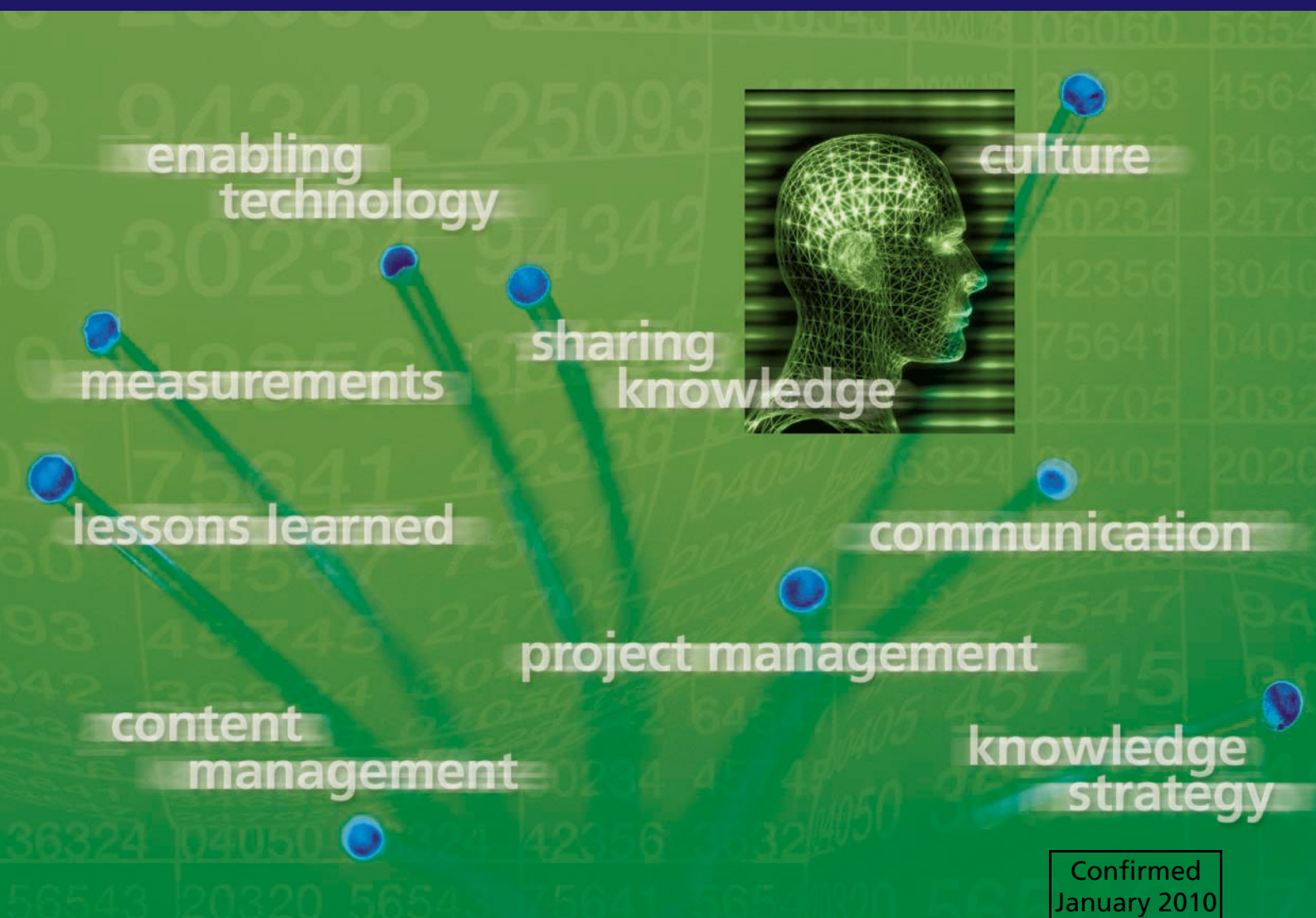


Introduction to Knowledge Management in Construction



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The following BSI references
Relate to the work on this standard

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Foreword

The purpose of this document is to bring ‘**informed clarity**’ to the understanding and practice of knowledge management (KM) in the construction industry.

To date, the value of KM has been primarily recognized in a number of highly competitive areas of private industry, including the pharmaceuticals, energy, consulting and manufacturing industries. Much of the public sector and some areas of private industry, such as construction, still have some way to go before they gain the full benefits of effective KM.

In 2001, the well received ‘Knowledge Management: A Guide to Good Practice’ (PAS 2001) was published. The subsequent publication of sector specific guidance documents, such as this one, complements the comprehensive but generic PAS 2001.

This document is consistent with and forms an integrated whole with existing and planned BSI KM-related documentation including:

- PAS 2001 - Knowledge Management: A Guide to Good Practice
- PD 7500 - Knowledge Management Vocabulary
- PD 7501 - Managing Culture and Knowledge: Guide to Good Practice
- PD 7502 - Measurements in Knowledge Management: Guide to Good Practice

Introduction

The document outlines the idea of KM and the many ways it can benefit the construction industry and then summarizes the key issues to be addressed when introducing KM to a company. The document aims to stimulate the reader by providing a set of case studies which outline examples where construction industry companies, both large and small, have applied and benefited from KM.

On offer is concise guidance to those wishing to make progress in this area, but it is not intended to be comprehensive – readers should refer to PAS 2001 and the other BSI KM literature for more detailed guidance where appropriate.

Industry issues

Different industrial industries, by the nature of their size, structure and activities will have differing KM needs. The construction industry is no different in this, it having a number of key differentiators from many other industries. The construction industry:

- is large, comprising between 10 % and 11 % of the UK GDP,
- is highly disaggregated in terms of:
 - company size (small and medium enterprises (SME) to large multinational enterprises (MNE))
 - company activity (engineering, planning, development, architecture, material/products suppliers etc.)
 - user (home-owner, health, education, commerce, industry),
- comprises a large number of organizations, and
- is highly project focused, with teams forming for projects and breaking up afterwards.

Target audience for the document

From the above analysis it is clear that the construction industry is highly disaggregated. A 'one size fits all' approach will not work in such an industry and the document needs to be aimed at the part of the industry where maximum impact can be gained.

To this end, the primary audience of this document is SMEs within the industry. These companies are able to apply appropriate resource to implement the necessary actions to benefit from KM. Within these companies this document is in part aimed at the board member who may have been tasked with knowledge-related matters – possibly the Chief Executive Officer or Technical Director.

Micro-SMEs (≤ 10 people), although making up a substantial proportion of the construction industry, are unlikely to take significant benefit from the more formal and complex KM practices, as their primary function is to tackle communication and information exchange across large organizations.

Larger companies in the sector may well be well advanced in implementing KM practices. They will most likely be aware of current management thinking on the issues, will have appropriate resources and will have a track record of implementing new ideas. This audience may be more advanced in their KM thinking and if so, would perhaps gain more benefit from other BSI KM literature – for details of these publications see [References and further reading](#).

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1 Scope

This Published Document gives guidance on KM in the construction industry. The construction industry is a particularly complex one, often with a wide range of specialist companies working together, sometimes with a complex customer structure, to design and build a single building or set of buildings. This complexity can result in process inefficiency and the need for remedial and repair work, all of which can have significant cost implications to both the contractors as well as the building owners and users. The document introduces KM as a way of avoiding potentially costly mistakes by streamlining the flow of knowledge and information within the construction process and across the supply chain.

Although this Published Document discusses various different management sciences (for example environmental management) it does so only, by way of example or analogy. This Published Document is primarily oriented to KM and is not intended to cover other specialized management sciences.