

Measuring 'knowledge' in organisations

May 2008



Outline

- Definitions
- Benefits
- Activities
- Methods
- Standards & Good Practices
- Tools
- Eliciting information (asking the right questions)
- Case studies
- Gurus



Definitions – Audit Types

- Financial
- Compliance
- Investigative
- Operational
- Information Audit
- Knowledge Management Audit
- Knowledge Mapping
- Knowledge Audit (K-Audit)



Refer to Handout for definitions

Information vs Knowledge Audits

What is the difference between an **Information Audit** and a **Knowledge Audit** – or is there a difference?

An Information Audit:

looks at the explicit assets an organisation has in its documented and recorded information e.g. what is in the document repositories, hardcopy and electronic, what databases does it have, what procedures, what information collections does it hold ...



Knowledge Audit

What is a knowledge audit?

“Systematic investigation, examination, verification, measurement and evaluation of explicit and tacit knowledge resources and assets, in order to determine how efficiently and effectively they are used and leveraged by the organisation” Ann Hylton

“The systematic analysis of an organization's information and knowledge entities and their key attributes, such as ownership, usage and flows, mapped against user and organizational knowledge needs” David Skyrme



Benefits

Some of the reasons for doing a Knowledge Audit are:

- Helps identify knowledge needs to support organisational goals
- Tangible evidence of the extent knowledge is effectively managed (shared, leveraged etc)
- Provides a map to show what knowledge exists, where it is, and whether there are any duplication or gaps
- Reveals pockets of knowledge that are not being used to best advantage – untapped potential
- Shows knowledge sources and any sinks or blocks
- Provides information to tailor knowledge management initiatives



K-Audit Activities

1. Identify what knowledge exists

- Identify & locate explicit & tacit knowledge
- Determine sinks, sources, flows, blockages
- Map ways knowledge is captured, shared, used & saved

2. Identify what knowledge is missing

- Assess corporate aims, objectives, skills, competencies against mandatory requirements & best practices
- Perform a gap analysis
- Determine who needs the missing knowledge & why they need it

3. Report and recommend suggestions for improvement



Methods

Background research

Workshops & discussions

Questionnaire survey

Face-to-face interviews

Observation

Knowledge mapping (process flow & gap analysis)



Standards and good practices

Know what you are using to benchmark

- Knowledge Management Standard (Standards Australia)
- AGIMO best practices (Checklists)
- Creditable research (e.g. peer reviewed articles)
- Tertiary course material
- Public Sector guidelines (if a Govt Department)
- Case studies – K-Audits in similar organisations
- Corporate Objectives, KPIs
- Previous Audit Reports



Tools

Templates (Gap Analysis, As is – To Be)

Standards (KM Standard), Best practice (AGIMO)

Robust methodology

Tested survey instruments

Mind Maps

Microsoft Office (e.g. Excel)

Creditable research



Developing the right questions

Take time to prepare

- Include both qualitative and quantitative elements

Test the instruments – usability

- No jargon, no bias, no ambiguity, clear instructions

Know how the results will be analysed and used

- Be careful when attributing significance



Break out – Audit Questions

What would you say about asking the following questions in an emailed Knowledge Audit Questionnaire?

- Do you transfer knowledge regularly?
- Do you think a knowledge portal helps in knowledge sharing and transfer?
- If this organisation introduces a knowledge portal in 2006, will you use it to share your experience with other colleagues? Chong & Lee – Re-thinking Knowledge Audit

What are some good questions to ask in a Knowledge Audit?



