

Knowledge Management

Vocabulary



PD 7500

Knowledge Management
Vocabulary

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Foreword

This Vocabulary has been prepared by Technical Committee KMS/1.

The Vocabulary is designed to be a companion work to other BSI publications in this field, and in particular, supports and complements: Kelleher, Dominic and Simon Levene. Knowledge Management: A Guide to Good Practice. PAS 2001. London. BSI. 2001. In addition, it will be revised in the light of subsequent BSi documents in this area.

The Vocabulary is presented in alphabetical order, each term being followed by a concise definition and a brief explanation of that term. Where useful the definition has been extended by links to other terms in the Vocabulary in order to put that term into a broader context. Bold words indicate that terms are defined elsewhere in this Vocabulary.

Each entry is followed by a number in brackets which leads the reader to items in the bibliography that specifically deal with that concept. It is emphasized that these sources were consulted to gain a fuller understanding of that term and were not used to extract an exact quotation. A second number refers to a (sub)clause in PAS 2001 which also refers to that concept. Thus, a specimen entry is presented as follows:

25 Communities of Practice

Definition

Amplification

[49] [83] [PAS 2001 (2.2.5)]

There is also an index of compound terms, in which every word in the list of Vocabulary terms is presented in alphabetical order. Entries starting with a capital letter refer to Vocabulary items while those starting with lower-case letters indicate a word occurring in a term with more than one word. Preferred terms are set in bold type. Other synonymous terms are set in normal type on a new line under the preferred term.

The Bibliography is presented in alphabetical order of principal author or URL to enable the user to see easily the key authors in the KM field. As well as including those references from which specific definitions were sourced, it includes the wider list of references consulted in order to achieve the remaining definitions. The latter are denoted with an asterisk.

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Summary of pages

This document comprises a front cover, an inside front cover, pages i and iv, pages 1 to 45 and a back cover.

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Introduction

This Vocabulary is aimed at those many organizations contemplating, or starting on, the introduction and implementation of Knowledge Management. It is not intended for those organizations that are already well advanced in this area, suggesting that it may, perhaps, be very useful for Small - and Medium-sized Enterprises and other larger organizations embarking on knowledge management. Consequently, the Vocabulary concentrates on the core terms in this developing area, and makes no attempt to capture highly specialized, or new, terminology emerging in associated areas such as, for example, the design of buildings and office spaces to support human communication and interaction. Inevitably however, opinions will vary as to what should constitute a core terminology for this large and evolving field, potentially embracing theoretical and practical terms, as well as the historical and the contemporary.

In the preparation of this Vocabulary, almost 100 monographs and websites were inspected, some of which were included in the bibliography to PAS 2001, and these have been augmented by a search conducted in the British Library. The Internet was also used extensively in the search for terminology with acceptable definitions, and these sources are included in the bibliography. As is so often the case in the social sciences, authors in the field use the terminology in many slightly, sometimes significantly, different ways. Consequently, the authors have attempted to look for some degree of consensus in the sources consulted, and above all, have tried to concentrate on clarity and consistency. Furthermore, the authors have consulted widely with colleagues in devising definitions and explanations of those definitions within practical contexts. It was found, in the process of compilation, that many of the terms finally included were turning up increasingly frequently, from which it was concluded that the Vocabulary appears to approximate closely to a core terminology and a reasonable perspective of the area at the time of publication of this document.

Some seminal works go back to the mid 90s and even earlier. Specific mention should be made of Nonaka and Takeuchi [1] who explored the phenomena of tacit and explicit knowledge within the context of the Japanese automobile industry; Stewart [2] who contributed substantially to the understanding of intellectual capital; Argyris [3] on organizational learning and later writing by Skyrme [4] on knowledge networking. Thus it may be said that, for the most part, the Vocabulary reflects a relatively stable terminology and has not ventured far into newer areas, which are still being investigated.

As is common with many subject domains, many of the terms are homographs of more commonly used terms, but with specific meanings (e.g. 'Competence'). These terms are, of course, defined in the context of Knowledge Management. Many terms are variations, or extensions, of terms commonly found in the terminology of Information Management (e.g. Knowledge audit). Though there are strong and inevitable connections between Knowledge Management and Information Management, it was not thought useful to include extensive terminology from this second area.

Absorption

Actionable
intelligence

After Action Review

Articulated
knowledge

Ba

1. Absorption

Application of new codified insights to create new understanding that can be applied in different situations.

Over time, the application of such codified insights gained by **scanning** (see 128), become part of the **tacit knowledge** (see 142) available to an organization. [5] [6]

2. Actionable intelligence

Information (see 61) or **knowledge** (see 80) that can be acted upon to produce a decision.

Actionable intelligence is a term sometimes used to describe information and knowledge that has been analysed and is believed to be valid in the context of a required decision. [6]

3. After Action Review

Structured and facilitated discussion to review an activity that is focussed on performance improvement through reflection and learning.

