



February 2016

Knowledge Management Governance

The missing link for success



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Other News



Governance seems to be the neglected element in many KM programs, but is an essential part of any management framework. You can have all the roles, processes and technologies you need, but without governance Knowledge Management may never get off the ground.

In this newsletter members of our world-wide Knoco family address this crucial element, explore the three components of governance, and look at what happens when governance is missing.



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We have introduced a range of low-investment starter offers, for companies wishing to get started in KM.

These include quick and easy ways to

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Why governance is important



[Nick Milton,](#)
[Knoco UK](#)

We have seen many examples of organisations with what look like very good Knowledge Management systems which are not being used. For example, they might have defined accountability for capturing knowledge from projects, they might have a defined process for [lessons capture meetings](#), and they might have a top range lessons management system, and yet only a trickle of lessons are entering the database, and even fewer are actually re-used.

So what is missing, when a system is in place but is not used? You could say "culture" or "behaviours" - but both of these are outcomes of something else. To understand what else is needed, let's think about what makes people adhere to other systems at work. For example, what makes people follow the (sometimes onerous) safety procedures, or the security procedures, or the time writing procedures?

The answer is **Governance**. In each successful case, people know the rules and expectations, they know how to follow the rules, and they know if they don't follow the rules, there will be consequences. These three elements are the elements of governance, and apply to every management system, at work or at home.

Our knowledge management assessments show that governance is one of the least well developed aspects of KM, but is one of the elements that will make most impact to the longevity of your KM program. Read on to learn more, or contact us for help in developing your own KM governance program.

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The three elements of governance



**[Rupert
Lescott,
Knoco UK](#)**

Knowledge is a key factor that influences on performance of teams and efficiency of processes. Because of this, when an organization takes the decision of implement a knowledge management model it's crucial to integrate it in a governance framework.

We see the KM governance framework having three main elements:

- The company expectations about knowledge management: what level of KM activity is expected, who is expected to do it, what standard is expected, and when it should be done. These expectations can be set out in a [KM policy](#) or similar document, and there may be separate expectations for sub-components of KM such as communities of practice, lesson learning and the corporate knowledge base.
- **Performance management:** [measuring the application of knowledge management](#), looking for the teams and individuals that are performing well against the expectations and recognising them, and looking for the teams and individuals that are performing poorly and offering them support.
- Support: the resources offered to support people in meeting the KM expectations, including resources for [training](#), coaching and monitoring, and online reference resources, elearning and manuals that cover the KM processes, roles and technologies.

Those three elements together - clarity of expectation, a link to performance management and a high level of support – make sure the KM task gets done, despite the distraction of more urgent (though often less important) work activities.

[Read more about Knowledge Management Governance here](#)

Leadership expectation



**Cory
Cannon, Knoco
US (Kansas)**

Through my years working in Knowledge Management in both the military and civilian realms, one of the items that always comes up is the importance of governance for the program. Establishment of clear expectations for how Knowledge Management program will work in the organization provides that much needed guidance for the Knowledge workers in the company.

There are three simple things to consider when developing these expectations:

- Ensure your [Knowledge Management policy](#) follows the mission and vision of the organization. Having your governance nested with the mission and vision links your program to the larger strategic goals of the company and gains that crucial buy-in from the Corporate Levels of the company.
- Include a statement from the leadership expressing the importance of the program. This can be a simple one page forward or memorandum from the person who is either the company president or the person who acts in the Chief of Staff role for the organization. This statement gives validity to your program and shows the middle management they need to take this policy seriously.
- Understand who is your audience: If your company is at one location with only local individuals then KM governance and a KM policy are relatively easy to develop. However, if the organization involves multiple locations and especially different cultures, these have to be kept in consideration.

These considerations, no matter if the organization is only 50 people from the local neighbourhood or 50.000 people from 64 nations gives

the focus on your program and the importance it is not only to yourself but how it affects the entire mission of the company.

[Contact us](#) for help in defining your own KM policy

Metrics and governance



[Didier Plegat,](#)
[Knoco France](#)

Good governance requires good metrics, and you cannot govern what you cannot measure. This is as true of Knowledge Management as it is of anything. We need to be able to measure both compliance with the KM expectations, and also KM activity levels down to the level of the individual.

We need to know:

- Who are the experts in our key focus areas, and how engaged are they with the communities?
- What are the topics for which we lack expertise?
- How can we prevent our company from a loss of critical knowledge related to turnover or retirement of employees?
- How well are we disseminating knowledge in our organization?

In our changing world, with dispersed organisations and more and more complex business issues, it is essential to answer precisely these questions to build and steer a successful knowledge management program. Luckily there are a lot more online networks about nowadays, the concept of [Communities of Practice](#) is widespread, and the ability to collect big data about Community activity.

