KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT: LESSONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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1
INTRODUCTION

Effective approaches for knowledge management and knowledge sharing do not come easily to government at either local or national levels. As Sinclair (2006, p.14) comments, 'knowledge management is counterintuitive in relation to how government organisations have traditionally functioned. The average government office functions through a strict adherence to policies, rules and hierarchy – not at all how knowledge management tends to work'. Added to this, knowledge management is sometimes perceived as elitist or impractical, adopted as a management fad by private sector multinational corporations, but unsuitable and impractical in the public sector.

Defining knowledge management

Knowledge management is about building organisational intelligence by enabling people to improve the way they work in capturing, sharing and using knowledge. It involves using the ideas and experience of employees, customers and suppliers to improve the organisation's performance. Building on what works well leads to better strategy, practice and decision-making.

Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government, UK (2009) (now the Local Government Association)

The public service and the role of public servants is changing. The drivers of these forces are numerous, encompassing factors such as the forces of globalisation, digitisation, decreased trust in political institutions, changing demographics, budgetary pressures, polarisation of politics, increasing complexity of social problems, less deferential and more demanding citizens and so on (Dickinson et al., 2019). There is also ongoing economic uncertainty. While the consequences of the Great Recession a decade ago have receded somewhat, the uncertainty surrounding Brexit dominates most economic and political conversations.

Ultimately there is reassurance for Irish public servants in the conclusions of Dickinson et al. (2019), who note that while institutions do change, they do so in an evolutionary rather than revolutionary way. The challenge then, particularly for public service leaders, is to know how to navigate the future, retaining what is of value from established institutions and norms, while embracing new ideas, technologies and ways of doing public service work. One way of doing that is through knowledge management, which affords organisations an opportunity to review their knowledge and skills needs to ensure we have a public service that is 'fit for purpose'.

To the extent that local and central government organisations have engaged with knowledge management, it has to date been primarily through a demographic lens, prompted by concerns in relation to an ageing public service and loss of knowledge and know-how

occasioned by large-scale retirements. However, while a starting point, it underestimates the potential contribution of knowledge management. Organisational knowledge is a strategic asset for the public service. It supports better decisions and evidence based policy-making. It supports collaborative working and joined-up government. As Sinclair (2006, p.X) concludes, 'KM is probably the single best hope for successfully moving the monolith of government towards a new and improved business model, one that can better respond to the information age demands of an online and computer-savvy generation'.

1.1   TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE STUDY

Local authorities differ in size, locality and culture – all factors which shape and constrain knowledge sharing. However, it was recognised by the City and County Management Association that there would likely be advantage to all in highlighting the benefits of knowledge sharing, reviewing good practice in Ireland and internationally, and providing guiding principles for moving forward in relation to better knowledge management in local government. Consequently, it was agreed that this report would:

a)   Highlight why knowledge management matters in delivering efficient and effective local government; in particular, in enhancing decision making, productivity, succession planning and innovation and through avoiding information overload and unnecessary costs.

b)   Provide guidance in respect of developing a robust approach to knowledge management in local government, for example, through knowledge audits and knowledge management strategies. A range of other tools and techniques for promoting knowledge sharing (e.g. communities of practice, after action reviews, knowledge banks) will also be considered.

c)   Review some of the organisational and cultural factors that can both support and inhibit the development of knowledge management in local government and, in particular, in terms of building knowledge capability and encouraging knowledge sharing.

1.2   STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER

Following on from this introduction, the report will subsequently look at reaching a more comprehensive understanding of what is knowledge management and the related concept of knowledge sharing (Section 2). This is followed by a review of factors which motivate organisations to engage with knowledge management, while also acknowledging that there are barriers to change (Section 3). How an organisation might go about instigating a knowledge management approach is covered in Section 4, together with a summary of knowledge management tools and techniques, including social media. Section 5 shows how knowledge management impacts organisations in practical terms, in particular under the guise of HR policies and practices. While any of these sections might merit a report in their own right, the aim here is to provide an overview of knowledge management and its implications for organisations.

2
UNDERSTANDING KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

With each advance in our ability to reproduce and store information, the amount of information available has increased exponentially. The internet gives people access to an unprecedented amount of data. More than two decades ago writers were already referring to a 'tsunami of data' (Wurman, 1997), and of people suffering from information overload and anxiety because of the sheer volume and the unstructured, chaotic storage of this data.

How we collate, store, process and use information and knowledge should be a major area of concern for governments. It is not a new problem, but the scale has never been so vast. Furthermore, the implications of managing information and knowledge effectively are far-reaching. Put simply, knowledge management supports better decision making and therefore better delivery of services and better value for citizens. There is therefore an onus on public servants to ensure that the information and knowledge brought to bear on decision-making is as relevant, complete, accurate and timely as possible.

2.1   WHAT IS KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT?

Knowledge management is about enabling individuals, teams and entire organisations to collectively and systematically create, share, and apply knowledge to improve the achievement of their organisational objectives (Australian Public Sector Commission, 2013). Knowledge management can help identify and manage gaps in the ways that knowledge circulates within an organisation. It also assists in identifying future knowledge required within an organisation in changing circumstances, for example, when an employee retires. For employees retiring or leaving, a structured approach to knowledge management provides an opportunity to leave a 'legacy' of their acquired learning. It also ensures that key corporate knowledge is captured, and not lost when the person leaves. For public sector organisations, this helps to ensure consistent and improved service delivery to citizens.

Knowledge management aims to enhance the ability of an organisation to share or 'transfer' knowledge between individuals or groups. Knowledge transfer is most effective when there is a planned approach to knowledge management. The key to success for knowledge management is the ability or willingness of an organisation to collaborate at all levels so learning and knowledge transfer can occur. The alternative is a situation in which knowledge and information is not shared and collaboration is limited: the outcome is that information is only stored and soon becomes redundant over time.

Knowledge management aims to access and build on the skills and knowledge of all employees through the design, review and implementation of both social and technological processes to improve the application of knowledge in the collective interest of stakeholders.

Knowledge is guaranteed to be lost by those agencies that do not plan for change and turnover in their workforce. Those agencies with an ageing workforce, or who rely on the undocumented knowledge of specific staff, are most at risk. To ensure effective operations, the responsibility to champion a knowledge management culture within an organisation must be recognised and shared by all.

When knowledge is shared, it benefits everyone. Public sector executives and managers benefit directly through increased productivity and capability. Existing employees feel valued for their knowledge, while new employees are more likely to be retained through the learning environment that knowledge management can create.

2.2   INFORMATION VERSUS KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is often confused with information or the gathering of data. However, the terms are not interchangeable. Information on its own means very little. Information and data can only evolve into knowledge when they are interpreted and usefully applied. Therefore, knowledge can be thought of as the experience and skills acquired through education, theory and the practical application and understanding of information and data.

Davenport and Prusak (1998), among the first writers to highlight the relevance of knowledge management to the workplace, explain the differences through the following definitions:

Data is: simple observations of states of the world

Information is: data endowed with relevance and purpose

Knowledge is: valuable information from the human mind.

However, the authors also comment that in practice the three areas may be difficult to separate. In effect, what may emerge is a continuum of the three or an evolutionary approach, well represented by Skyrme and Amidon (1997) as a pyramid or hierarchy.

