ahead in the twenty-first century, knowledge management has materialized as the only real differentiator. According to Larry Prusak, the executive director of the IBM Institute for Knowledge Management, "In the emerging economy, a firm's only advantage is its ability to leverage and utilize its knowledge."

To accomplish the knowledge production and integration processes, an organization needs to foster collaboration among all individuals and to codify the resulting insights in knowledge base repositories for self-service access by others. This will enable knowledge management to reach its goal of facilitating the delivery of the best knowledge to the right person at just the right time. With this knowledge, people are empowered to effectively solve problems, make decisions, respond to customer queries, and create new products and services tailored to the needs of clients.

Many organizations have named a chief knowledge officer (CKO) as the executive responsible to make all of this happen.

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Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO)

Knowledge management success requires a holistic approach, and the most effective leader will possess solid technical, business, and social skills. The CKO is someone who could lead an enterprisewide knowledge management program. Included in the CKO's responsibilities are:

- creating a knowledge management vision
- integrating knowledge management into the strategic plans of the enterprise

- selling knowledge management to senior managers and creating a shared vision
- getting buy-in from competing initiatives and advocates
- mentoring knowledge management initiative leaders
- managing multiple projects, vendors, and consultants
- delivering measurable knowledge management benefits that significantly contribute to the success of the enterprise

The CKO's primary activities should span the "metaprise" (the enterprise and its entire ecosystem which includes customers, prospects, suppliers, other strategic alliance partners, stockholders, governing board of directors, and competitors). To be most effective, the CKO needs to be a member of the senior management team and should report directly to the CEO. The CKO's direct reports could be structured through a matrix or as a dedicated knowledge management organization. For proven success, multiple project teams report to the CKO and team leaders need to be accountable to the CKO for the duration of their specific projects.

The CKO has a very complex mission and needs to be very learned in his or her profession. To get the knowledge required for mission success, CKOs have many options available: They can take university courses, read any of the hundreds of knowledge management books on the market, or use trial and error. They can also take the Certified Knowledge Manager (CKM) program which combines the best of the above options into a one-week workshop and follow-up practicum.

The Certified Knowledge Manager Program (CKM)

The certified knowledge manager program prepares its CKM candidates for knowledge management leadership and emphasizes the role of the CKO. This program exceeds the competencies identified by extensive U.S. government-funded research to be the critical standards for successful knowledge management. This CKM research was conducted by noted experts from the government, the private sector, and academia.

The CKM program includes an intensive, one-week workshop, followed by enrichment projects based on assessed needs. The program melds traditional training (proven knowledge management principles and meth-

ods) with extensive hands-on mastery (i.e., Knowledge Management Community of Practice, work projects, Innovation Lab, publishing, teaching, and simulations). Satisfactory completion of the program bestows the professional designation of “Certified Knowledge Manager” (CKM), which attests to the professional’s ability to successfully perform a diverse set of activities and deliver results well beyond the classroom environment.

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The authors of this article recently became CKM candidates by successfully completing the one-week CKM workshop. Many of the concepts in this article are based on that workshop.

The electronic KM Methodology Kbase (for the robust knowledge management methodology that was introduced in the workshop) serves as a living reference tool that will continuously evolve and incorporate new knowledge as it develops. The CKM Alumni Community of Practice that started during the workshop will continue with the assistance of state-of-the-art technology—KM Methodology Kbase and collaborative technologies for online learning and knowledge sharing. This is invaluable and at the core of knowledge management. The CKM program also is developing associations with universities that are involved with knowledge management research. This research will feed knowledge management practitioners, and the results of the applied research will be fed back to the universities. A CKM Incubation Lab™, currently under construction, includes incubator and venture capital expertise to allow graduate CKMs to confidentially disclose, test, patent, and bring new knowledge management ideas to market.

