

# **BSBINM302**

# **Utilise a knowledge management system**

Release 1

**Learner guide**

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Aspire Version 1.1

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# Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBINM302 Utilise a knowledge management system*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au).

## How to work through this learner guide

This learner guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the learner guide you need to read, and which practice tasks and learning checkpoints you need to complete. The features of this learner guide are detailed in the following table.

Feature of the learner guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	Read each topic in this learner guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.
Examples and case studies	Examples of completed documents that may be used in a workplace are included in this learner guide. You can use these examples as models to help you complete practice tasks and learning checkpoints. Case studies highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice tasks	Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.
Video clips	Where QR codes appear, learners can use smartphones and other devices to access video clips relating to the content. For information about how to download a QR reader app or accessing video on your device, please visit our website: <a href="http://www.aspirelr.com.au/help">www.aspirelr.com.au/help</a>
Summary	Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning checkpoints	There is a learning checkpoint at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which learning checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.



## Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

The following table outlines specific foundation skills noted for your learning in this learner guide.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Builds on knowledge and experience from the use and review of using the knowledge management system, and applies knowledge to improve work practices</li> </ul>
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehends textual information, incorporating ideas and concepts from a range of sources, and checks for accuracy and relevance</li> </ul>
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documents information analysis and emphasises key outcomes using vocabulary and structure appropriate to audience</li> </ul>
Oral communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expresses own observations and opinions using clear and specific language to relevant personnel</li> <li>Elicits views and information from others and obtains information by listening and questioning</li> </ul>
Navigate the world of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understands rights and responsibilities, and complies with explicit procedures in the workplace</li> </ul>
Interact with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies and takes steps to follow accepted communication practices and protocols when providing feedback</li> </ul>
Get the work done	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plans and implements routine tasks and workload making limited decisions on sequencing, timing and collaboration</li> <li>Uses basic functions of digital technology tools to read, record, search and input required information</li> <li>Uses analytical processes to review and evaluate the effectiveness of workplace systems and suggest improvements</li> </ul>

## What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1: Access and use knowledge management systems	1A Access a knowledge management system to help with tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Administer the system in line with procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 2: Input to knowledge management system	2A Gather, analyse and prepare inputs	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Check inputs for clarity, accuracy, currency and relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Make inputs according to organisational procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2D Analyse and improve the system	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 3: Review and improve work practices	3A Provide feedback on the system's output to relevant personnel	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Document learning that results from using the system	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3C Learn to improve work practices	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident



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# Topic 1

## Access and use knowledge management systems

Organisations need information to operate effectively and information required has become more complex over the years. A major challenge for businesses is to organise this information so it is comprehensive, easily accessible and secure. Organisations in all industries and of all sizes need to constantly organise and manage the huge amount of data that passes in and out of the workplace.

A well-established system that turns organisational information into knowledge is known as a knowledge management system. Managing knowledge well can give an organisation an advantage over its competitors. Today's technology manipulates data at great speeds. Organisations that fail to adapt to the new information systems will probably fail to survive. Managing information so it can be translated into useful knowledge is one of the most important skills an organisation can develop. To stay competitive in a global economy, good knowledge management is essential.

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 1A Access a knowledge management system to help with tasks
- 1B Administer the system in line with procedures

# 1A

## Access a knowledge management system to help with tasks

Knowledge management systems are not new. People have always manipulated information since the moment they began to tell stories and record them for later use. The basic system of storing, accessing, retrieving and using the information is simply much faster now.

Every day, organisations deal with large amounts of information. This information might come from customers, suppliers, government departments, the general public, and even research conducted on the internet. It could also come from information already stored within the organisation.

People accessing and using information every day need to know:

- what type of information the organisation has
- what information is needed for a specific task
- how current the information is
- where the information is stored
- the procedures for accessing the information.

### Collect information

Information becomes knowledge when it is analysed and used for a specific purpose. For example, as a student you may keep information about your assignment results. At the end of the semester you analyse your results to see how you are progressing and realise, perhaps, that there is one kind of assignment for which you are regularly getting low marks. The information you have collected then becomes knowledge. You would use this knowledge to try to improve your performance.

