



DoD Knowledge Management Conference  
Knowledge Management Buzz Session:  
Using KM for Results in Your Organization  
October 15, 2009, Ronald Reagan Building, Washington, DC

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## Buzz Summary

The final Session of the DoD KM Conference was a "Buzz Session" where attendees were presented two separate topics and then discussed the topic between participants at their table, based on talking points below. Each table had a Facilitator to lead the discussion. These notes are highlights based on input from attendees who participated in the session. Table numbers below do not accurately reflect the actual table numbers from the session.

## Buzz Session 2: Why KM Programs Flounder and How to Save Them

- Presented by Douglas Weidner, Chairman, International Knowledge Management Institute

### Session Description:

Has your initial KM initiative flagged and you're ready for a re-start? Or, maybe worse yet, did your boss just say, "Go buy me one?" In this KM Buzz Session we will review the progress of DoD's KM Methodology, key lessons learned since 1995, and a proven way forward that integrates the requisite, but often overlooked, strategic planning and change management interventions necessary for success.

### Buzz Discussion Issues / Talking Points:

1. Change Management: What have you done or do you plan to do, including: Creating a sense of urgency; Planning and executing 'quick wins'; Storytelling; An 'awareness campaign'; Knowledge Age vs. Information Age branding; and others?
2. Strategic Planning:
  - What have you done or do you plan to do, including having a robust KM methodology?
  - How did you change your vision/mission in context of the Knowledge Age, and did you make it clear, compelling and repeated often?
  - Did you form a 'guiding coalition'?
  - What other strategic interventions do you consider essential for your specific operation?

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## NOTES:

### Table # 1 Participants

- Doing transformational change for one agency
  - Using Kotter steps (Recommended reading: John Kotter, [Leading Change](#))
  - Senior leader training programs
    - didn't see leader
    - leaders must lead or nobody will follow
- Building guiding coalition is different
- Showing value of KM builds momentum
- KM awareness plans are not formalized
- If leadership does not consistently demonstrate and communicate that transformation is essential and their highest priority then the workers will not care. Kotter building a guiding coalition comes to mind.
- Bottom up is important, but top down still trumps it. Leadership provides the "stimulus" so to speak to make real change happen. This is done through resourcing (money and time), and through behavioral changes (leading by example, assessment, accountability)

## Table # 2 Participants

### Change Management / Strategic Planning

- "This is a new concept for my organization -- to see KM as transformational change"
- KM as change. It's a paradigm shift.
- At one organization: There is a lot of talk about the need for change but no real concrete actions
- At one agency, they are using the KM maturity model to get a sense for the organization's "As-Is" and then using that as a baseline to lead change from
- Can't fix the whole organization at one time
- Communities of practice can facilitate change across the organization
- Identify things that are going well and then share the KM component to that
- Imbed the knowledge tools into the work process
- Explore what barriers to entry there are to each change

## Table # 3 Participants

### Agency "A": took portal approach

- Lots of money, lots of knowledge
- No implementation addressed
- Became a dumping ground
- No content management
- became stale
- last couple of years -- changing
- Today: more consensus building
- Communities and users didn't really see the value of it
- IT forums -- always say we need more bandwidth, but instead need to address what goes in the pipes

### Developing guidelines now; staffing

- sense of urgency key
- ID key users, start small, develop business case
- Vision of KM as a key element: need strategic plan
- Need to define what KM is; need information and knowledge not pieces

### KM is a component / enabler for change management

- Technology was driving the train
- Senior leadership is stuck
- We've had to back up and start working with senior leadership; roadmap / strategy
- CoPs: decide who does KM? KM is enabling but no change management. Need training, distance learning.

## Table # 4 Participants

- One agency is still building and marketing the KM idea
- Awareness vs. reaction: Created Bureau Project to capture exit information
- Too many leaders w/out a sense of urgency on awareness
- Hiring the personality in charge / champion to KM
- Looking at process improvement approach first
- First impact the culture
- Develop strategy: short, concise and precise

## Table # 5 Participants

- Large portion of retirees being brought back as contractors -- hadn't taken the additional step to capture that knowledge
- Documentation is required -- which is a norm for knowledge sharing.
- Knowledge champions
- KM: change management -- transformation all tied together

## Table # 6 Participants

### Agency "A" Experience

- 2006 KM Program: 6 people in team
- Executive champion
- Lessons Learned
- Exit Interviews
- KM Overview: online and in-class training
- Task Ref. Guides: SOPs
- Draft Communications Plan
- Using SharePoint for Repository, not yet using other capabilities

#### Agency "B" Experience

- Center now instead of Command
- Control Chaos
- Content Discovery
- Needs definition -- "Director can't find x, y, z": creates crisis

#### Agency "C" Experience

- Moving to centralized records keeping with SharePoint.