After Action Review (AAR) is a process developed by the US Army to help teams to learn rapidly from their successes and failures and to share their learning with other teams. After every mission or task AAR enabled participants to discover for themselves what happened, why it happened, and how to sustain strengths and improve on weaknesses. It is a tool that leaders and units can use to get maximum benefits from every action. **Learning histories** (see 113) include formal reports arising from AARs. The principles behind AARs are now used by many organizations in different sectors and different contexts. [6] [7]

4. Articulated knowledge

Description, by workers, of how they do their work.

Articulated knowledge is a term sometimes used to describe the transfer of the **tacit knowledge** (see 142) of a worker to others to enable performance improvement or learning. Articulated knowledge can often give insights into the realities of particular processes. [8]

5. Ba

An organizational environment where **knowledge** (see 80) is created, shared and exploited.

A term used in Japan which equates closely to “a highly collaborative knowledge-sharing environment”. Ba is used to describe an environment in which it is natural to create, share and exploit knowledge. A Ba environment provides the shared context which allows people to work together. Ba functions as a stimulus for the concentration of the organization’s knowledge and of the individuals who own and create such knowledge. A Ba environment ensures that the applied knowledge of the organization is collected, integrated and used. Ba forms part of the **SECI** (Socialization, Externalization, Combination and Internalization) **model** (see 129) by which knowledge grows and is transferred. [9] [10] [11]

6. Balanced scorecard

Balanced scorecard model (non-preferred term)

Business model that offers a way for a business to gain a wider perspective on its strategies and its performance. The scorecard is created by considering the impact of decisions on finances, customers, internal processes and employee learning. The analysis takes into account financial and non-financial measures, short and long-term goals, and external ongoing requirements as indications of future performance. Some organizations have used this technique in setting and measuring **knowledge strategies** (see 111). [6] [12]

Balanced scorecard

Benchmarking

Best practice

Blue pages

7. Benchmarking

Method of assessing activities by reference to industry-wide practices.

Benchmarking is a collaborative learning process among a group of organizations to focus on specific operating practices, compare measures and results and identify improved processes within their organizations. Benchmarking is often used in the context of **best practice** (see 8) or **good practice** (see 55) and both external and internal benchmarking can lead to the identification of best practice. In the **Knowledge management** (see 95) context, benchmarking is often used to assess how KM activities compare with those used in other organizations. Organizations that have begun to consciously manage **knowledge** (see 80) often look for benchmarks in other similar organizations. [6] [13]

8. Best practice

Practice seen as having worked in the past and which it is anticipated will work in similar situations in the future.

Practices and processes that have been proven to work well and produce good results are captured and made available so that others may learn from them and avoid re-inventing the wheel. Some authors prefer the more realistic term **good practice** (see 55), whereas others argue that best practice is a dangerous term as it assumes that the circumstances of the past and future can be fully known. Both these terms are also related to **evidence-based practice** (see 49). [12]

9. Blue pages

Structured directory of external contacts.

Usually electronic, this directory identifies those organizations and people with which the organization has relationships and is generally referenced to formal material maintained by the HR function, not requiring maintenance by the individual. Similar to, but different from, **Yellow pages** (see 145). [6] [14]

Business intelligence**Business process****Capability****Chief Information Officer (CIO)****Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO)
CIO****10. Business intelligence**

Collated and analysed **knowledge** (see 80) and **information** (see 61) relevant to the organization that enables informed decisions to be made.

The result of a process of gathering, processing, analysing and using knowledge and information relevant to an organization and its business environment that enables the organization to make more intelligent decisions, achieve specific goals and attain success. Includes **competitive intelligence** (see 27) and embraces both published information and intelligence gathered by other means. [6] [12] [15] [PAS 2001 (3.2.2.1)]

11. Business process

Established set of activities that enable an organization to achieve a specific goal.

Within a **Knowledge management** (see 95) context organizations can realize value by reviewing whether their **knowledge assets** (see 81) and flows are fully supporting their business processes. Similarly the examination of the organization's business issues and problems from a knowledge perspective may lead to improvements in efficiency and effectiveness of business processes. [16] [17]

12. Capability

The ability to apply skills, experience and resources in the context of an organization.

Capability can refer to both individuals and organizations. An organization's core capabilities can be viewed as the set of **knowledge** (see 80) and behaviours that distinguishes and provides it with competitive advantage. Capability includes values and norms, knowledge and skills, managerial processes and technical processes. [18] [19]

13. Chief Information Officer (CIO)

Senior position with strategic responsibility for information technology and **Information Management** (see 65).

A generic term used to describe a role with strategic responsibility for ensuring that the information technology strategy and investment and information management capability support business objectives cost effectively. [6]

14. Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO)

Senior position with strategic responsibility for **knowledge strategies** (see 111) and policies.