HANDOUT Standards Australia Audit Questions

Case Study 1 - Organisation A

Organisation A – privately owned consulting company based in QLD with Offices interstate including in Canberra. A handful of permanent staff and about 100 contractors were involved in activities like:

- ERP implementation
- Business process re-engineering
- Change management strategies
- Policy development
- HR outsourcing
- KM – a new KM Business Line was established



Challenge for Organisation A

- To identify gaps in service delivery to clients so that these may be addressed
- To improve internal business processes and productivity and to increase their store of knowledge capital
- To provide improved systems and processes to allow R staff to collaborate (eg improved web access)



Method – Organisation A

WHAT ADEPT KM DID

- Initial research (Intranet, manuals) to obtain any knowledge artefacts produced by the company – many were restricted
- Developed a list of questions and sought approval to canvass staff/contractors in ACT and QLD – CEO endorsement was not promulgated
- Conducted some one-on-one interviews - met with some resistance and a lack of understanding of the purpose
- Contracted external company (also based in QLD) to allay concerns about sharing knowledge



Audit findings – Organisation A

WHAT WE FOUND

- ❖ Culture of knowledge hoarding (Consultants reluctant to share their knowledge)
- ❖ Distrust between Canberra and QLD personnel – access problems in obtaining templates etc via the Intranet
- ❖ Each project was conducted in isolation – little re-use, debriefing etc

NB The company was forced into liquidation before the Audit could be completed



Case Study 2 – Organisation B

Large Government Department Branch About 100 people (mainly QLD and ACT) who fulfil various design roles (internal consultancy). The challenge was to:

- Create & implement a knowledge management strategy that was built upon three key areas: **people**, **processes** & **technology**
- Complete a KM audit to identify the essential knowledge elements to support a knowledge strategy
- Highlight existing knowledge assets and thereby make them accountable and relevant to organisational performance



Method – Organisation B

WHAT ADEPT KM DID

- Initial research – Intranet & shared drive
- Leveraged work by RMIT on a Government Senior Executive Survey – used results from ATO Executives
- Obtained responses from the Business Line using a 'tick & flick' electronic survey
- Conducted a range of semi-structured individual interviews and observations
- Conducted a basic knowledge mapping exercise



Audit findings – Organisation B

WHAT WE FOUND

- ❖ Support for existing knowledge sharing & support initiatives
- ❖ Need for additional 'cross-team' sharing
- ❖ Need for improved tacit knowledge capture from leavers
- ❖ Need for improved targeted training
- ❖ Need for improved access to 'experts' and artefacts
- ❖ Need for clarity of roles & responsibilities
- ❖ Need for improved systems for collaboration, version control, archival etc



Case Study 3 - Organisation C

Small specialised team in a Government Department – seen as a Pilot site for Knowledge Management.

The challenge was to:

- Complete a Knowledge Audit to identify gaps that could be addressed by a knowledge strategy and some politically driven initiatives (e.g. CoPs)
- Undertake the K-Audit without using 'Knowledge Management jargon' like Tacit or Explicit Knowledge



Method – Organisation C

WHAT ADEPT KM DID

- Established Project Management procedures - scope, reporting, concepts
- Undertook preliminary research & later Industry research
- Developed and tested survey instruments
- Conducted 'As is - To Be' workshops
- Administered electronic questionnaire
- Conducted individual semi-structured interviews
- Analysed results
- Mapped processes & knowledge sources, sinks, flows
- Undertook a skills and knowledge inventory
- Performed a gap analysis
- Suggested recommendations in a final report



Preliminary findings – Organisation C

WHAT WE FOUND

The findings were:

- ❖ Demonstrated support for a culture of knowledge sharing
- ❖ Good personal knowledge networks – but not team ones
- ❖ Some documentation of knowledge processes
- ❖ Some problems associated with explicit knowledge (information) management – version control, access, archival, search, publication, catalogues



Gurus

- Ann Hylton www.annhilton.com
- Patrick Lambe www.straitsknowledge.com
- David Skyrme www.skyrme.com
- Denham Grey www.kmwiki.wikispaces.com

Journal Articles

Burnett Simon, Illingworth Lorraine and Webster Linda. **Knowledge auditing and mapping: a pragmatic approach**. Knowledge and Process Management. 2004, Volume 11 Issue 1, pp 25-37

Liebowitz Jay, et al. **The knowledge audit**. Knowledge and Process Management. 2000, Volume 7 Issue 1, pp 3-10



Questions and Discussion