Knowledge in an organisation is information, data and statistics that is organised meaningfully and that an organisation uses to operate efficiently and effectively. The type of knowledge an organisation has depends on the type and size of business it operates.

Here are some examples of organisational knowledge.

#### Examples of organisational knowledge

- Customer and employee details
- Sales and financial data
- Minutes of meetings
- Stock information
- Policies and procedures
- Suppliers' details
- Operational strategies

### Access information

While all organisations are different, this information is generally stored in various locations throughout the organisation. It could be stored in computerised tracking systems, filing cabinets, electronic databases, a library, in a central filing system or in a staff member's personal paper-based filing system. It might even be in someone's head.

Think about an organisation you are familiar with. The knowledge that an organisation has about its customers, its suppliers, its financial state and its operational strategies for the following months and years is all stored in its information systems.

Ask yourself these questions:

- How organised are those systems?
- Is everything on pieces of paper in different filing systems?
- Is it in the boss's head, or is there a computer system that can generate reports any time they are needed?

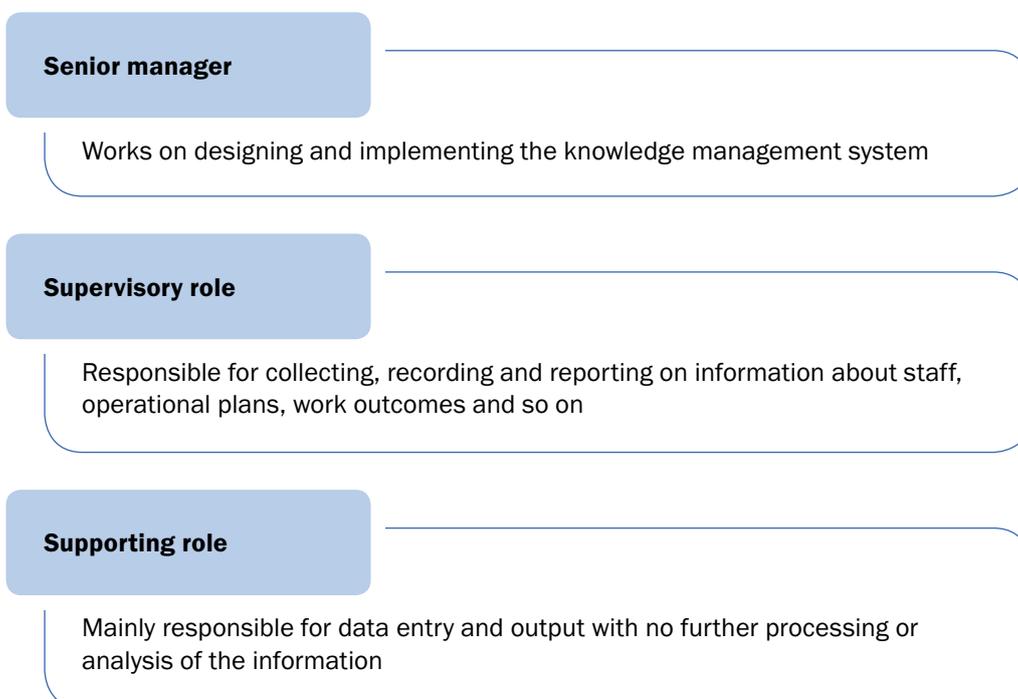


## How the system works

Throughout the day staff are constantly identifying, collecting, organising, storing, retrieving, analysing, sharing and applying knowledge to the tasks they carry out. They use a variety of strategies, methods, activities and techniques. For example, as an employee you are working with a knowledge management system when you record customer details, print out a graph of sales statistics, and look over the balance sheet provided by the accountant or meet with colleagues to discuss a marketing strategy.

To manage this knowledge, an organisation needs to plan and implement a comprehensive system that everyone in the organisation follows. What would be your role and responsibility in all this? This will vary depending on your position in the organisation and the needs of the knowledge management system.