A generic term used to describe the role with strategic responsibility for ensuring that knowledge strategies are embedded within all appropriate business strategies and processes. This role also articulates and champions the knowledge vision and provides the organizational leadership to implement and sustain knowledge practices and behaviours. [6] [15] [PAS 2001 (2.6.2)]

15. CIO

Abbreviation for Chief Information Officer

16. CKO

Abbreviation for Chief Knowledge Officer

CKO

COC

COI

Collaboration

Combination

Communal learning

Communities

17. COC

Abbreviation for Communities of Commitment

18. COI

Abbreviation for Communities of Interest

19. Collaboration

Transferring and sharing **information** (see 61) and **knowledge** (see 80) among colleagues, customers and partner organizations.

Although a generic term, collaboration has a specific connotation in knowledge management where it specifies close working relationships involving the sharing of knowledge. It is often used in the context of partnerships, communities and their creation and sharing of knowledge. [12]

20. Combination

The process of converting **explicit knowledge** (see 51) into more complex and systematic sets of explicit knowledge.

This is the explicit to explicit link in the **SECI process** (see 130). Individuals exchange and combine **knowledge** (see 80) through documents, meetings, conversations and electronic means. Examining and reviewing knowledge from a variety of sources leads to new knowledge. An example would be the synthesis of a number of internal and external reports and documents into a single overview appropriate to the organizational context and with added insight. The process gives rise to **Systemic knowledge** (see 141). [20] [21]

21. Communal learning

Learning that takes place within a group with some common context.

Communal learning within a **Knowledge management** (see 95) environment typically involves working together to understand the context, identify trends and key insights; generate alternative paths to reach a goal, and build new knowledge. [22]

22. Communities

Groups of people with a common purpose, interest or task.

Communities frequently exist in organizations on an informal basis. In a **Knowledge management** (see 95) environment communities are seen as a means to connect people who do not usually work together on a day-to-day basis. One, but by no means the only view, sees three main types of communities – **Communities of Commitment** (see 23), **Communities of Interest** (see 24) and **Communities of Practice** (see 25). [6] [7]

Communities of Commitment. (COC)**Communities of Interest (COI)****Communities of Practice****Competence****23. Communities of Commitment. (COC)**

Communities of purpose (non-preferred)
Delivery networks (non-preferred)

Groups of people accountable for the delivery of a clear business goal.

Also referred to as delivery networks, these communities frequently have a fixed life until what they are aiming for is delivered, for example a project or internal initiative. [6]

24. Communities of Interest (COI)

Knowledge network (non-preferred)

Groups of people who share **knowledge** (see 80) and experience based around a common interest.

A Community of Interest is often broader in scope than a **community of practice** (25) and may have members who join to learn. These communities may exist inside and outside organizations, e.g. hobby, professional standards, ethics, benchmarking groups, etc. [4]

25. Communities of Practice

Enabling networks (non-preferred)
Knowledge network (non-preferred)

Groups of people who develop **competence** (see 26) and **good practice** (see 55) for their organization in a defined area.

Also known as Enabling Networks, Communities of Practice bring together and attract people who do not normally work together to share their knowledge and create better working practices for the organization. Communities of Practice may continually emerge and dissolve. They act as mechanisms for increasing **tacit knowledge** (see 142) and also for transforming tacit knowledge into **explicit knowledge** (see 51). Communities are now an accepted route to build corporate **capability** (see 12) in knowledge-focused organizations. [4] [15] [PAS 2001 (2.2.5)]

26. Competence

A general description of the abilities needed by an organization to perform successfully.

Organizational competence is the mix of skills, expertise, experience, know-how and processes, and the ability to sustain and deploy these in a way which enables the organization to achieve its goals. Personal competence is the mix of skills, expertise, experience and personal attributes that enable an individual to carry out their role successfully. [5] [14] [18]

27. Competitive intelligence

Collated, analysed and interpreted **information** (see 61) and **knowledge** (see 80) concerning the competitive environment.

In **Knowledge management** (see 95) environments competitive intelligence is often a key goal. This term/concept is therefore often used in the context of formalizing and improving a process that is ongoing. It aims to ensure that **information** (see 61) about the competitive environment (that is published formally and gathered informally or through business activities and networks) is systematically and effectively gathered and assessed. Part of **business intelligence** (see 10) [6]

Competitive intelligence

Competitor Intelligence

Conceptual knowledge

Content architecture

Content help desks

Content management

28. Competitor intelligence

Collated, analysed and interpreted **information** (see 61) and **knowledge** (see 80) concerning competitors.

Competitor intelligence is similar to **competitive intelligence** (see 27) but focuses on competitors only. [6]

29. Conceptual knowledge

The product of transforming **tacit knowledge** (see 142) to make it explicit.