#### Table # 7 Participants

- With KM think transformational but focus on "small wins"
- Sustainability and usage no longer an issue because individuals are empowered who want to see the program succeed
- How does an org know that KM failed? In other words, just because there's a change of command, is KM really impacted?
- Reward KM sharing behavior
- Leadership role is crucial for successful KM

#### Table # 8 Participants

##### Change Management

- Lean Six Sigma
- In some organizations, some KM activities are being done backwards -- technology comes first; people need to go first and technology should be a facilitator

##### Awareness plan:

- Need a coordinator (should be a KM professional)
- Organizational KM working group -- representatives from each command as collateral duties
- In one large agency: too many pockets or isolated projects
- Leadership has to constantly promote KM. Must support efforts.

#### Table # 9 Participants

- KM: Large Bull or squirrel
- Track 3: Ad hoc / not formal
- Track 2: No budget KM (change management)
- Track 1: Formal KM methodology

##### Change Management

- Create urgency
- Plan and executing "quick wins"
- Story telling
- awareness campaign
- knowledge branding

##### Strategic Planning:

- KM Methodology: must understand how lack of KM impacts the business
- guiding coalition
- strategic interventions

#### Table # 10 Participants

- Top down approach for change management does not come quickly
- Important to have top down cover for any change
- Quick wins are important (the squirrels)
- Use performance objectives to make people participate in and contribute to KM activities
- Tried the "Bull" approach in one agency and it was too much too soon; now using squirrels
- 80% of KM is not technical; km programs flounder when they focus on the technical side; km does not belong with the CIO

#### Table # 11 Participants

##### Change Management

- Agency "A": Institutionalized already, been around a long time
- Agency "B": Just thinking about it, in initial stages
- Agency "C": Bottom up and top down, started bottom up, had a retreat, close to institutionalized, can charge time to KM efforts

- Agency "D": Still working on strategy plan, awareness could be better in diff. orgs; "Change fatigue" exists - the administration will always change; this is an obstacle in government, vendors did KM a disservice

#### Strategic Planning

- Agency "C": Not in operating plan, but have a dashboard approach. Expectation for knowledge sharing is in performance plans (usage of KM tools - capture what has been tried, worked, and contact info)
- Agency "D": KM forcefully injected in Strategic Plan, mostly senior leadership and other levels -- still a work in progress

#### Table # 12 Participants

##### Change Management

- No agreement; afraid of expense, time
- Working to reach consensus
- Tried CM and failed because none of 8 steps were applied
- Hard to share as people think Knowledge is Power
- Communicate the value to people; provide incentives; think about what an expert you will be
- Undergoing big transition with all the usual problems involved
- Training at same time transitioning
- Expect Change Management and KM to be enablers.
- Problem of having CM on things-to-do-list: lack of time, CM drops off list.

#### Table # 13 Participants

- If KM is not part of new hires process it becomes ineffective
  - After few iterations of new hires without KM training, the KM processes will erode and lose effectiveness
- KM Programs fail when they lose a sense of urgency to improve.
- Senior leaders must take key positions in the KM program and must continue to support it actively
- Know the difference between a pilot and an experiment
  - Test role based usage of technology (test early, test often)
- Older employees more adverse to new technology.
- Performance measurements need to be worked into assessments
- KM workers need to be educated on what to evaluate
- Figure out competitions to make KM improvements.
- Tie Risk management to KM to improve relevance.
  - KM essential to Risk Mitigation and Risk Avoidance.
- In order to truly benefit the organization KM must be part of Orientation
  - One day information – Orientation Boot camp
    - Knowledge Management 101
    - Personal knowledge Management
    - Privacy
    - Information Security

#### Table # 14 Participants

##### Participant statements:

- KM initiatives need to be started in your organization but should be supported from outside advisors / consultants. Staff in your organization is usually too close to problem and hence cannot identify the right starting steps (i.e., is overwhelmed by the problem and often gets lost in details and hence never started)
  - General advice suggested for this topic:
    - "A single and immature plane rigorously executed is better than waiting for a perfect plan with no action"
    - "Each long way starts with the first step"
- Change management should be communicated as a campaign; you want people to elect the program/changes
- Change plans should start with interviews; need to make sure you get the commitment of the staff and build up trust as part of these interviews; → round tables are good to get change started; use them to get a feeling for peoples' needs/likes and dislikes
- Ideally, change management should be associated with each and every activity and document; be prepared for an ever changing environment!
- Good issues addressed in the presentation; but there is typically a learning experience associated with failures, which everyone (especially management) has to go through to acknowledge the importance and difficulties associated with KM initiatives. → people often talk and announce plans but don't act; especially management typically does not really commit to the price tag associated to run a successful KM program
- Many people (and organizations) are not used to be transparent and collaborative; this is contra productive for change; → may want to use the transparency initiative of the new administration to initiate better transparency in your organization
- "I think that all the KM collection activities addressed in today's conference are not the real issue; the main issue

is the providing guidance in selecting and finding the right things" → make sure you think about how you will actively use and utilize the knowledge you collect otherwise you will end up with a " data cemetery" or yet another useless lessons learned database which is not used for any other purpose the storing the lessons learned