However, there often is a lack of analysis tools for the transformation of raw data into meaningful and useful information for Knowledge Management purposes. An efficient solution is based on three pillars: defining indicators which reflect quantity and quality of knowledge and knowledge sharing; using advanced algorithms such graph theory to model relations between knowledge objects; and finally, making the

This model is totally aligned with the background of the governance frame, particularly for individuals with a [Knowledge Management role](#) to play, such as the KM champions, the departmental or project knowledge managers, the community of practice coordinators or the process owners. So, if you are implementing (or have already implemented) a knowledge management model and one of your concerns is related with governance, you can develop or align your existing model of MBO to ensure that it includes also the appraisal of KM-related aspects of specific roles, or just general engagement with the KM expectations of the organisation.

[Contact us](#) for help in building a KM performance management system.

Governance in lesson learning



**[Ian Fry, Knoco E
Australia](#)**

The starting point is that Lessons Learned itself is an act of Governance; making sure positive lessons and techniques are promulgated, and that something is done about negative outcomes. Unfortunately we regularly see organisations "observe" lessons without actioning them, and in many cases we can trace multi-million dollar losses occurring, with the probability of ongoing losses. This important role of Lessons Learned has finally been acknowledged in ISO9001-2015.

Within a [Lessons Learned regime](#) there are three important points of governance.

- The first is **Root Cause Analysis**. This is a well-established practice and we encourage it. It means continuing to ask "Why" until you have identified the actual factor (and ALL the factors) responsible for a specific organisational outcome. Too often we see organisations jumping to the first conclusion resulting in re-occurrence of the outcome.

- The second is **Validation**. It comes up frequently when we discuss Lessons Learned with organisations. This means that the Lesson is validated by a subject matter expert, preferably within the organisation. Again we are seeking a complete understanding of the context and outcome. Even if the lesson is raised by a senior and experienced person, it should still be submitted to peer review to test for completeness.
- The third is ensuring action. A lesson is not learned until something has changes, and every lesson is associated with a change action. The lessons learned regime ensures these actions are assigned, and taken. Once the action is complete, the lesson can be archived.

These 3 points of governance are important in all lesson-learning systems. Where they really stand out is when it is established that the outcome was due to non-compliance. In that case the organisation has nothing to "learn", and the Validation and Root Cause Analysis will replace the reported "lesson" with a new one around training and discipline. The Lessons Management Hub (LMH) software embodies these governance points.

[Contact us](#) to learn more about effective lesson learning and the Lessons Management Hub

When governance is missing



[Ewa Stelmaszek](#)
[Knoco Poland](#)

Do you know what Brownian motion is? Brownian motion is the random movement of microscopic particles suspended in a liquid or gas, caused by collisions with molecules of the surrounding medium. For the external observer the movement is completely chaotic, although a lot of energy is involved.

The key word here is "random", which is what I saw in a recent [KM implementation program](#) for an educational portal. The portal was a great tool with a complex functionality, an easy way to create its own e-courses, support social activity and cooperation, find experts, make surveys and questionnaires. and of course to collect and share

knowledge. It was a really great tool, and people liked it. However the downfall of the project was the Brownian motion syndrome.

Different people in different places of the organization implemented the functionality they liked or were simply fascinated in. Sometimes other people joined them. Sometimes not. Sometimes they stopped using a particular tool, or changed the subject of their interest. They were no rules, no clear expectations, so they could stop whenever they wanted and start something new. From my external observer's point of view it was just random activity.

What was lacking was a clear Governance framework, with a set of expectations related to the question "What do we want to achieve?" This would put some rules on the chaotic activity, stop the Brownian motion, and direct the flow of knowledge in service of the company's strategy.

Continuous improvement as part of KM governance



Ian Corbett,
Knoco S
Africa

When Nick requested input for a newsletter focused on governance, it made me wonder how many boards of organisations actively apply Knowledge Management to the improvement of governance.

In his book [The Corporate Citizen](#) Mervyn King (South Africa's governance guru and author of the King Reports) says that "Good governance is a journey and not a destination. It is a continuous learning process". Interestingly, knowledge and the development of experience features frequently in the book and Mervyn King highlights the danger of "asymmetrical knowledge" at board level produced by an imbalance in internal "coalface" knowledge of a business with external experience. He also makes a point that rigidity in process can dilute enterprise.

Governance, like many organisational activities, is a dynamic process that should continuously improve in order to meet the challenge of

changing external and internal dynamics. From King's perspective quality and continuous improvement should be fostered in the company's control procedures. Like the revised ISO9001:2015 standard, this focuses attention on how an organisation is led. If leaders make the judgement call on introducing KM, it is vitally important that they should contribute to defining how it will be applied to add value by applying their "coalface knowledge of the business".

Knoco has found this to be a key differentiator of success versus failure when it comes to KM implementation. Where leaders abdicate this important judgement call to people with limited knowledge of the business and the way in which it creates and delivers value, the return on the investment is much harder to achieve. For this reason, good KM governance should include a regular health check, where the effectiveness of KM processes are reviewed and lessons learned reapplied to continuously improve the value adding capability the KM team can bring by exercising enterprising thinking.

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