

8.0 Practice Guide – Capability Area # 4: Knowledge Base

Knowledge Repository

Tips for capturing and retrieving critical, stable information through the creation and maintenance of a knowledge repository

What is a knowledge repository and how does it support a knowledge management strategy?

Well-designed and used knowledge repositories are small but key elements of an overall strategy to manage knowledge as an asset. A repository is not a large database to satisfy Freedom of Information purposes. Rather, it houses organizational doctrine from which people can access critical, reasonably stable information. Repositories can complement other document and content management work, such as policy or procedures.

Specific practice:

- Recognize that codified, stored information has strengths and significant limitations. Plan it as part of a strategy that includes several other interacting knowledge-generation and -sharing approaches.
- Put high priority on information that
 - is absolutely critical as defined by stakeholders
 - makes sense as stand-alone material
 - is stored in a way that adds as much context as possible (e.g., stories, podcasts, links to stages of a business process)
 - is stable (but note exceptions)

Include information to encourage human interactions (e.g., author's contact information)

Benefits:

- Links knowledge repository (best for stand-alone information) and peer-to-peer work (best for problem-solving and tacit knowledge creation and sharing)
- Work with repositories can help to build relationships between IT professionals and other groups with extra expertise and resources
- Repositories can focus on external information, structured internal information or records of conversations and experiences

When?

- Early in process, based on needs
- Learn through pilot work
- Senior project champions model during implementation

Pitfalls:

- Assuming that a repository will solve more than 10-20% of knowledge and information-related issues
- Investing in technology before needs and culture are understood
- Assuming successes from one business culture will transfer to another.

To learn more:

Davenport, T. H., & Prusak, L. (1998). *Working knowledge: How organizations manage what they know*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Pasher, E. (n.d.). *Association of Knowledgework*. Retrieved October 23, 2009, from Strategic Renewal -- The Key Link Between KM and Organizations: <http://kwork.org/Stars/pasher.html>