FIGURE 2.1   THE KNOWLEDGE HIERARCHY
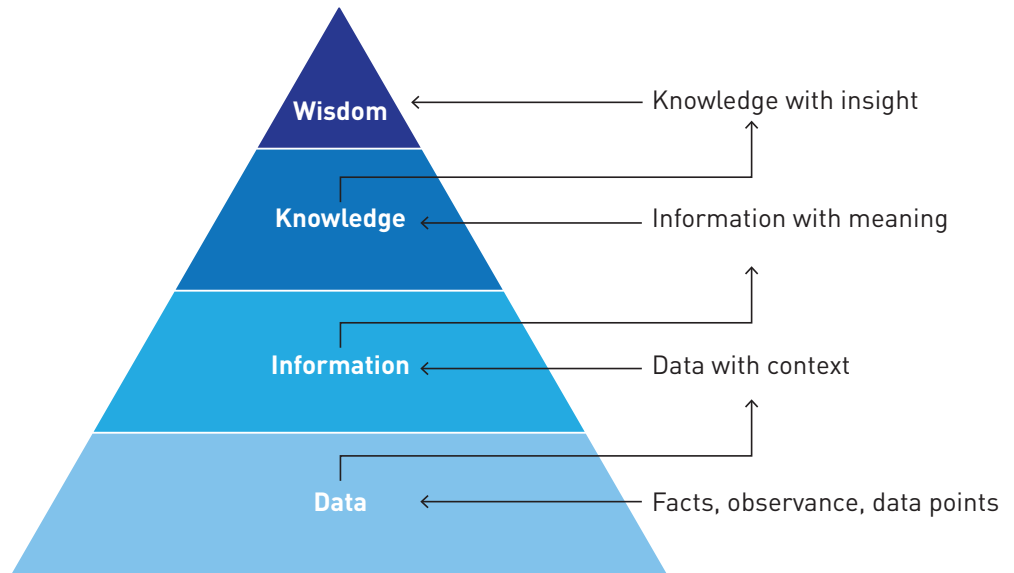
Skyrme and Amidon include wisdom in their hierarchy. They explain this by noting that the acquisition of knowledge has a higher purpose – the full integration and realisation of knowledge in an area leads to mastery.

The difference between information and knowledge – Baking a cake

David Gurteen (www.gurteen.com) has used a metaphor of making a cake to explain the difference between data, information and knowledge and also the different types of knowledge. An analysis of a cake's constituents provides data. For most purposes this is not very useful, you might not even be able to tell it's a cake. A list of ingredients (information) is more useful as it gives the data context, an experienced cook could probably make the cake. However, the recipe is knowledge, written down, explicit knowledge, it tells you how to make the cake. An inexperienced cook however, even with the recipe, might not make a very good cake. A person though with relevant experience and skills, knowledge in their heads, tacit knowledge, would almost certainly make a good cake from the recipe. Know-who, who to ask for help, and know-why, what, for example, to do if a certain ingredient is unavailable, are also relevant.

Source: www.gurteen.com

Knowledge can be thought of as either explicit or tacit:

Explicit knowledge is knowledge that can be captured and codified, expressed in words, numbers or symbols, and is easily articulated in processes, procedures, products and practices. It can be stored electronically or on paper, on the web or via other visual or oral sources. It has a tangible form and can therefore be relatively easily transferred, stored and communicated.

Tacit knowledge is more elusive as it is developed through personal skills, experience, judgment and intuition; moreover, it accumulates over time. Tacit knowledge is also known as 'a gut feeling' and can be hard to communicate. Its effective transfer generally requires extensive personal contact and trust. The majority of an organisation's knowledge is tacit and not necessarily documented. This is the typical knowledge that the public sector is at risk of losing as a result of the ageing workforce.

Given the extensive tacit knowledge of public sector employees, relying exclusively on Information Communication Technology (ICT) networks and the internet to provide access to this knowledge is therefore likely to prove insufficient. However, if used well and integrated to the needs of employees, ICT can enable easier knowledge sharing. Examples of ICT that facilitate knowledge management include internet conferencing, email, bulletin boards, discussion groups and blogs.

While noting the complexities involved in managing knowledge, in particular tacit knowledge, know-how and experience, most authors still emphasise the importance to organisations at every level of seeking to promote knowledge capture and dissemination. According to Chris Collison, independent consultant and author of the popular knowledge management book Learning to Fly:

> It's an oxymoron. It's like herding cats, You can't manage it, I can't manage it. What we can do though, is manage the environment in which learning really happens, knowledge is captured, distilled, shared – and most importantly of all, applied. Making a difference, improving the outcome.

3
BENEFITS AND BARRIERS TO KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge needs to be viewed by organisations as an asset, and as with other assets, it requires pro-active management. For public sector managers, the responsibility is if anything greater than in the private sector. Managing knowledge needs to be seen as a core business of government and important for public service values (Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, website). However, beyond this basic principle there are wide-ranging strategic arguments for taking knowledge management seriously.

3.1   BENEFITS OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge management is an important precursor of effective workforce planning. It is impossible to fully estimate workforce supply – the skills, attributes and knowledge of your current workforce –without knowledge management. The famous quote 'If only HP knew what HP knows' applies. Knowledge management is vital in appreciating what an organisation does know and subsequently in identifying the gaps when compared to what it needs to know. Knowledge management also boosts employee engagement and productivity. How knowledge is managed in organisations matters to employees. According to Redman (2013, p.86), knowledge workers waste up to 50 per cent of their time hunting for data, identifying and correcting errors and seeking confirmatory sources for data they do not trust. The phenomenon of 'drowning in data while thirsting for information' has been well documented. As noted by Hemp (2009), the surging volume of available information can affect not only personal wellbeing, but also decision making, innovation and productivity.

How knowledge management can help government to stop reinventing the same policies – UK Institute for Government report
An Institute for Government (2017) report lays bare the staggering amount of policy churn in three UK sectors: further education, regional government and industrial policy. At the report launch, panellists and the audience discussed the causes of churn in Whitehall, the implications for policymaking, and what can be done about it. In a blog report, Institute for Government Director of Research Emma Norris comments:

'Government has a tendency to recreate policies and organisations on an alarmingly regular basis. In industry, we are onto our third industrial strategy in a decade. In regional and local government, there have been 59 attempts to join up local public services between 1997 and 2015. But nowhere is this tendency towards reinvention more acute than in the further education sector. Since the 1980s there have been 28 major pieces of legislation, 48 secretaries of state with relevant responsibilities, and no organisation has survived longer than a decade. There are now around 13,000 technical qualifications. The costs of all this churn and reinvention are high.

During our research, we saw numerous examples of past initiatives being recycled or policies and organisations being abandoned before they had time to thrive. There is a tendency to start with first principles rather than draw on the past or focus on delivery. As Lord Macpherson, former Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, put it: "When you get power, you are under pressure to do something with it. Once you're there, the chances are you'll only be in job for few years before a reshuffle. This encourages government-by-announcement rather than government-by-delivery. There is a Year Zero effect where we start from scratch each time."

The crux of the problem is how to allow for necessary political change, while ensuring the policymaking process and broader Whitehall system is best configured to deliver policies rather than continually reinventing them. The Institute for Government report recommends the following:

- departments use tools (such as digital records) to better capture what they already know, instead of starting from scratch on every new policy idea

- clear lines of accountability, making the senior civil servant in charge of policymaking in each department responsible for maintaining institutional memory

- making it standard practice to gather evidence, including of previous reforms, as part of the development of new policy proposals

- greater scrutiny by select committees, requiring government to include a statement on the evidence behind policy decisions as a routine part of enquires

- a greater role for the Treasury in assessing the costs of organisational change

- incentivising civil servants to build expertise and spend longer periods in post, rather than promoting very regular change.'

Norris, E (16-03-2017), https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/blog/how-government-can-stop-reinventing-same-policies

Human resource management (HRM) considerations are for many organisations most prominent when they are making a business case for knowledge management, but there are other important benefits. Knowledge management is associated with innovation and increased productivity. Perhaps contrary to popular understanding, innovation does not 'just happen'; a supportive organisational culture is vital. Knowledge management is part of this culture. You can only innovate effectively from a position of knowledge. It is helpful as a starting point to find out what your organisation knows already, and then see how much you have to innovate, based on that knowledge. This point is reinforced in a research study by the Institute for Government (2016) titled *Joining up public service around local, citizen needs*. In the conclusions, the authors comment that limited sharing of what works (and does not work) emerged as a critical barrier that needs urgent attention.