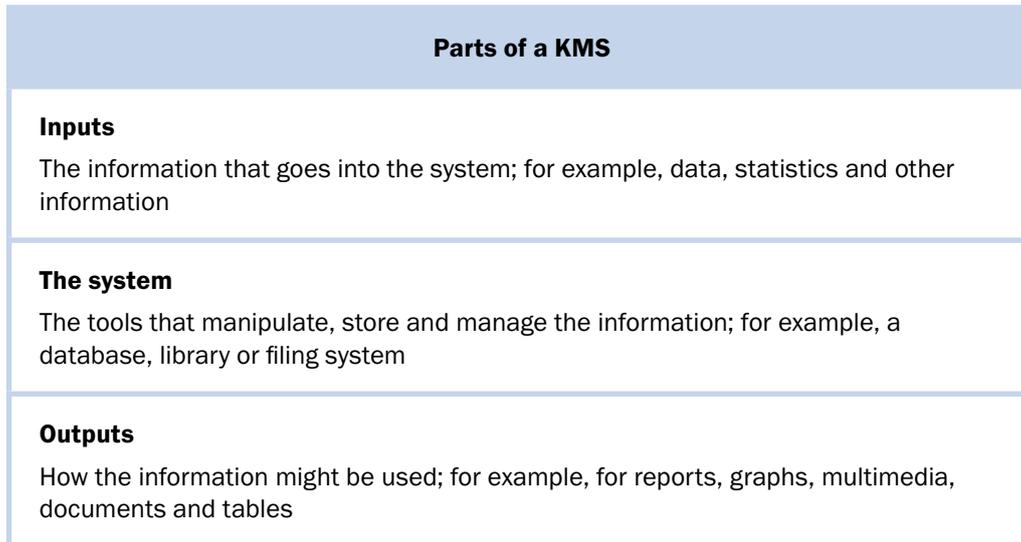
Here is an outline of the key roles and responsibilities within an information management system.



## A knowledge management system

You need to understand how such a system operates in your organisation and the procedures you have to follow to access and use the knowledge when you are undertaking your specific tasks.

Here is a depiction of a knowledge management system. It shows the type of knowledge an organisation might have, the system used to manipulate and store the knowledge and how the knowledge might be used.



## Characteristics of a knowledge management system

To be effective, a knowledge management system needs to have five characteristics. It must be comprehensive, accessible, secure, responsive and customisable. If an organisation's knowledge management system lacks any of these five characteristics, the system will not be effective.

Here are examples of characteristics of an organisation's knowledge management system.

### Comprehensive

It needs to receive relevant data for all aspects of the organisation's operation, not just a few.

### Accessible

Knowledge must be easy to retrieve and easy to understand. It is no good having data if no-one can access it or, when they can, it does not make sense. Report formats must be logical and readable.

### Secure

Knowledge in the wrong hands can help destroy an organisation. Knowledge systems must give access only to those with security clearance.

**Responsive**

The system must be able to report knowledge as fast as possible. It is no good finding out important strategic information when it is too late to make use of it.

**Customisable**

If you can tailor reports from the system so they give you just what you need at any given moment and don't supply unnecessary details, you will be less likely to suffer from information overload. Customising output of the system can give you the right information at the right time rather than too much all at once.

## Knowledge is valuable

Knowledge has a broad definition and isn't just about statistics and data. Knowledge can include resources, such as the skills and knowledge of your employees and the relationship you have with your suppliers and customers. Like a building owned by the organisation, or income saved by the organisation, it is valuable. It is an asset.

Have you ever been on a committee, undertaken volunteer work or been employed full time or part time? Think about a time when someone who seemed to know everything about that organisation left. Did you wonder how the organisation would continue to function when a person with such knowledge, experience and networks walked out the door?

The knowledge, experience and networks of that person are referred to as intellectual capital. This is an important component of any knowledge management system.

Here are the three parts to intellectual capital.

**Intellectual capital**

Customer capital: the value of the relationship between an organisation and its customers: customer loyalty, understanding the changing needs of customers and meeting their expectations

Structural capital: tangible information or processes, such as manuals, procedures, databases, trademarks and information systems.

Human capital: knowledge, skills, experience and attitude of employees.

