

Knowledge Management

Knowledge Management is the explicit and systematic management of vital knowledge—and its associated processes of creation, organization, diffusion, use, and exploitation.

A successful program must be explicit so you can codify the knowledge in your organization. It must be systematic to ensure that you capture all critical knowledge. Because you don't have the resources to record all company knowledge, your process must focus on vital knowledge only. A KM program defines the processes to capture, store, and use knowledge.

And if implemented on a wide scale, KM can not only aid in knowledge sharing and retention, but even expedite research and learning as well.

Types of Critical Knowledge

Companies with KM programs concentrate on identifying which employees in each department (including technicians, chemists, administrative personnel, and managers) possess critical knowledge. Then they categorize the types of critical knowledge each person holds such as:

Process Knowledge

This refers to knowledge about how products get produced and tasks get completed. All processes that are critical



Pat Ropella explains how KM aids in knowledge sharing and retention, as well as expedite research and learning.

to company operations need to be documented – everything from R&D and production to marketing and management.

R&D Knowledge

Because of the rapidly changing, competitive environment of the chemical and pharmaceutical industries, KM in the Research and Development arena is crucial to improve productivity and reduce a product's development time. Since typical R&D staffs have to do more work faster and with less personnel, the need exists for new tools and strategies for documenting and sharing information.

Technical/Manufacturing Knowledge

In his article, Knowledge Management in Pharmaceutical Manufacturing, Dr. Barry Hardy, expert in knowledge management and communications in the chemical and life sciences, tells us, "Transfer of technology between development and manufacturing is now a key success factor to achieve robust processes and minimize cost of goods." R&D and Technical Operations need to get on the same page, not just communications-wise, but also with standardization of equipment, materials, and processes.

Knowledge of People and Relationships

Not all knowledge relates to products and processes. Some of your most vital knowledge is the expertise you have developed about your clients, vendors, competitors, and even the people inside your organization. Understanding

where knowledge resides and the dynamics of internal relationships can have a big impact on the success of future initiatives.

Organizational Memory

This is the information that results from the lessons of your organization's past. When a problem arises, it needs to be traced to the source and noted so that lessons can be learned and future errors can be avoided.

Knowledge About the Market, Your Customers, and Products/Services

Documenting and updating current knowledge of market trends and industry standards can keep your company ahead of the competition. Also, monitoring customer-provided information can help you better understand your company's value and uncovers areas in which you need improvement. Lastly, the tracking of products/services information allows you to develop smarter solutions for your customers' needs.

Intellectual Property (IP) and Patent Knowledge

Patent management is crucial for pharmaceutical companies and businesses developing exclusive key product lines. Industry patent ownership, patent licensing, and other IP trends need to be tracked and managed. Potential patent infringement should also be monitored.

Future Knowledge

This refers to information that results from capturing staff ideas for future products, services, and business strategies.

Putting the Power of Knowledge to Work Developing a company that truly values KM is not easy. It takes strong leadership, commitment to a culture that values learning, and open lines of communication. But a successfully executed KM program is an excellent way to maintain your competitive advantage. And in today's knowledge economy, it's an avenue you can't afford to ignore.



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