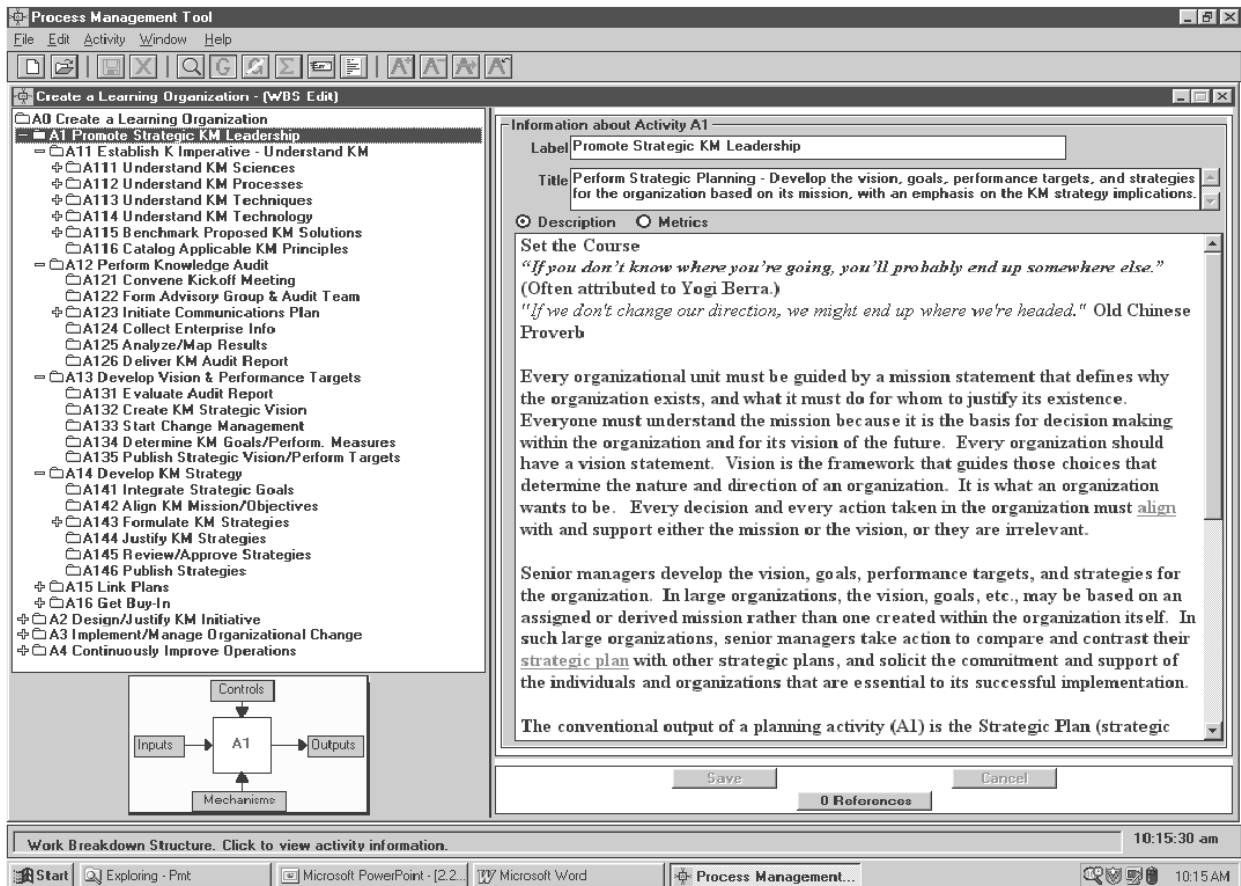
The CKM program’s workshop outline is as follows:

- Unit One—Demystify Knowledge Management—What is knowledge management?
- Unit Two—Create Knowledge Management Methodology—How do you perform knowledge management?
- Unit Three —Study Knowledge Management Methodology Phase I—How do you get started?
- Unit Four—Study Knowledge Management Methodology Phases II–IV—Complete the knowledge management initiative.
- Unit Five—Special Topics (e.g., Excite Innovation, Knowledge Management Performance Metrics, Build and Sustain Communities of Practice, Fundamentals of Managing Knowledge Management Projects)

The CKM program was developed over a period of several years by Douglas Weidner. He is the workshop instructor/facilitator and can be reached by e-mail at: Weidner_Douglas@prc.com. Weidner’s unselfish attitude and passion for the success of knowledge management are two of the qualities that contribute to his being a visionary leader and pioneer in the knowledge management field. His full-time position is as chief scientist: knowledge management/senior technical fellow for the \$15-billion Northrop Grumman Corporation. Recently, he trained and advised Navy knowledge management system developers for the Navy Acquisition Reform Office’s (ARO) worldwide knowledge management system. Also, he provided an in-depth evaluation of the United Nation’s two-year-old knowledge management initiative. In April 2000 and 2001, Douglas served on the executive advisory board for the e-gov Knowledge Management Conferences, and presented the event’s most popular workshop on knowledge management fundamentals. He is an engineering graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy with an MBA in business economics and an MSIE in operations research.

Figure 2: KBase Screen Shot of CKM's KM Methodology Phase I

A1 Promote KM Strategic Leadership



Knowledge Management Methodology Knowledge Base

The KM Methodology KBase is a technology-based tool that is the repository for the knowledge management lessons learned by all. The users continuously update it as they share, and most importantly capture, their specific experiences doing detailed knowledge management activities throughout the strategic knowledge management life cycle.

The four-phase knowledge management methodology is:

- Phase I—Promote KM Strategic Leadership—Establish the knowledge imperative. (Figure 2: “KBase Screen Shot of CKM’s KM Methodology Phase I”)

- Phase II—Design/Justify KM Initiative—Design, test, and justify the strategic or grassroots KM initiative before roll out.
- Phase III—Implement/Manage Organizational Change—Develop organizational and technological change management plans, then implement.
- Phase IV—Continuously Improve Operations (KM Initiatives)—Leverage successes.