## Use a knowledge management system

Every organisation is different. Organisations store different types of knowledge and have diverse needs according to their business. But what they all have in common is the fact that the knowledge is constantly changing. Information is continually coming into the organisation, being stored, used and reorganised to meet specific needs.

A knowledge management system should follow the natural pattern of data. Take the example of quarterly business activity statements (BAS). When a BAS is due at the end of each three-month period, the appropriate financial knowledge must be generated for reporting to the tax office.

In general, data comes into the system, is stored, manipulated, used, goes out, changes and comes back in. Knowledge flows through a cycle of activity in a network of connections between people and databases. Tasks, activities and equipment are designed and allocated to help the cycle along.



## A commonsense approach

If you think this a complex description of something that is basically common sense, you're right. Keep a practical focus about it. When you are at work you will be working with knowledge in some way. You will be writing something, using a computer, talking with someone, having to think about something, and so on. In each case you are working with knowledge.

Your work process may involve the following stages:

- Gathering numbers, names, ideas, strategies, statistics, graphs, pictures and sounds
- Reorganising them to be meaningful for you in what you are doing. Making sense of them
- Reporting them as part of your job; if you have a formal job description, the types of information you gather, organise and report may be listed

## A comparison of knowledge management in two different job roles

Think about the three stages of knowledge management for different kinds of jobs.

Here are examples of jobs similar in the knowledge management steps they need to follow when working with information, but different in the details at each step.



### Machine operator

The machine operator needs to:

- gather and input important numbers and other details about the materials coming along the line
- watch the information coming from the machine during operation, compare it with the physical product, and adjust settings as required
- gather and report machine performance data and product output data.



### Office administration worker

The office administration worker needs to:

- gather and input data into databases, word processors and other applications
- process and organise information according to office procedures
- provide information reports in relevant formats, such as database forms, word-processed documents, web pages and so on.

## Access knowledge to perform your job role

The knowledge management system includes information about how various tasks are to be completed. Your job defines the tasks you do. If you are a supervisor, you have to organise people and resources, gather certain kinds of information, think in particular ways and report relevant knowledge to your staff and the senior management. If you are not in a supervisory role the tasks that comprise your job will still require you to access and use particular parts of the organisation's knowledge management system.

### Example: knowledge to perform your own role

A bicycle courier is required to complete three main tasks in their role.

Here is the related knowledge that should be accessed in order to complete these tasks.

#### Deliver items safely

##### Knowledge required

In order to deliver packages safely and efficiently, the courier needs to know:

- how to drive
- parts of WHS legislation that relate to their work
- the WHS policies and procedures of their employer
- road rules.

#### Correct destination

##### Knowledge required

In order to deliver packages to the correct destination, a courier needs:

- GPS, road directory and paper or online maps.

*continued ...*

... continued

### Complete documents

#### Knowledge required

To complete delivery documents properly, a courier needs:

- employer's policy and requirements related to completing documentation.

## Legal issues

Every job or task must be completed without breaching any laws. Depending on your job and level of responsibility, you need to know about various laws, such as the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth) and the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). Other laws deal with discrimination, equity and diversity, trade practices and fair trading, environment protection or industrial relations. Job-specific laws include financial regulations, privacy and confidentiality, freedom of information, and so on. Your organisation's knowledge management system will include policies and procedures that are based on any relevant laws and regulations.

The law can also be very specific regarding how certain tasks are to be conducted and this must be reflected in the policies and procedures of the organisation. For example, work health and safety is a legal requirement. The responsibilities of employers and employees are set out in the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth). When the law affects how a task or work procedure is undertaken, then this information must be included in the knowledge management system.

Find correct procedures for these in your KMS to work safely:

- Lifting
- Machine operation
- Using office equipment
- Acceptable noise levels
- Chemical handling
- Disaster procedures

## Policies and procedures

Efficient organisations set out policies and procedures to guide their workers through tasks to ensure consistent and better performance. These policies and procedures are stored in the knowledge management system. You need to access and use the knowledge management system to keep in touch with these work requirements.