A further focus of knowledge management within the public sector is the use of knowledge to improve products and services delivered to citizens. However, as noted by Denner and Diaz (2013, p.10), citizens no longer automatically follow the policies and procedures developed by government. They now have access to vast amounts of information and knowledge that have altered the way they perceive government. Citizens expect the public service to interact with and listen to them and to use their combined knowledge to improve services. While most governments, local authorities, and many individual public service organisations now provide online portals to disseminate information and possibly also allow feedback, some organisations are also going further in allowing citizens to participate in decision making.[1] As Denner and Diaz (2013, p.11) conclude, there is widespread evidence that collaborating with citizens and stakeholders 'can lead to better policies, plans and programmes, creating opportunities for development'. Similarly, Breu and Smith (2002) refer to greater customer focus and organisational responsiveness as benefits that can be expected from exploiting knowledge in organisations. However, capturing all of these benefits is predicated on having a robust approach to knowledge management.

Costs of ignorance

An effective approach to Knowledge Management can help mitigate 'costs of ignorance':

- People have difficulty finding the information and knowledge they need to make key decisions

- Employees lose productivity by searching for information across disconnected, non-validated and non-compatible knowledge repositories and databases

- Good ideas and best practices are not shared, which raises overall costs of providing services

- Findings from research and development are not making their way into practice quickly enough

- Costly mistakes are duplicated because earlier ones were not recorded or analysed

- Work is redone because people are not aware of activities and projects which have been executed in the past

- Useful sources of information and knowledge are frequently stumbled across by accident

- One or two key employees hold crucial knowledge, and continuity of operations is at risk when they retire or are transferred.

Source: O'Riordan, 2010

1 See IPA Local Government Research Series, Report No. 15, FURTHERING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN LOCAL AUTHORITY BUDGETARY PROCESSES THROUGH PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN IRELAND – Feasibility Study https://www.ipa.ie/_fileUpload/Documents/CitizensEngagement_LocalGov_2019.pdf

Like any management discipline, knowledge management requires good governance if it is to be effective and sustained. However, organisations that have committed to knowledge management have found that it impacts positively on organisational governance more generally. The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA, 2014) includes a number of guiding principles that are supported by a strong approach to knowledge management. In particular knowledge management supports a culture of openness, transparency and engagement of stakeholders, required of good public governance. Furthermore, failure to effectively manage organisational knowledge and employees who may hold that knowledge represents a serious risk management issue.

3.2   BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

As with any change programme, developing a new approach to knowledge management may meet with resistance, which has the potential to slow the programme or even to cause its failure. Addressing these issues is not easy. They strike at the heart of an organisation, its culture, and impact all areas – its leadership and management approach, its human resources and employee development policies, and information and communication technology. While the extent to which resistance occurs can be reduced by careful preparation and communication, there are a range of common obstacles that it is important to be aware of.

Technological factors

A key consideration when approaching knowledge management is that technology has a helpful role to play, but it will not be the driver of change. Developing databases of good practices, on its own, rarely achieves the impact hoped for, as staff will rarely take the time to enter a practice into a database unless it is specifically part of their job. Furthermore, as noted by O'Dell and Grayson (2000), 'the really important and useful information is too complex to be put online, too much tacit knowledge is required to make a process work'. Instead, they suggest that effective databases are brief rather than comprehensive and are designed to enhance and support, rather than replace, existing sharing mechanisms. They can provide insights into what has been done, not 'the right answer'. In this regard, many organisations have found that directory or pointer systems, assisting people in making contact with colleagues, can be at least as useful as more complex databases.

Many organisations also experience a range of further technical 'barriers' that may impact on the development of a knowledge management system. These include poor IT literacy and lack of support in using technology. While adopting new work systems will involve IT, their success should not be dependent on the IT department. In order to overcome these difficulties, an organisation needs to:

- Provide accessible, user friendly and joined up technologies

- Make sure people are supported in using technology

- Help people to use technology appropriately by developing acceptable use policies and protocols

- Raise the standard of IT competencies through the adoption of accredited training.

Cultural factors

Cultural considerations, where people are motivated, supported and rewarded for sharing information is a vital factor related to sharing and transfer of knowledge in organisations. However, it is estimated (Perrin, 2003) that as much as 80 per cent of knowledge that needs to be transferred is not easily documented (i.e. tacit knowledge). As a result, organisations need to actively work to promote a knowledge sharing culture.

This needs to take place on a number of levels. For example, an organisation can support the setting up of informal networks or communities of practice, which facilitate the sharing of experiences and knowledge. But equally, organisations need to develop concrete initiatives that enhance trust and break down resistance to change.

According to a UK NHS report (2009), trust is the basis for effective participation and collaboration. Without trust, people are unwilling to participate and collaborate with each other. However, building trust is not a linear progression. It is a cyclical and iterative process. To build and reinforce trust it is important to:

- Recognise that everyone has something to learn and everyone has something to share

- Champion collaborative working, recognising the role of trust in successful collaboration

- Encourage inclusion and active participation

- Get started; it can be hard to know when you have established sufficient levels of trust to initiate collaboration

- Set common and realistic objectives, start with something small and build on it.

For organisations seeking to develop knowledge management, it is important to recognise that in all but exceptional circumstances some level of resistance to change will surface. Employees will need to be convinced that there are compelling reasons for change; that staying in the current situation is jeopardising the organisation; and that the new situation will bring enough benefits that it is worth the journey. In this regard, good communication is fundamental. Knowledge management is all about changing people's behaviour – without the right messages, fully understood, it will be very difficult to build sufficient conviction to implement effective new approaches.

It is necessary to constantly push the need for people at all levels to take responsibility for voluntarily participating in the activity of sharing and leveraging knowledge. Managers can ask regularly what people are learning from others, and how they have shared with colleagues ideas they think worthy. Changing the reward system to encourage sharing and transfer is desirable. Leadership can help by promoting, recognising and rewarding people who model sharing behaviour, as well as those who adopt best practices. The emphasis at all times should be on promoting the benefits of knowledge sharing and the damage caused by not doing so.

Obstacles to sharing knowledge in organisations

- *A lack of conviction that change is needed* – if people are not properly informed or the purpose and benefits of change are not explained to them, they are likely to view the present situation as satisfactory and an effort to change as useless and unsatisfactory. Related to this is dislike of imposed change; people resent being treated as passive objects and having changes imposed on them about which they cannot express their views.

- *A belief that knowledge relates only to certain groups or positions* and therefore is a subject that most employees do not need to bother about.

- *An over-emphasis on technology* which needs to be seen as an enabler rather than an end in itself. However, 'technophobia', where organisations are uneasy about using technology tools as a support for knowledge sharing, can be equally inhibiting.

- *Fear of the unknown* – people do not like uncertainty and may prefer an imperfect present to an unknown and uncertain future. Knowledge management requires a level of confidence within the organisation to encourage people to share and get involved. If people are uncertain about the future, they are less likely to do this.

- An enduring notion that *knowledge is power* – this factor can go to the heart of organisational culture where the competitive internal environment can foster knowledge hoarding.

- *A lack of business focus* – this may result in knowledge management being treated as an end in itself and a knowledge management programme being created because everyone else has created one or because it might pay off later. Knowledge management projects tend to be successful only if they are linked to real business issues.

- However, resistance can work both ways and *not invented here* or a refusal to accept knowledge that comes from another organisation, industry or country can be a real barrier to learning. Trust grows with face-to-face knowledge sharing.

- People are often afraid that *mistakes will be penalised* and are therefore unwilling to share what they may see as failures.

- People sometimes feel they are *not paid to share*. Knowledge sharing is often seen as not part of the day to day role of the employee.

- People feel they have *no time to share*. This is a very real barrier; it is important to make knowledge sharing as quick and efficient as we can, because really we have no time NOT to share.

Adapted from knoco.com, https://www.knoco.com/knowledge-management-faq.htm#What%20is%20Knowledge?

Leading knowledge sharing and 'lack of time'

The best leaders understand that the current success of their business, and any future innovation, depends upon the 'deep smarts' of their employees – the business-critical, experience-based knowledge that employees carry with them.

