

Editorial Extract

Extracted From Paperless Ponderings
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Serious Records Management

SUBJECT	"KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT is expensive – but so is stupidity. " 1
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Yes, they are the buzzwords at the moment – but life is just one buzzword after another. It used to be filing, then records management, then information management and now Knowledge Management. They are all the same sort of thing with a different name but such name changes should not belittle the importance of getting better organised in the management of your information.

Imagine a large library of books, magazines, files and spreadsheets which are the accumulation of your knowledge - everything you know. That is your knowledge, and when all the people you work with contribute the same things, we have corporate knowledge.

Knowledge Management (aka KM) is about collecting all the knowledge of a company and making it available to other people in that company so there is a "Corporate Memory" or "Corporate Knowledge" (as it was called in the teachings of 1980) that allows for internal research and sharing.

Sharing can be the difficult part. Technology is really cute and useful, but change is a different issue. We all have experienced discussions in those interminable meeting to find the problems of "politics" and "hidden agendas" can become more important to the team members than the big picture of "sharing knowledge". For KM to work we have to get everyone to contribute to the knowledge base, and that goes against many of us who believe that their specialist knowledge is their "edge" over Fred in Accounts, and why should they make it available for someone else to use and take credit for.

Knowledge is all about teamwork. Knowledge management is all about the people in your company **sharing** information, and to do that you do not need any whiz-bang computer or computer program. You need a culture of sharing information between sales people, the accounts department, the auditors and the negotiators.

FILEforce SME SOLUTION Any SME (Small to Medium Enterprise) can start a knowledge management programme without a paperless office concept and without any software not already owned. It needs some organisation, the specialty of the [FILEforce Tidy Team](#), to bring together the records of the company's core business. Manufacturing, Sales, Finance, Administration and Personnel files can be held in a simple spreadsheet detailing which physical files and reference materials are kept and, using a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) package (see more next issue) manage information on customers, prospects, staff, stakeholders and spheres of influence in your company and industry. When this information is made available to the whole team, the team can share the knowledge, maximising its usefulness. We must admit that we have had greater success with small business with 10-20 people than we have with corporations of 30 or more. It seems that the small tradesperson or sales company are more willing to work as a team.

What we have seen in too many cases over the last decade is the situation where Jack wanted to improve the records or create a knowledge base – it was his project, he was working as a one-man team. The other stakeholders were not involved and therefore not willing to share – why? – they didn't get the credit. The project continued while Jack was still there in the position but when Jack was promoted or left, the project management died and so, too, did all the work.

The primary message is to get everyone wanting to share – working as a team, believing – and the creation of a knowledge environment is then really very easy. We have seen sporting teams full of stars not make the finals, because they work as individuals and not as a TEAM. So, before you start forking out money for yet another expensive program, think past the mechanics of the problem, to the people behind it, and you will find managing your knowledge is simpler and cheaper than the software vendor want's you to believe. Call FILEforce first for an audit of your information system requirements. We really can save you money.



What do KM packages do? The strategy behind KM packages, like most RM packages, is to create a huge index (much like Google) to all the documents you have in your computer – ie all the emails, documents, presentations, spreadsheets – the data you use on a daily basis.

No matter what you call the file in the computer, it generally pops up with a save and index feature that forces you to enter keywords before saving the file to ensure the file can be found at a later date. Together with a bit of “Fuzzy Logic” in extracting keywords from the documents themselves, particularly emails, the KM package allows you to index all the stuff on the server and designated workstations, and through its search engine, find it at a later date.

This sounds pretty groovy and it is very helpful – provided everyone works as a team and does save files to the public drive and not their local drive. Other information, like your reference library and reports to and from clients, must be entered separately.

Teams need coaches. The coach ensures everyone knows the plays, everyone knows where to save documents to and everyone knows how to assign keywords so you can find those documents later. The coach must regularly train with the team, and work on new moves for new information sources.

Above all, the coach must observe and advise the team on the plays they make each day in the office. You cannot have a winning team without a winning coach. KM requires two things - teamwork and a coach.

“A champion team invariably beats a team of champions.” Do any recent corporate disasters come to mind?
www.filing.com.au/knowledge.html