For example, machines in the workplace usually come with operating procedures. These will be displayed with the machine. Some specialised jobs in industries are tightly controlled for quality and safety. Examples are food and meat processing, chemical production and storage, and mining and heavy industries. People performing tasks in these industries work closely to standard operating procedures. These set out the prescribed method that must be followed for specific operations or in particular situations.



Quality assured organisations, such as those accredited under the International Standards Organization (ISO) or some other system, also follow procedures closely. These may be in the form of work instructions, procedures manuals, work flow charts and other work design tools to help improve consistency, quality and safety.

## Find and access information

Your daily work requires you to access all the relevant knowledge to complete your tasks effectively and efficiently. Of course, the best information is not always at your fingertips. Organisational knowledge truly comes from the interaction of a whole system of data connections between people, machines, books, charts, and computers. You sometimes need to dig a little to get the knowledge you need for a specific task.

You also need to be aware that some types of knowledge are more difficult to obtain than others. Tacit knowledge is not written down but can be sought and expressed through such measures as a mentoring program and providing encouragement for staff to document ideas about best practice.

Here are explanations for the two types of knowledge.

### Explicit knowledge

Explicit knowledge is knowledge that is easily captured and exchanged. For example, a painter and decorator can easily teach their apprentice how to hang wallpaper. Explicit knowledge is often documented and can be found in a procedures manual or book.

### Tacit knowledge

Tacit knowledge is knowledge that is often referred to as instinctive and can be difficult to explain to others. The ability to perform a task is almost a subconscious action. For example, if you and a chef bake a cake and your cake is not as light, fluffy and evenly cooked as the chef's it is likely because the chef has an instinct about cooking that you don't have.

## Parts of a knowledge management system

It helps to think about the parts of a knowledge management system and the way they work together. An important element is the people who actively participate in a workplace: owners, managers, leaders, supervisors, coordinators, staff, team members and colleagues, who take part in committee meetings, discussion, leadership, teamwork and more. All these parts have to be appropriate to the goals and objectives of the organisation and the type of knowledge being generated, analysed and reported.

Other main elements of a KMS and examples of each:

- Templates for collecting input to the system; for example, forms, proformas, online forms, structured questions, database fields
- Data storage mechanisms; for example, disk drives, cloud computing, DVDs, books, ledgers, file cards

- Accessible operating instructions; for example, work instructions, procedure guides, flow charts
- Criteria for the selection and filtering of input to the system; for example, criteria lists, required database fields
- Policies and procedures; for example, standard operating procedures, memoranda, operational plans

## Example: a knowledge management system

A badly set-up knowledge management system can adversely affect any organisation. Clubs need to be able to prove that they are compliant with WHS and food safety regulations and they require secure and accessible systems. They also have organisational goals to ensure they survive, grow and prosper.

An AFL club membership database would contain information such as member names and membership numbers, contact details, length of membership, level of membership and game attendance statistics.

Here are the consequences that would occur if the club's KMS lacked the five characteristics.

### Not comprehensive

If the database only keeps a few member details – such as address and phone number – the club may miss better marketing opportunities to members, they may overlook some features or characteristics of the member that would otherwise allow the club to provide better service to the member, or more on-selling to that member.

### Not accessible

Member details might be managed by the administration department, but may need to be accessed by the club's membership and sales departments. If data is only made available to the administration department or its contents are not easy to understand, how can it be used? People in charge of membership strategy need to be able to review the data as required.

### Not secure

If the system is not secure, access to it may lead to a breach in member privacy. It could give competitors sensitive information. It is extremely important to avoid these scenarios by keeping information secure.

### Not responsive

Changes in membership payment patterns would affect cashflow. Responsiveness of data feedback about this is crucial.

### Not customisable

Senior club officials need particular information about members; not every single detail. The system must be able to customise reports to speed up decision-making and make activities run more smoothly.

## Practice task 1

Think about a job. It may be your current job or a previous job. It may be a job you know a lot about. If you haven't worked before, interview somebody who is working. Complete this table with the following information:

Three tasks that the worker must complete to be successful at that job

The information the worker needs to access to assist them with these tasks

Name of job:	
Main tasks	Information required

# 1B

## Administer the system in line with procedures

An organisation needs to ensure that its knowledge management system continues to find, select, organise, refine and present information in a way that improves the employee's comprehension in specific areas.