The single largest obstacle to managing human knowledge is a lack of time. The more essential the know-how held in the head of an expert or highly experienced manager, the less time he or she has to pass it along to potential successors. Such valuable individuals are pulled into every important client meeting, problem-solving session, and innovation project. The only way that their deep smarts will be retained is if leaders recognise and address that limitation. Specifically, leaders need to:

- Tie preservation of critical know-how to corporate strategy;

- Behave as if developing and retaining knowledge is truly important. Leaders who take time to teach in education programs, or at least start them off, provide visible evidence of seriousness.

- Support incentives within the organization that both recognize current expertise and encourage it to be shared.

If leaders do not show that knowledge development and preservation is a priority, then they cannot expect that managers lower in the organization will provide the necessary incentives, time, and resources to share, and thus preserve, knowledge across generations, geographies, and corporate silos.

Source: Directly quoted from Leonard D, 29 September 2016, *Develop Deep Knowledge in your Organisation and Keep It*, Harvard Business Review

4
IMPLEMENTING KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knight and Howes (2003) suggest that organisations frequently come to knowledge management because they have spotted a gap in how well the organisation does things and look to undertake or commission some work to address this. It could be a database, intranet, discussion board, or some kind of specialist software deployment. Such initiatives are often labelled as 'knowledge management' but in reality they are focused on new ways to organise information. Furthermore, big infrastructure initiatives, such as the development or improvement of the intranet site, frequently fail in their objective of promoting internal communication and knowledge sharing. When this happens, the issues are seldom technical, rather the sites are not fulfilling their potential due to employees not using them. Knight and Howes (2003, p.29) conclude that unless knowledge management interventions are 'firmly embedded into the culture and processes of organisations, and appropriate reward and motivation systems are in place, they will fail to deliver what the architects promised of them'.

A further drawback of approaching knowledge management in this way is that the solutions only address elements of the problem and in addition are overly concentrated on the provision of 'tools'. There is also the danger, if a range of unrelated responses of this nature are developed, that staff will experience 'initiative fatigue', the result of change piled on top of change in no predictable manner.

4.1   ASSESSING KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT NEEDS

A more comprehensive route into dealing with knowledge issues is to conduct a 'knowledge audit', that is, a sound investigation into an organisation's knowledge 'health' or 'where are we now' (www.Skyrme.com). A typical audit will look at:

- What are the organisation's knowledge needs?

- What knowledge assets or resources does it have and where are they?

- What gaps exist in its knowledge?

- How does knowledge flow around the organisation?

- What blockages are there to flow, e.g. to what extent do its people, processes and technology currently support or hamper the effective flow of knowledge?

There are a wide variety of approaches to conducting a knowledge audit, with varying levels of coverage and detail. According to the UK National Health Service's knowledge management team,[2] an organisation may choose to use some or all of the following:

Identifying knowledge needs

The first step involves clarifying what knowledge the organisation and the people and teams within it need in order to meet their goals and objectives. Knight and Howes (2003) suggest some generic categories: product and service knowledge (the core of any organisation), process knowledge (how to get things done), customer and supplier knowledge, technical or expert knowledge, and project knowledge. Common approaches include questionnaire-based surveys, interviews and facilitated group discussions, or a combination of these.

Drawing up a knowledge inventory

A knowledge inventory is a stock take to identify and locate knowledge assets or resources throughout the organisation. It involves counting and categorising the explicit and tacit knowledge of the organisation. In the case of explicit knowledge, it examines things like numbers, types and categories of documents, databases, libraries, intranet websites, links and subscriptions to external resources etc., and also their purpose, relevance and quality. In the case of tacit knowledge, there is a need to consider staff, who they are, where they are, what they do, and their qualifications, skills and experience.

Analysing knowledge flows

An analysis of knowledge flows looks at how that knowledge moves around the organisation – from where it is to where it is needed. The focus at this stage is on people: their attitudes, habits and behaviours in respect of knowledge sharing. This will usually require a combination of questionnaire-based surveys and follow-up qualitative research.

Carrying out a knowledge audit is not a quick or simple process, and so the time and effort required needs to be justified by a clear purpose and set of actions that will be taken in response to what the audit reveals. An organisation may choose to document the latter in a knowledge management strategy. This is a statement of the role played by knowledge in the organisation and how it can be mobilised in support of business objectives. The purpose of the strategy is to establish a concrete action plan in respect of the generation, capture and sharing of knowledge. As with all strategies, a knowledge management strategy should be clearly aligned with business objectives and should include details on issues such as the context and rationale for the strategy, key stakeholders, resources and methods of evaluation.

Knowledge Audit Pitfalls

The biggest challenge facing those planning an audit is its scope and scale. Some people argue that an audit is not an audit unless every nook and cranny of an organisation is surveyed and its knowledge inventory listed. Others that a 'quick and dirty' assessment is sufficient to identify priority areas. It takes judgment to strike the right balance between effort and returns. Be careful about: Poor participation - like any intervention the benefits of completing questionnaires or attending workshops have to be 'sold' - ahead of time; Not seeing the wood from the trees - aggregate specific knowledge resources into categories; Producing reams of spreadsheets and charts - hand-written visual maps are often more useful; Starting by asking questions about knowledge - it is important to start with people and business processes (and what makes them effective), only then lead into questions about knowledge needs

- Be clear on what you are trying to achieve and limit the scope accordingly

- Ensure that you have a senior business manager sponsor

- Build up a network of committed knowledge champions across the organization

- Focus on what's important - see the wood from the trees; don't be over ambition

- Communicate well - engage with people at all levels; prepare for the next steps.

Source: Directly quoted from https://www.skyrme.com/kmpractices/kaudit.htm

4.2   KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Once an organisation decides 'to do something' about knowledge management, the question of how to capture and record knowledge immediately emerges. There are a wide range of tools and techniques for achieving this and they can be categorised under a wide range of headings including knowledge capture, knowledge creation and knowledge sharing. In practice there is often much over-lap between the categories and the associated tools and methods. Some of the more important are discussed here.

Portfolio of Knowledge Management Tools and Techniques	
Function	**Some examples of tools**
Connecting people to people	Communities of practice Peer assist Social networking Knowledge cafés
Connecting people to knowledge/the evidence-base	Knowledge banks/centres Smartphone apps Learning portals
Connecting people to best practice	Lessons learned Story telling Communities of practice Professional forums
Helping people to keep up to date	Policy briefings Online portals News bulletins E-zines
Sharing learning	After action reviews Exit reviews Post project appraisals
Connecting people to corporate knowledge	Induction Mentoring/peer support Mapping knowledge assets
Source: UK National Health Service, Library Service	

A very comprehensive overview of tools and techniques can be found at: http://kfh.libraryservices.nhs.uk/knowledge-management/km-goals-tools-and-techniques/

After action reviews

An AAR (also known as a retrospective review) is a discussion of a project or an activity. It enables the individuals involved to learn for themselves what happens, why it happens, what went well, what needs improvement and what lessons can be learnt from the experience. The spirit of an AAR is one of openness and learning – it is not about problem fixing or allocating blame. Lessons learnt may be shared on the spot by the individuals involved or explicitly documented and shared with a wider audience. The size of an AAR may reach from two individuals conducting a five-minute AAR at the end of a short meeting, to a day-long AAR held by a project team at the end of a large project. Activities suitable for an AAR simply need to have a beginning and an end, an identifiable purpose and some basis on which performance can be assessed.

Storytelling

Stories can be used in organisations as a way of sharing knowledge and helping learning. Stories can be very powerful communication tools, and may be used to describe complicated issues, explain events, communicate lessons learned, or bring about cultural change. Storytelling humanises theory. It can also be valuable in communicating strategic issues and motivating employees. According to Little (2016), people will not change if they are not emotionally engaged. Learning is change so an emotional connection is critical.

Monarth (2014) cites two examples of how storytelling has helped achieve positive public service outcomes. Penn State College of Medicine researchers found that medical students' attitudes about dementia patients, who are perceived as difficult to treat, improved substantially after students participated in storytelling exercises that made them more sympathetic to their patients' conditions. And a University of Massachusetts Medical School study found that a storytelling approach has also been effective in convincing populations at risk of hypertension to change their behaviour and reduce their blood pressure.

Storytelling - Principles to Remember

Do:

- Consider your audience — choose a framework and details that will best resonate with your listeners.

