

Questions Executives Should Ask About Knowledge Management in Their Organizations...

By Mike Prevou, Ph.D.

Today's executives have been raised in the era of knowledge management (KM). The common question from 10 years ago ("What is KM, and what can it do for my company?") is seldom asked anymore. Instead, it's been replaced by a question about process:

How do we talk with our staff and business unit leaders about KM?

Having the right conversation with your team about how your organization captures, shares, and manages knowledge, along with probing questions on how knowledge flows in support of effective decision making is critical. It is a conversation every executive should have with staff.

But where do you start? When we assess the Knowledge Environment™ in a company, we often begin with 15 simple questions. These questions are designed to peek at the workings of KM inside an organization and begin to give you an idea of which elements of KM work, and which could use improvement. From there, you can begin to build an effective KM program. Ask these questions in your organization and you might be surprised at what you learn.

- What is the most valuable knowledge in our company?
- Is the most valuable knowledge in our company written down, or is it in the heads of our employees and experts?
- How can improving the way we share information save us time and money?
- Where do we currently link our KM strategy and KM practices to our business strategy?
- Do our people share and collaborate effectively? (Follow up questions: What are our barriers to collaboration? How can we break down barriers to improve knowledge exchange?)
- What rules, policies, and guidance have we established to help knowledge flow? (Or, what rules, policies, and guidance have we established that disrupt knowledge flow?)
- How have we organized our key documents so people can get what they need when they need it? (Or, can our people easily find what they need to do their jobs?)
- Do we manage documents, or are we managing organizational knowledge? (Follow up question: How do we differentiate between the two?)
- How do we differentiate between information management and knowledge management?
- What processes are in place that allow us to assess, acquire, organize, validate, manage, integrate, and transfer knowledge? (Follow up questions: Where are these processes listed and mapped? Can everyone access them? How do we train our people to perform them?)
- How are our business processes enabled by technology?

- Do our people resist using new systems (technology) and processes? If so, why?
- What collaboration and sharing behaviors do we want our employees to exhibit?
- Do we allow time (and provide space) for our people to collaborate and share knowledge?
- Are our meetings effective? (Follow up questions: What do we actually accomplish during meetings? How could meetings be better?)

These questions are a great place to start a conversation and raise awareness of how sound KM practices can help your organization.

To learn more about what KM is, what KM is not, and how KM can help your organization, check out our free preview of ***Everything You Need to Know about Knowledge Management in Practice in 140 Characters or Less*** at www.strategickS.com.

For more helpful tips, contact Mike Prevou at Mike@StrategickS.com.