As part of the knowledge management system there will be policies and procedures relating to its currency and upkeep. These documents will provide specific guidance to employees on how to suggest improvements and update and alter information.

In some work environments your work role may include administering the knowledge management system.

### Organise to share information

An organisation must decide how it will organise itself to make sure that knowledge is shared well. Organisations are still experimenting with the right way to organise; some put the function in the computing group, some put it in strategy or finance and some put it in operations.

Often a very small, central coordinating unit is established with overall coordination responsibility. The unit spearheads and makes the case for change in the organisation, solves problems as they emerge, measures progress, provides support to others and, in general, does whatever needs to be done in order for knowledge management to succeed.

Some organisations have 'knowledge officers' who are responsible for:

- developing an overall framework for managing knowledge
- actively explaining the value of properly managing knowledge
- overseeing the development of the knowledge infrastructure
- facilitating connections, coordination and communications.

### Administrative role

An administrator is a person having administrative or managerial authority in an organisation; you may be given authority to assist with the administration of the knowledge management system of the organisation. To ensure that employees are efficient and effective, the main goal of a knowledge management system administrator must be to effectively disseminate up-to-date knowledge to all employees.

#### The role of knowledge management administrator

- Ensuring procedures are understood within the organisation and used when suggesting changes and providing feedback to the knowledge management system
- Supporting the organisation's strategy by facilitating effective communication to all
- Managing (and facilitating) things such as the website, intranet, threaded discussions, communities of practice, and chat rooms
- Establishing knowledge requirements within the organisation and capturing lessons learned
- Developing new intellectual capital
- Generating new products or services

## Follow policies and procedures

As part of the knowledge management system there will be policies and procedures that are designed to make sure that the KMS is up to date and regularly maintained. These documents will provide guidance to employees as to how to go about suggesting improvements and updating and altering information. It should be remembered that organisations are legally accountable for every piece of information provided to customers. As an administrator of the system you need to understand and follow these policies and procedures and to take time to explain them to employees.



## Legal issues

An essential element of knowledge management system administration is overseeing the legal aspects of knowledge. These may include: patents; licensing; trade secrets; appropriateness of knowledge; knowledge protected by intellectual property rights or some other form of legal contract; access privileges; and copyright information.

Depending on your job and level of responsibility when working on the administration of a knowledge management system, you need to know about various laws.

These laws may include the following Acts:

- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth)
- *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth)
- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth)
- *Fair Work Act 2009*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth)

## The Privacy Act

When making any changes to the knowledge system in your organisation, you should be guided by the organisational policies and procedures related to making changes to the system and to the relevant Commonwealth and state Acts and regulations.

To assist organisations in understanding their obligations under the Privacy Act, the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner has developed a set of guidelines that gives organisations helpful information about the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) that replaced the National Privacy Principles in 2012.

An organisation needs to comply when it is collecting data and reasonable steps must be taken to make sure that the personal information it collects, uses or discloses is accurate, complete, up to date and necessary for one or more of its functions or activities.

You can find out more about the Australian Privacy Principles at: [www.oaic.gov.au](http://www.oaic.gov.au). Guidelines are provided to assist organisations to comply with the Act and Australian Privacy Principles.

When administering a knowledge management system, it is important that these privacy principles are understood and taken into account.



## Example: knowledge management administration

In call centres there is a wide variety of customer inquiries, and legal accountability for information provided to customers is of prime importance. Customers expect instant answers to questions and this can result in a high stress work environment for call centre operators resulting in high staff turnover.

New staff are required to learn a large and complex body of knowledge, there is constant pressure to reduce call handling times and continuous tracking and assessment of efficiency measures is undertaken.

Here are examples of the general administrative duties that may occur in a call centre environment.

### KMS administrator duties in a call centre

- Maintain efficient processes to ensure that the right knowledge is captured, managed and kept up to date.
- Set up knowledge management systems to support these processes.
- Identify information that the staff and customers need.
- Shape raw information into a structured and useable knowledge repository.
- Make sure operator needs are identified and sales support information is provided.
- Develop prototypes for new knowledge management systems, and test these with real users.
- Develop a knowledge repository to include policies and procedures and help desk resources.
- In collaboration with IT staff, contribute to online solutions, including effective searching and browsing facilities.