- Identify the moral or message you want to impart.

- Find inspiration in your life experiences.

Don't:

- Assume you don't have storytelling chops — we all have it in us to tell memorable stories.

- Give yourself the starring role.

- Overwhelm your story with unnecessary details.

Source: O'Hara (2014)

Knowledge exchange/exit interviews

A knowledge exchange should take place when someone is moving on from their current position. It aims to recover unique and valuable information from them before they leave. The knowledge exchange occurs between a knowledge holder and a facilitator. The knowledge holder is the person who is departing. The facilitator is typically a line manager or trusted team member – someone who is close to the person leaving and can ensure the questioning is of sufficient depth and relevance. Ideally, the knowledge exchange will also involve the person replacing the knowledge holder or carrying out the tasks they leave behind. They will benefit from any useful tips and knowledge and from asking their own questions.

An exit interview more specifically relates to why an employee is actually leaving the organisation, either due to retirement or to work elsewhere. Exit interviews have evolved from human resource management feedback interviews to become a knowledge management tool, as a means of capturing the experience and know-how of a departing employee.

Knowledge exchanges enable an organisation to ascertain the skills and experience they are about to lose and to determine if further action, for example, coaching or mentoring of the person's replacement, is required. For the departing employee there is the opportunity to articulate their contributions to the organisation and to 'leave their mark'. The greatest benefit arises where knowledge exchange is a formalised and structured process, prepared by all parties

Capturing knowledge of departing employees

In many organisations, the typical off-boarding process is a whirlwind of project wrap-ups, paperwork, and exit interviews. The manager might ask the person who's leaving to write a report to share his knowledge, but often there's just not enough time for that, says John Sullivan, professor of management at San Francisco State University, HR expert, and author of 1000 Ways to Recruit Top Talent.

But failing to capture the departing employee's organisational-specific knowhow is short-sighted especially if the person leaving has 'deep smarts — meaning business critical, experienced-based knowledge', says Dorothy Leonard, professor emerita at Harvard Business School and chief adviser of the consulting firm Leonard-Barton Group. 'These are the people who have so much tribal knowledge and are so valuable that they become almost irreplaceable', she says. Fortunately, a lot of this know-how can be passed along if you make it a priority. 'You're not going to be able to clone the employee, but you can identify her behaviours, thought patterns, and processes that have made her such a valuable decision-maker'.

Principles to remember

Do:

*   Create opportunities for less-experienced colleagues to observe the expert in action

*   Encourage team members to keep a log of what they've learned from the expert and, more importantly, to practise new skills and behaviours

*   Make training and coaching part of the promotion process in order to motivate experts to mentor possible successors before they leave

Don't:

*   Panic— determine the timeframe and the scope of the knowledge that needs transferring to figure out which strategies will work best for your team

- Bother asking the departing expert to write a lengthy how-to manual — instead, ask them to share stories of how they handled problems in the past

- Treat the person like a traitor for leaving the organisation — use the off-boarding process to demonstrate your respect

Source: Knight, 2016

Peer assists

Peer assists are structured facilitated meetings or workshops where people are invited from other business units or other businesses to provide their experience, insights and knowledge to a team who have requested help.

Peer assists are part of a process of what BP, one of the first organisations to embrace knowledge management, calls 'learning before doing', in other words gathering knowledge before embarking on a project or piece of work, or when facing a specific problem or challenge within a piece of work. The benefits of peer assists are therefore quickly realised: learning is directly focused on a specific task or problem, and so it can be applied immediately.

A peer assist allows the team involved to gain input and insights from people outside the team, and to identify possible new lines of enquiry or approach – in short, reusing existing knowledge and experience rather than having to reinvent the wheel. Peer assists also have wider benefits: they promote sharing of learning between teams, and develop strong networks among people.

Communities of practice

A community of practice (COP) is a network of individuals with common problems or interests who get together to explore ways of working, identify common solutions and share good practice and ideas. Communities of practice pool resources related to a specific area of knowledge. In theory they should be organic and self-organising, evolving from a recognition of a specific need or problem.

Informal communities exist in some form in every organisation. The challenge is to support them so that they can create and share organisational knowledge. Technology allows people to network, share and develop practices on-line, and overcomes the challenge of geographical boundaries. Many communities of practice only interact online. Jackson (2019) notes that using social media to support the creation of communities of practice can encourage the creation of wider connections and help break down many of the traditional barriers associated with communities of practice. She comments (Jackson, 2019, p.9) that it has been found to be particularly helpful in forging relationships between policy makers, practitioners and academics, who may find it quite difficult to communicate due to geographical or time constraints.

The UK Government provides advice on developing communities of practice:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-development-handbook/community-development-handbook#what-a-community-of-practice-is

Communities of practice to support citizen-centred care

National Voice is the coalition of health and social care charities in England. Under an initiative titled *Wellbeing Our Way*, the organisation established a number of national and place-based communities of practice to bring together people from charities and community organisations, alongside those with direct experience of using health and care services, to share learning and challenge around a range of person- and community-centred approaches.

An assessment of the initiative came to the following conclusions:

- Co-design is time well spent. The most successful communities push the boundaries of existing knowledge and expertise.

- Having a clearly defined goal in mind and having team- or organisation-wide commitment to trialling new approaches, makes it more likely that a community of practice member will be able to create change in their organisations.

- Great facilitation enables creative thinking and increased confidence.

- A careful balance between 'solving the problem' and 'capturing the opportunity' is needed to generate energy within a community.

- Identifying specific expertise within communities of practice leads to inspirational learning around diverse aspects of practice.

- Defining the scope of the 'domain' is essential (and challenging!).

- Involving senior leaders 'makes space' for change.

- Communities of practice may have a natural time limit.

- The success of place-based communities depended on them being locally owned and led partnerships which span national and regional interests and bring unique value.

Source: https://www.nationalvoices.org.uk/wellbeing-our-way/communities-of-practice

Social media

Social media is a generic term used to describe a range of online applications that enable and specifically encourage interactive communication between users. NHS Employers (2016) define social media as the websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. Social media is therefore central to knowledge management in organisations. Jackson (2019) comments that the opportunities presented to public service workers by the arrival of social media are in many ways unprecedented, therefore understanding the social media landscape and the potential benefits for organisations is vital.

Millions of people around the world use social media to ask questions, network, learn and share their interests. The social media ethos is all about engagement, participation and relationship building. Every platform encourages its users to take part, by commenting on what they see and getting involved in conversations with others. This makes it a particularly useful vehicle both for informing citizens and for gaining their feedback. According to White (2016), used well, social media can be part of collaborative working and co-production. As well as having conversations and giving their opinions, visitors to social media sites also like to share information. This can have a powerful amplification effect (known as going viral), where articles, videos or images are shared between thousands or even millions of people.

The term 'social media' makes many people think of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. While these are useful tools, they are not the only tools available. Appendix One includes a comprehensive overview of social media (Jackson, 2019). Local Authorities Ireland (@LAsIreland) is the Twitter account of the local government sector in Ireland. It is hosted by the Local Government Management Agency.

Fingal App

The Fingal Libraries app allows you access your library service at the touch of a button. Some features include: Remote catalogue search – now you can find a title, reserve, borrow or renew it, straight from your mobile. Barcode scan – why buy when you can borrow? The app allows you to scan the barcode on any title, anywhere, then search the catalogue to see if you can borrow it. Library information – from events to opening hours to directions, regularly updated service information gives you all the knowledge you need.

Fingal County Council (2018)

Scottish Government '10 Things' Social Media Training

10 Things is an online, self-directed 10-week training course developed by the Scottish Government library as part of the Scottish Government's Digital Communications Programme for Scottish Government staff and others in the Scottish non-profit sectors. The aim is for staff to spend a little time each week developing their social media and information searching skills. 10 Things is based on the original 23 Things course which ran at the public library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, USA in 2006. Once a participant registers for the course, they are e-mailed content each Monday for 10 successive weeks. However, participants can work through 10 Things at their own pace and there is no deadline for completing the course. The course is delivered by the 10 Things blog and the content held on Google drive. Participants are encouraged to share their thoughts and experiences in respect of the tools on the 10 Things blog and it is also possible to ask questions privately of the Scottish Library Service. It is suggested to participants that they view 10 Things as a toolkit, spending most time on what is most useful to them.

