

## 5 Knowledge Management Tips

The efficient flow of information, knowledge, and data is highly valued by ITIL practitioners. These factors contribute to effective knowledge management, and each in their own way.

Optimal development of an IT service depends on the ability of decision makers to access pertinent and accurate knowledge.

But before we can begin to think about effective solutions for sharing and accessing knowledge within an organization, it's important that we first settle on an appropriate conceptual scope.

### Knowledge, Data, & Information

*Knowledge is contextually applied information, ultimately derived from data.*

As knowledge is accumulated and utilized, it yields wisdom.

If a train arrives at Central Station at 5:15 p.m., that constitutes a piece of *data*.

If the train schedule states that the train was due to arrive at 5:00 p.m., then we now have the following piece of *information*: the train arrived fifteen minutes late to Central Station.

The acquiring of knowledge necessitates additional levels of abstraction, implications, and/or results.

*Knowledge* is what we know that can be supported by available data and information.

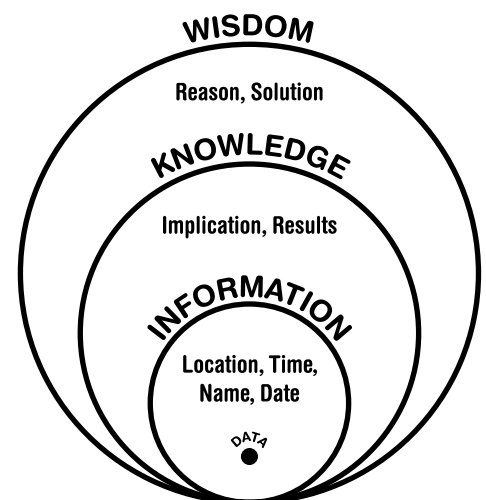
- A minor maintenance issue prevented the train from departing Woodbury Station on time.
- The train will also arrive fifteen minutes late to Westwood station, which is the next stop after Central Station.

*Wisdom* refers to the ability to make good judgments and to take effective action on the basis of accumulated knowledge.

Thorough maintenance checks should be administered at least one hour prior to the inaugural leg of any train route, thereby giving maintenance staff adequate time to resolve issues without creating scheduling delays.

Wisdom, or the ability to turn data into solutions, is a key actor in results-oriented knowledge management. Before data can be turned into solutions however, it must undergo several rounds of inference, storage, and analysis.

ITIL defines a tool for knowledge management called an SKMS (service knowledge management system).



The SKMS acts as a kind of warehouse where knowledge about a service can be stored, accessed, applied, tested, and shared when needed.

Here are a few tips for developing an excellent SKMS:

### **1. Stay Focused On The Stakeholder's Perspective.**

Whether your stakeholder is a train passenger trying to get to work on time or a builder waiting for a shipment of steel, it's important to cultivate knowledge that helps fulfill your service obligation to the stakeholder.

### **2. Eliminate Knowledge Management Redundancies.**

The ITIL knowledge management process (under the Service Transition LifeCycle Phase – you can read more about service transitions here) emphasizes a system whereby knowledge is continuously being categorized, sorted, and stored.

Once discovered, knowledge should be made accessible and shouldn't have to be rediscovered/reconsidered several times.

### **3. Delineate Data, Information, Knowledge, & Wisdom.**

The SKMS can be used to store data, information, and even wisdom, not just knowledge.

During the lifetime of a given IT service, the usefulness of certain data and information is bound to change and evolve over time, giving way to new knowledge and new wisdom. Having an expansive history of data and information can thus prove useful.

### **4. Transfer Knowledge In An Appropriate Way.**

You wouldn't teach your five-year-old how to tie her shoe the same way you'd teach a programmer how to code in JAVA. In the IT world, different elements of an IT service require different approaches to knowledge transfer.

Some automated service components may need nothing other than basic data and information to function, whereas your service desk might require knowledge or even wisdom in order to provide optimal support.

### **5. Leverage Both Your CMS & Your CMDB.**

The CMS (Configuration Management System) is a tool that's used not only in the knowledge management process, but in the change and release management processes as well.

Records of errors, incidents, and feedback are kept here that can be invaluable to your SKMS.

The CMDB (Configuration Management Database) is more like a data warehouse that defines the relationships between various IT assets. If your CMS helps you identify or diagnose a valid knowledge management initiative, then the CMDB will help you tailor an appropriate solution.

## **The Bottom Line**

The effects of good (or bad) knowledge management ripple throughout an organization, well beyond IT. From troubleshooting to marketing strategy to best practices for getting feedback, the implications of knowledge management are ever consequential.

A thoughtful, focused, informed, and stakeholder-conscious effort will yield the best results for IT.