## Practice task 2

1. What is the primary goal of a knowledge management system administrator?

2. List at least four key laws that a knowledge management system needs to know about.

*continued ...*

... continued

3. Use the internet to find out more about the Privacy Act. Must all organisations comply with the Privacy Act and Australian Privacy Principles?

4. What is the name of the organisation that regulates privacy in your state or territory? Does it have an FAQ page on its website? What is the name of the Act in your state or territory?

## Summary

1. Knowledge is information organised meaningfully.
2. Knowledge management involves manipulating information for specific purposes.
3. A knowledge management system involves collecting, organising, analysing, and storing information so that it can be retrieved, shared and applied to the organisation's tasks. You need to consider all the ways its parts interact.
4. Knowledge must be organised in a way that is comprehensive, accessible, secure, responsive and customisable.
5. Intellectual capital is an important part of an organisation's knowledge management system.
6. Knowledge management systems involve manipulating input to produce outputs such as reports, tables, graphs, documents and multimedia.
7. The knowledge management system will have policies and procedures to guide workers through their various tasks.
8. Knowledge management systems include information about how various tasks are to be undertaken and policies and procedures that relate to relevant laws and regulations.
9. Explicit knowledge is knowledge that is easily captured and exchanged.
10. Tacit knowledge is knowledge that is often referred to as instinctive and can be difficult to explain to others.
11. All personnel must follow the procedures.
12. To ensure that employees remain efficient and effective, the primary goal of a knowledge management system administrator is to effectively disseminate knowledge and to ensure it is current and up to date.
13. An essential element of knowledge management system administration is overseeing the legal aspects of knowledge.

## Learning checkpoint 1

### Access and use knowledge management systems

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in accessing and using knowledge management systems.

#### Part A

1. Explain the difference between information and knowledge using examples.

2. Discuss the actions you would have to take to turn organisational information into a knowledge management system.

3. Discuss ways in which an organisation can ensure it identifies and captures the tacit knowledge of its employees. Explain why it can be difficult to gather tacit knowledge.

4. A business administration officer in the head office of a supermarket chain deals with several sources of knowledge every day. These include product details and the names of suppliers and financial data. The organisation has policies and procedures in place to ensure that it complies with relevant legislation. Identify organisational procedures that are likely to be in place to protect the security of data.

5. All organisations must comply with government legislation. Identify two different legal issues that must be taken into account when working in a knowledge management role in your organisation or one that you have researched.

6. Identify policies and procedures that address these issues and ensure that the organisation complies with legal requirements.

## Part B

A major supermarket employs a number of managers who oversee the activities of the delicatessen, butcher, bakery and fruit and vegetable sections. Select a section of the supermarket and answer the following questions.

1. Identify the types of information that the manager would gather throughout a typical week.

2. Discuss how the raw data or information collected by the manager could be reorganised into knowledge that is meaningful for both the work the manager performs and the supermarket.

3. Explain why it is important that the supermarket has procedures in place that all staff must follow when accessing the knowledge management system.

4. Give examples of what the supermarket can do to ensure their knowledge management system includes the five characteristics such a system should have.

5. Identify the legal issues that you think will affect the daily work of the manager.

6. Discuss the knowledge management actions the supermarket could put in place to ensure the requirements arising from the legal issues are properly met by all staff.

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## Topic 2

# Input to knowledge management system

Some or all of your daily work will involve putting information into some part of your organisation's knowledge management system. So, it is useful to think about the system that receives, processes and reports on your information.

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 2A Gather, analyse and prepare inputs
- 2B Check inputs for clarity, accuracy, currency and relevance
- 2C Make inputs according to organisational procedures
- 2D Analyse and improve the system

# 2A

## Gather, analyse and prepare inputs

You manage knowledge when you take information and store it in an accessible form for other people in the organisation who need to use it. This information needs to be accurate and up to date.