Course content:

Week 1:   Overview of 10 Things, blogs

Week 2:   RSS (newsfeeds) and dashboards

Week 3:   Presentation and meeting tools

Week 4:   Twitter

Week 5:   YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, SoundCloud, AudioBoom, Pinterest, Snapchat, WhatsApp

Week 6:   Government secure collaborative tools

Week 7:   Open collaborative tools 1

Week 8:   Open collaborative tools 2

Week 9:   Searching skills

Week 10: Alerts and current awareness tools

Source: https://sglibraryservices.wordpress.com/10-things/

One of the most common barriers to the uptake of social media within organisations is anxiety among both professionals and organisations about the potential challenges, ethical considerations and risk in relation to social media use. Jackson (2019) notes that many organisations perceive social media as a risk. She continues that there is a need to address the inherent unease around social media within organisations, and to highlight that the potential benefits for employee wellbeing and practice far outweigh any potential risks, provided they have proper guidance and structures in place to support staff who choose to use social media in their work. Having robust security systems and efficient software is important (LGA, 2016). NHS Employers (2016) have created a six-stage process which enables organisations to review how they are currently using social media: https://www.nhsemployers.org/case-studies-and-resources/2016/11/social-media-toolkit-for-the-nhs

The impact of social media on employee wellbeing is a further consideration for organisations. On the one hand, Jackson (2019) notes that social media can support employee wellbeing. As noted above, communities of practice can provide opportunities for employees to communicate with others in similar roles, both within the organisation and outside and this can be for many both a source of knowledge and learning and also a positive therapeutic experience. Similarly, the use of closed forums and groups can provide a safe environment among colleagues to test ideas, or receive advice and support. Finally, social media provides extensive opportunities for staff who work remotely to engage with colleagues and be more efficient. However, it is important to stress that while a potentially invaluable tool, social media further reinforces the 'always available' mentality. Employees should be reminded that they have the right to 'switch off' even when using technologies that promote 24/7 connectivity. Lastly, the stress impact that can be caused by public criticism of public service employees and organisations on social media platforms needs to be closely monitored.

5
HOW KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IMPACTS YOUR ORGANISATION

As noted above, knowledge management has wide-ranging benefits for organisations, but in particular a strategic approach to knowledge management is closely aligned with better management and engagement of your workforce. Many of the initiatives organisations may engage with to support better knowledge sharing are HR practices which they may be implementing anyway. However, bringing a knowledge management lens to bear on these initiatives can result in additional benefits.

The ageing of local authority staff and public service employees generally has emerged as a prominent issue in Ireland as in other countries in recent years. Employees recruited during the years of public service expansion in the 1960s and 1970s are approaching retirement age, with the situation further exacerbated by the two major recruitment embargoes, during the 1980s and after the financial crisis in 2008. The loss of knowledge and know-how as a result of the departure of a large cohort of their workforce has prompted many organisations to consider knowledge management.

This chapter considers how knowledge management can be promoted within an organisation under the guise of a number of good management practices. These are:

• Workforce planning

• Succession planning

• Training and development

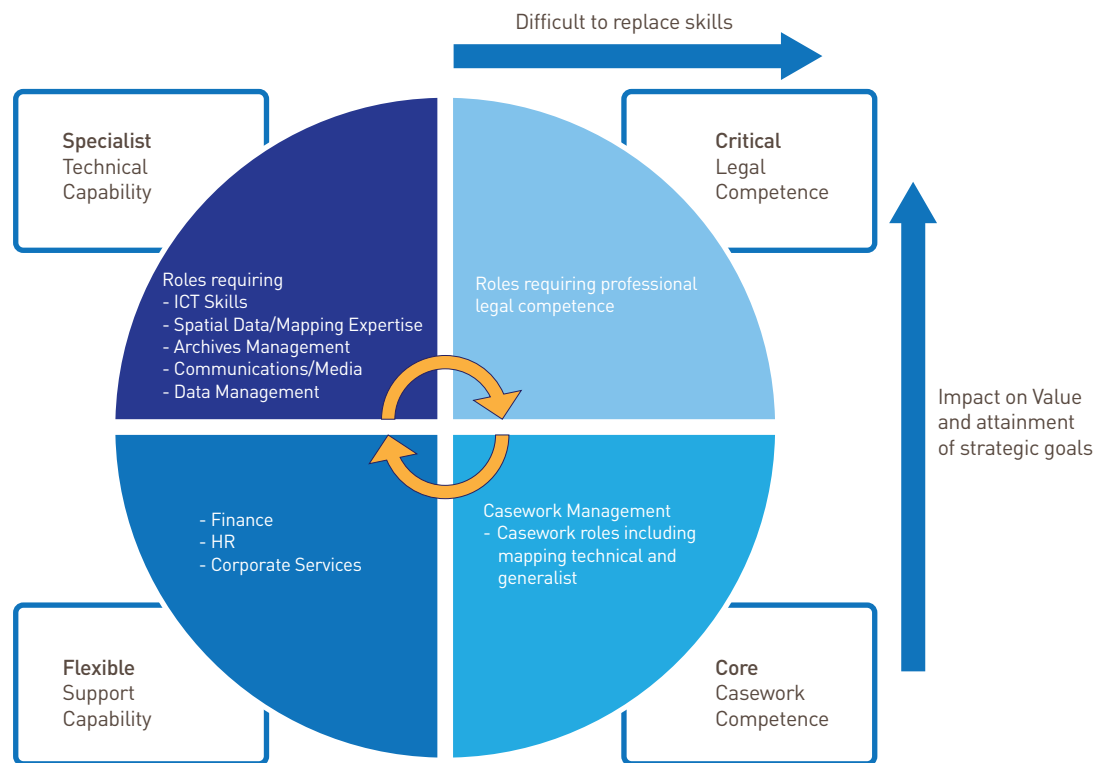• Workforce policies and employee wellbeing.

5.1   WORKFORCE PLANNING

Within the Irish public service, workforce planning is (DPER, 2019): the proactive management of current and future human resources by each organisation, aligned with their Statement of Strategy, to ensure the following are reflected:

• Access to the right skills and experience

• The changing needs of each organisation

• The evolving environments within which they operate (includes impacts in relation to technological developments)

• Available resources.

The CIPD (2018) refers to a workforce planning mind-set rather than merely regarding it as yet another HR practice. This is helpful because it points to the fact that workforce planning should be an ongoing preoccupation of both HR professionals and line managers and that it should imbue the culture of the organisation. Workforce planning is critical for public service organisations which wish to ensure they are fit-for-purpose and have the capacity to deliver on their objectives (O'Riordan, 2019). In the context of a generally ageing labour force, it is particularly important that organisations examine the age structure of their employees and how demographic trends may affect organisational capacity.

From the perspective of encouraging better knowledge management and sharing in an organisation, workforce planning is a critical starting point. Workforce planning goes beyond forecasting headcount and filling vacancies. The objective is a detailed understanding of the organisation's workforce requirements and how those requirements can be addressed both now and in the future. Rather than simply reacting to political or market events, the organisation has a planned approach to the recruitment, deployment and development of staff. This is summed up by the OECD (2013, p.8), who note that 'workforce planning has the potential to contribute to governments' agility by preparing it to respond to changing strategies or needs'. O'Riordan (2012 and 2019) extensively reviews workforce planning in the Irish public services and provides guidance on implementing workforce planning in organisations.

