

Introducing the new look Managing Health
and Social Care Open Learning Framework

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Everything you ever wanted to know about...

Knowledge Man



Józefa Fawcett

In the first of an occasional series intended to reduce stress levels amongst our readership, Józefa Fawcett, Director of the Knowledge Management Centre (nhs) Network - Berkshire, takes us on a gentle amble through the concept of - you've guessed it - "Knowledge Management".

So ... Józefa, tell us, what is Knowledge Management?

Knowledge Management (KM) is an umbrella term for mobilising the flow of information and knowledge from:

- **PEOPLE TO PEOPLE** (the connection factor: people to expertise)
- **PEOPLE TO KNOWLEDGE** (the collection factor: people to information)

How can KM be used?

It can help make sense of change, cultural shifts and complexity within an organisation. Used effectively it can help people and the organisation start to see the value of its own local intellectual capital - in other words, recognise how good their own staff are!

What are the other aspects of KM?

One of the initiatives within KM is the concept of community and in particular, 'Communities of Practice'. These integrate different cultures, technologies and processes and are made up of a network of people who help each other to:

- Share knowledge
- Learn together

- Communicate what has been learned
- Solve problems
- Innovate

There are also '**Communities of Interest**' (for example, action learning sets, fan clubs, journal clubs) and '**Communities of Purpose**' (e.g. project teams, task groups)

Isn't KM just another management fad?

It might seem so at first, were it not for the wide range of people who have been 'doing KM' for many years, albeit without the label. These include management development educators, librarians, IT specialists and corporate Intranet designers. What doesn't always happen is the joining up of ideas. Nowadays, technology makes it faster and easier to find information, whilst other initiatives create opportunities for meaningful collaborative partnerships between like-minded individuals who together can make a worthwhile contribution.

How do you "do KM"?

Berkshire is using the 'KM Parachute' model (figure 1) which brings together national work around Learning & Development, Workforce Planning and IT Management systems and provides a series of 'human portals' through which staff can access information. These 'portals' are geographically placed KM Centres scattered around the county. They can also provide decision-makers with details about the range of talented, experienced staff that work within the local health and social care economy and as a signposting service for users to find out what's going on.

This particular KM model was designed to meet the needs of Berkshire, and ensures staff without regular access to computers have the same access to information as those who do.

Figure 1

The KM Parachute Model

A framework for aligning the existing systems for Information Management, Education & Learning, Workforce Planning & Development



Knowledge Management Centre (NHS) Network

"Mobilising Knowledge in an ever changing Health Service"

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agement ...but were afraid to ask

How does KM link into Management Education?

Many aspects of KM probably already feature in current MHSC programmes. In fact it is from this perspective that my interest in KM grew. During the 1990's when I was a Programme Manager running a project and exam route MESOL course, it was often said by participants that they wished their managers would either do the course or listen and incorporate some of the ideas generated by the course and stimulating discussions within sessions.

Like most programmes, we held project presentations. It would concern me just how few line managers would attend and, more importantly, the number of projects and ideas that would actually be used back in the Trust to drive improvements locally. It is here that I believe KM and Management Education can work hand in hand.

The world renowned change management guru, Rosabeth Moss-Kanter (1999)

highlighted that to create world class 21st Century organisations, what is needed are a range of skills that allow organisations to operate either with a 'collaborative advantage' or as a 'collaborative ambassador'. These skills are categorised within three important elements, **CONCEPTS; COMPETENCE** and **CONNECTIONS** (figure 2). If the NHS is to successfully manage its modernisation agenda during this century it too could benefit from such an approach.

What can I do to introduce KM principles to my own organisation?

This depends on who it is you speak to. If it's an Informatics specialist they'll suggest you set up a database and a website. If it's a learning specialist then they'll advise you to look at overall learning management systems and career progression routes. However, if you manage to get both of these professionals together then you can start to apply KM principles to establishing a KM infrastructure. You might even try including some KM information in your

own local MHSC discussion groups and see what they come up with - sometimes locally driven ideas ensure ownership and are more likely to succeed.

Where do I get more background information to help shape my thoughts around KM?

Why not try some of these exciting websites, books and articles?

www.knowledgebusiness.com
www.skyrme.com
www.sveiby.com/au
www.stevendenning.com
www.trainingvillage.gr
www.vistacompass.com
www.knowledgeboard.com

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Iske. P & Boekhoff. T., The Value of Knowledge doesn't exist, Knowledge Management Journal, Oct 2001

Lewin. R, & Birute. R, 1999, The Soul at Work, Orion Business Books, 1999

Moss-Kanter, R.; Change is everyone's job; Organisational Dynamics Journal; Summer 1999, pp7-22

Stewart. T.A. 2002, The Wealth of Knowledge, Brealey Publications, 2002

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Figure 2

21st Century Organisations

Concepts

Encourage ideas and technologies driven by innovation

Competence

Develop skills and abilities to use them

Connections

Create collaborative strategic relationships

After Rosabeth Moss Kanter.1999