In the **SECI process** (see 130), conceptual knowledge is produced by **externalization** (see 52). For example some claim that tacit knowledge on customer needs is of more value to an organization if it can be made into explicit conceptual knowledge, others argue that this is not always the case. [6] [1]

30. Content architecture

Method of cataloguing and tagging **information** (see 61) or

(see 80) in a consistent way and with consistent language, so that this information can be moved around and between organizations seamlessly. [15]

31. Content help desks

Often the first point of contact for users needing assistance with content. The role of a Content Help Desk is to enable staff to become more information literate and conversant with the knowledge-enabling tools available to them on their desktop. Experience has shown that users are much more likely to use the tools and **information** (see 61) correctly if they are supported through initial use. [15]

32. Content management

Ability to capture, manage, index and distribute **knowledge** (see 80) and **information** (see 61) in diverse formats across various applications and types of output.

The term is generally applied to the management of digital information assets although these assets may be key to connecting people and their **tacit knowledge** (see 142). It requires a set of rules, roles and processes to manage the content life cycle through origination, publication, delivery and expiry in such a way that quality information is delivered to the user. [12] [15] [PAS 2001 (2.4)]



Documents

Document Sharing Hub

CoP

Core competence

Corporate memory

Culture

Customer capital

33. CoP

Abbreviation for: Communities of Practice or Communities of Purpose

34. Core competence

Core business competence (non-preferred)

Organizationally embedded **knowledge assets** (see 81) that can deliver differential value and competitive advantage.

The core value statement of an organization. Normally taken to mean something that a customer is willing to pay for and the competitors find hard or impossible to imitate, core competence differs from product and market competency in that an organization's core competence outlives its product life cycles and market swings. [5] [18]

35. Corporate memory

Organizational memory (non-preferred)

Practices and **intellectual capital** (see 70) embodied in an organization which influence its behaviour.

Tacit or explicit understanding of an organization's people, processes or products along with its traditions and values. Corporate memory may assist or inhibit an organization in making progress. In a **Knowledge management** (see 95) environment the organization seeks to ensure the quality of the corporate memory and its appropriate use. [12]

36. Culture

Learned way of perceiving, thinking and feeling, shared and transmitted among organizational members.

An often used shorthand definition of culture is "the way we do things round here". Increasingly, a successful knowledge sharing culture is one of transformation, in which everyone exhibits the behaviours and characteristics that successful change demands, although this may be seen as idealistic and can not be achieved on a sustainable basis. Culture tends to be indiscriminately used to describe any issue or problem related to human behaviour. Behaviours that are already deeply ingrained and those that are aspirations vary across all countries, practices and people. [11] [15] [PAS 2001 (2.2 and 3.5.5)]

37. Customer capital

Combined value of all the relationships an organization has with its clients.

Customer capital is a component of **Intellectual capital** (see 70). It includes relationships with, and knowledge about, the client's people, culture, products, markets, processes and values gained through all business contact. It also includes the processes that underpin successful customer communication and the trust established between the client and supplier. [2] [6] [15] [PAS 2001(1.3)]

38. Customer relationship management

Combination of business processes, corporate culture, knowledge sharing, and technology used to manage relationships with customers.

A relatively new term coined with the availability of software to integrate dispersed information on customers. Customer relationship management (CRM) is a business strategy to select and manage the most valuable customer relationships. It requires a customer-centric business philosophy and **culture** (see 36) to support effective marketing, sales, and service processes. [6]

Customer relationship management

Data

Data mining

Deutero learning

Diffusion

39. Data

Facts, statistics, than can, frequently, be analysed to derive **information** (see 61).

A recording of facts, concepts, and instructions for automatic communication, retrieval, and processing to produce information that is comprehensible to its audience. [12] [15]

40. Data mining

Technique for analysing **data** (see 39) in very large databases. Analysis of data can reveal trends and patterns i.e. **knowledge** (see 80) that can be used to improve business processes. [15]

41. Deutero learning

Integrative learning (non-preferred)

Systematic learning (non-preferred)

A strategy for organizational learning that questions why errors have arisen, seeks to extract implicit rules and to put learning into context.

Deutero learning occurs when an organization learns how to learn by challenging why errors have arisen from the widest relevant perspective, thus avoiding the hardening of mindsets that is the biggest barrier to learning. Organizations that have learned to carry out both **single** (see 131) and **double loop learning** (see 45) are said to be practising Deutero learning. [3] [22] [23]

42. Diffusion

Sharing newly created insights with a target population.

Diffusion is one of the steps in the **social learning cycle** (see 134) and follows **scanning** (see 128). It covers alerting people to new **information** (see 61) and **knowledge** (see 80). The diffusion of well codified and abstract **data** (see 39) to a large population will be technically less problematic than that of data which is uncoded and context specific. This term is fundamental for the **learning organization** (see 114) concept. [5] [24]