Understanding your workforce – An outcome of workforce planning at the Property Registration Authority

Difficult to replace skills

Specialist
Technical
Capability

Critical
Legal
Competence

Roles requiring
- ICT Skills
- Spatial Data/Mapping Expertise
- Archives Management
- Communications/Media
- Data Management

Roles requiring professional legal competence

Impact on Value and attainment of strategic goals

- Finance
- HR
- Corporate Services

Casework Management
- Casework roles including mapping technical and generalist

Flexible
Support
Capability

Core
Casework
Competence

Source: O'Riordan (2019)

5.2   SUCCESSION PLANNING

Succession planning is closely linked to both workforce planning and knowledge management. It is one part of an organisation ensuring that it can meet its future needs for people. Hirsh (2000) notes that succession planning now is a much broader concept than simply identifying a successor to the chief executive; it sits within a very much wider set of resourcing and development processes called ''talent management'. In many organisations a capability based approach will be used, rather than developing people for current specific job requirements. It is also helpful when succession planning is placed within a strong development culture where all staff are encouraged and supported in self-development, thereby reducing negative perceptions of it as an elitist activity.

The most obvious advantages of succession planning are that the process of job filling is enhanced through broader candidate search and faster decisions. In a review of succession planning in the UK, Hirsh (2007) quotes a senior manager from Unilever as saying 'a formal succession management process is designed to avoid "being in the right place at the right time" becoming the principal appointment mechanism'.

Other less obvious benefits of succession planning include the advantage of having precise data in relation to key posts, key people and the competencies available within the organisation. An organisation is also more likely to attract and retain the best employees if they are offered tailored and varied career and development experiences. Furthermore, succession planning ensures that valued employees are aware of how the organisation regards them.

How to prevent experts from hoarding knowledge

Asked if he would be willing to share his hard-earned knowledge with others in the company before he retired, the engineer laughed. 'Why would I do that?' he asked. 'First off, I don't owe this company anything more. I've given 35 years to this outfit, and I hope they miss me when I'm gone. Or', he added with a bit of a twinkle, 'hire me back at double pay as a consultant'.

There we had it in one concise capsule: a few of the reasons why retirees refuse to share their experience-based, business-critical knowledge. If suck knowledge leaves with the retirees, it may be lost for good. Lack of time or resources can, of course, constrain knowledge transfer. But a further, often unaddressed factor, is the expert's inclination to hoard knowledge. Financial incentives, personal ego and discontent or frustration with the organisation are three of the top reasons individuals choose to keep their expertise to themselves

Harvard Business Review (2014)

Linking succession planning and knowledge management in local government

Leaders in the Fort Lauderdale Public Works Department had a moment of reckoning in 2014 when they surveyed their employees and realised that more than a quarter of them were eligible for retirement by 2017. While all of the workers eligible to retire weren't expected to leave at once, the idea that up to 28 percent of their workforce could leave in a brief window of time led them to examine ways to prepare the organisation for disruptions.

'We knew our vulnerability wasn't consistent across the department, and it was most evident in skilled water and wastewater positions, especially among treatment, lab and supervisory roles,' says Paul Berg, Fort Lauderdale's public works director. 'It was difficult to impossible to achieve full staffing, and when we advertised positions, we weren't getting the numbers or quality candidates we needed to address the vacancies.'

Department leaders discussed the issue with other local government managers in the region and learned that most departments were facing the same challenges. They couldn't advertise their way out of the problem, and it wasn't enough to just hire people from other local governments. It became clear that they needed parallel strategies to both keep talented people in the department through training and promotion and recruit new employees from other workplaces.

The department's leaders gradually became aware that there were many different ways of addressing these challenges. After some discussion, they decided to hire an outside consultant because they didn't have the technology or expertise to manage a succession planning project, especially while managing the daily work of the department. After an RFP process, they hired Management Partners, a firm that specializes in providing management assistance to local governments, to help craft a comprehensive strategy for succession planning.

At first Public Works leaders envisioned a project that looked at the whole department all at once, but they ended up with a pilot program focused on one division, intending to learn from the pilot and then use that with the department's other divisions. After analysing retirement eligibility, vacancies and the significance of various positions, they focused on the water and wastewater treatment functions, which included the lab on both processes, for the pilot program. They identified 12 priority positions, including wastewater treatment manager, environmental chemist and industrial technician, that they deemed as critical.

Amy Cohen Paul and Nancy Hetrick of Management Partners surveyed the entire department to gather feedback on training and promotion opportunities and other perceptions. The consultants then interviewed employees in the priority positions and developed position profiles that included information on fulfilling job requirements, training, historical knowledge and contacts necessary to complete the job. They developed a profile for each position deemed critical.

The Public Works Department still has challenges even after completing the succession planning project. Leaders would like to improve their training budgets and schedules, and

they will continue to send their employees to continuing education to get the licenses and certifications they'll need. But the department now has a better understanding of where it is going and what leaders need to do to maintain and improve it.

'It helped to take the time to define our problems and explore possible approaches,' Berg says. 'Launching it as a pilot in their most critical areas helped as well. It's always easier to replicate successes at a small scale than tackle everything at once. In this case, it was better to narrow the scope and focus on a few positions where we had the most problems than try to do it all at once.'

Source: Directly quoted from Alliance for Innovation (2017) https://www.transformgov.org/articles/success-succession-planning

5.3 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Inevitably, your knowledge management audit will identify knowledge and capacity weaknesses and gaps within the organisation. Training and development is typically a first response to addressing these. However, training and development needs to be viewed in very comprehensive terms. For example, as Freyens (2010, p. 271) notes, 'leadership is not acquired through leadership seminars and country retreats, but by building in-house experience and mentoring high quality recruits'.

Mentoring in local government

LGPro is a member association for local government staff working in Victoria State, Australia. It offers a well-established mentoring programme. Over an eight-month period, an experienced professional (the mentor) is assigned to 'guide and advise' a less experienced mentee. It is based on the sharing of knowledge, experience, skills and perspectives. The objective of the programme is twofold. From a professional development perspective, it allows participants at all levels to learn from each other. Crucially, from an organisational point of view, councils benefit from having 'experienced officers pass on their knowledge to others working in the sector'. Therefore, this helps support efforts towards succession planning. LGPro's mentoring programme involves orientation and training sessions, facilitated workshops, and regular mentor-mentee meetings.

The Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA) is open to senior professionals in municipalities across Canada. The CAMA Mentorship Forum is a website dedicated to building capacity among senior managers in local government. By connecting municipal administrators via the Forum, it is hoped to 'encourage and facilitate the relationship between experienced and new leaders, as well as support succession planning in local government'. Acting almost as a Linkedin for senior local government staff, the Mentorship Forum allows municipal leaders register online a forum member and connect with a potential mentor or mentee.

Source:
https://www.lgpro.com/LGPro/Professional_Development/Programs/Mentoring/Mentoring_Program.aspx
https://www.transformgov.org/articles/cama-launches-political-acumen-toolkit-and-mentorship-forum

A further misconception in many organisations is to see talent management as a young person's domain, with training and development reserved for up-and-coming employees at the expense of more experienced staff. Unfortunately, a trap into which some employers can fall is believing an employee somehow becomes less talented as they progress through their career. A further misguided notion is that a person cannot be both experienced and talented. These are not mutually exclusive and just because someone is experienced does not mean that they do not have further untapped potential. Many organisations are subject to constant change and experienced staff often act as a 'steady hand on the tiller' bringing stability and guidance to organisations in transition. However, this capacity to deliver 'business as usual' is often undervalued.

As a result of these misconceptions, some organisations fail to assess the talents and development needs of long-serving workers, assuming they already know everything a particular employee has to offer. In fact, in many cases, skills deficits are frequently considered to be one of the employment risks associated with older employees. What is often over-looked is the self-fulfilling prophecy at work here – such skills deficits develop primarily because organisations do not invest in their older workers.

According to the CIPD (2018) some of the training and development initiatives organisations can adopt to support older workers include:

• The absence of age limits in determining access to learning and training opportunities

• Initiatives to address the low take up on training opportunities by older people which is reported in many organisations, for example, opportunities for on the job learning or coaching which may suit an older employee more than a classroom setting

• Organising work so that it is conducive to learning, development and mentoring

• Job rotation to ensure that employees' skills do not erode by becoming 'stuck in a rut'.

5.4   WORKFORCE POLICIES AND EMPLOYEE WELLBEING

Irish local government is traditionally viewed as an employer of choice, with large numbers of applicants even for competitions with a small number of vacancies. However, while the overall picture is good, there are still aspects of recruitment that require attention. Regulations around public service recruitment which ensure the integrity and merit of appointments, can make it difficult to hire top candidates in a tight labour market. Even with the best efforts of the Public Appointments Service (PAS), organising several rounds of a recruitment competition can take several months by which time candidates can have taken up alternative opportunities.

Once appointed, Freyens (2010) notes in relation to Australian public service recruits it is important that employers find out more about the skills, motivations and aspirations of new recruits, particularly at graduate level and above, but in Ireland this is at best done in an ad-hoc manner. If the public service invests in the induction, education and training of

young graduates it is imperative that they have progression opportunities and a future in the public service. In the context of an ageing public service, having a strong, internal talent pool is vital.

Understanding 'what is good about working here' provides an organisation with the opportunity to protect and promote its strengths (what we are really good at) and isolate its weaknesses (what we could do better) which may affect the engagement and retention of current staff. In the current environment of ageing workforces, global recession, and labour shortages for some specialist skills, it can be difficult for organisations to step back and review the way they do things. However, according to the Public Service Commission of the Queensland Government (2008), it is important to look not only at processes and practices, but also the culture being created in our organisations. Adopting good workplace practices creates loyalty among employees, improves morale and increases the productivity of the organisation. It is also one of the key factors that significantly influences whether mature employees are keen to remain working.

The Public Service Superannuation (Age of Retirement) Act 2018, which allows public servants to choose to work until 70, has resulted in some public servants choosing to remain at work for longer. However, it is likely that it will be only with the future increases in state pension eligibility (to 67 in 2021 and 68 in 2028), and the subsequent more prolonged reduced pension entitlements, that larger numbers will delay retirement. While this may prove beneficial for organisations in terms of retaining critical skills and know-how, a larger number of 'older' workers may present its own challenges in terms of managing and motivating an increasingly multi-generational workforce, with reportedly different expectations (The Economist, 2013).

However, there are a number of actions HR departments can take to manage the situation:

- Proactively address age discrimination and age stereotyping – while illegal in Ireland and many countries to discriminate on the grounds of age, some commentators refer to age discrimination as a silent prejudice in organisations. Not only is this unfair, it also wastes talent, experience and knowledge.

- Think total rewards – this is a very wide ranging factor; it encompasses acknowledging and valuing your workforce, at any age, as employees who believe they are appreciated will contribute at a higher level. More specifically in terms of remuneration, there is evidence that employees prefer to be offered choice, and to be allowed to choose rewards that particularly meet their needs.

- Flexible working – the benefits of offering flexible working to all employees has been documented for many years, however, there is a need to reappraise this. Research by the CIPD (2010) on managing age-diverse workforces found that many employers offered training and flexible working irrespective of employees' ages, but that many were struggling to engage older workers with these initiatives. Knowledge management may afford organisations the opportunity to reconsider the future contribution of older employees. Redeployment may be appropriate in some cases. Coaching and mentoring

responsibilities, which allow for the sharing of their extensive knowledge, may also increase these employees' morale.

- Act on the evidence you have – most organisations now have data on the attitudes of their employees. Analysing this information as fully as possible and addressing identified areas of weakness is critical to improving the morale and engagement of all employees.

However, ultimately Brown (2017) notes that the differences across generations can perhaps be over-stated and what matters is to treat each employee as an individual. He concludes (Brown, 2017, p.6) that 'age and generational characteristics can provide us with a useful perspective to analyse and understand the character, needs and motivations of a workforce. But the key is to use it as just that, as a lens to help to produce effective evidence to support your value-adding HR actions and initiatives, rather than simply a knee-jerk response to generic headline statistics and follow-my-competitor supposed "best practices".

6
CONCLUSION

Knowledge management and knowledge sharing offer huge potential for local authorities. Organisational knowledge is a strategic asset for the public service. It supports better decisions and evidence based policy making. It supports collaborative working and joined-up government. The public service is changing, together with the roles and responsibilities required of public servants. Within this context, capturing, sharing and using organisational knowledge to best effect makes sense. Knowledge management supports organisations in using the knowledge and experience of employees, customers and other stakeholders to improve the organisation's performance.

However, notwithstanding its benefits, knowledge management can often appear remote or impractical. Given the likelihood of resistance, the best starting point for organisations is to encourage employees to see the benefits of managing and sharing knowledge. According to Sinclair (2006, p.14), 'knowledge management flourishes where practitioners find a strong rationale for it'. A culture of learning and knowledge sharing does not happen by accident and is strongly associated with the wider organisational culture.

This report has highlighted very wide-ranging practices, tools and techniques that support better use and sharing of knowledge in organisations. Irish local authorities will be engaging with some of these initiatives, though perhaps not under the heading of knowledge management. A good starting point for organisations is to acknowledge, support and build on these initiatives. Sinclair (2006, p.18) points to the value of knowledge management activities 'occurring all over the place, playing a supportive role, and being valued by those involved'. Organisations cannot function without knowledge; managing it effectively makes good organisation sense.

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APPENDIX ONE: SOCIAL MEDIA OVERVIEW

TYPES	EXAMPLES	USES	NOTES
Social networking	• Facebook • WhatsApp	• Closed groups allow for a level of 'safety' for practitioners. • Peer support forum opportunities. • Helpful from practice as well as personal wellbeing perspective.	United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust (ULHT) uses a closed Facebook group to share patient feedback with staff. Groups can be created informally among staff and are safe spaces for colleagues to discuss practice.
Professional networking	• LinkedIn • Twitter • Diigo • SlideShare	• Record and view professional and academic profiles. • Create professional networks. • Explore practice and connect with colleagues nationally and internationally. • Keep up to date with research/policy.	Research around the use of social media in professional networking in healthcare and medicine considers potential benefits for job progression, keeping up to date with innovative practice, and the benefits of engaging with people about issues on a professional level (Ventola, 2014b).
Multimedia **(e-notes, videos, live streaming, podcasts)**	• Evernote • YouTube • Vimeo • Instagram • VoiceNotes	• Take and save notes 'on the go' and easily organise them. • Ease of sharing best practice with colleagues. • Alternative ways to communicate and engage with colleagues. • Enhanced visibility.	The Open University regularly publish webinar and podcast sessions for social service workers. Social Care TV is a platform used by SCIE where new publications and best practice are made available through
Blog writing	• WordPress • Tumblr • Medium • Blogger	• Provides an effective way to reflect on practice. • Can be published anonymously but shared and read widely.	Many care workers are encouraged to blog both during training and once they are practising. In July 2018 NHS England ran a 'blogging month' campaign encouraging nurses to blog about their experiences and link them to a number of hashtags and Twitter accounts to allow others to see them.

TYPES	EXAMPLES	USES	NOTES
Workforce planning	• Slack • Workday • Jointly	• Day-to-day planning as well as wider strategic workforce planning. • Can be used by practitioners as well as management to ensure the needs of the team are met.	Calderdale Council developed a case management tool to support their day-to-day work, in areas such as child protection, looking after children, and fostering and adopting.
Professional, interdisciplinary collaboration	• Trello • Dropbox • Google Docs	• Sharing information across teams. • Collaboration among teams. • Multiple authors can contribute to, amend and read documents.	North Tyneside Council is developing an integrated system where social housing, health and social care teams all use the same systems to share information about at-risk tenants.
CPD monitoring and e-learning	• CPDme • Specifically designed apps and training sites	• Logging and tracking CPD. • E-learning and webinars. • Support and learning from teaching staff, as well as peers. • Apps which use scenario based games to 'play out' scenarios and consider potential outcomes.	CPDme is widely used in the NHS. The Skills for Care 'Digital capabilities in social care' report found that 95 per cent of organisations used e-learning courses to support staff development. Academics at the University of Birmingham developed The Social Work Social Media App8 which enables staff to experience real-life scenarios in a simulated environment, make decisions and see the potential outcomes of choices.

Source: Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services, 2019
https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/insights/social-media-and-social-service-workers