Organisations need to manage or handle a lot of information. This information is often described as inputs. Inputs are the various types of information an organisation generates, requires or receives. Inputs may be in electronic, verbal or paper form. Typical inputs include sales figures, running costs and income.

Inputs may come from a variety of sources and include numbers, words, bar codes, scanned documents, minutes taken at meetings, interviews with managers or customers and web-based and paper documents. You may have to scan documents and gather voice recordings for input.

Your manager or supervisor will let you know the information that you need to gather to assist them with their decision making.

In gathering information, you may need to:

- identify the information needs of the organisation so the right information is provided to the right person at the right time
- filter information to prevent information overload
- find relevant and credible sources of knowledge to share with others in the organisation
- assist others to collect information.

### Gather inputs

When gathering inputs for a knowledge management system, you should answer certain question for yourself. The answers will provide guidance on how much and what type of information is needed and more.

Here are examples of the questions that may need to be posed when gathering data inputs.

#### Who needs the information

Your manager or supervisor will identify what information employees need in order to fulfil their tasks. An example of how this affects the job is when your manager works with other areas to get sales figures for you to input.

#### Type and kind of information

You should be guided by your manager with regard to the type and amount of information required; for example, your supervisor may ask you to gather information on suppliers of a particular product that can deliver immediately.

### Finding the information

There are many sources of information. You may need to refer to a variety of sources to gather as much relevant information as necessary. You may find information:

- on the internet
- in books or magazines
- through industry associations
- in organisational documents such as policies and procedures
- by networking with people.

### Why and how

Your manager or supervisor will let you know why you are collecting the information. This will help you gather the most accurate information. Your manager may also guide you on how to collect the information or you may need to do your own research or follow organisational policies and procedures. For example, your supervisor may ask you to gather statistics for the organisation's annual report. They may also suggest who you should contact in the organisation to obtain this information.

## Analyse and prepare inputs

Once information has been collected, it needs to be analysed and then prepared for input to ensure it is useful for the people who need to access it.

The information may need to be:

- sorted
- categorised or classified
- summarised
- analysed
- presented in a different form (such as a graph).

## Electronic inputs

Inputs may be electronic, verbal and/or paper-based.

Digital information can be arranged as numbers, words, sounds or graphics.

There are countless ways that electronic data can come into and out of an organisation. The trick is gathering the appropriate data and feeding it into the knowledge management system using the right technique. For instance, if you are asked to scan a document for your supervisor, you then need to find out where you should store it.

Here are several examples of electronic data and how it can be stored.

### Electronic input

Examples of electronic input/data:

- Documents may be scanned and converted into electronic files.
- Words or numbers may be keyed straight into a spreadsheet.
- Barcode readers may translate information into a database.
- An automatic re-ordering system could send a request to a supplier for more products.
- Emails may deliver critical information.
- Voice-recognition software could be used to translate voice into a written document, which must then be edited.

### Storing electronic data

Things to consider when storing electronic data:

- What the document is about
- Your supervisor's intended purpose for the document
- What filing systems are being used
- What the storage capacity is
- What the future use of the document might be

## Verbal inputs

Discussions are also information but it is important to be able to distinguish which discussions are accurate, reliable and worth recording. Also verbal information is difficult to recall unless it is recorded verbatim.

Finding ways to record or capture the main ideas coming from discussion and conversations is an important aspect of knowledge management. For example, skilful minute-taking in a meeting ensures that all important points are faithfully recorded and the speaker's ideas are conveyed accurately.

You may need to follow up on points that need clarifying. When this is the case, if you communicate effectively, the quality of information you get will be better. Some effective communication techniques include active listening and asking questions for clarification. Speak clearly and use appropriate vocabulary and an effective pitch and intonation.

Organisations need to work out the best way to record verbal customer feedback.

Questions to think about when dealing with customer feedback:

- How should the feedback be recorded?
- What are the privacy implications?
- What are the implications of not recording customer feedback accurately?
- How should verbal information be presented or formatted for the appropriate knowledge management system?

## Paper-based inputs

Organisations still receive and create large amounts of paper documentation. Organisations must have a knowledge management system that deals with paper inputs and relevant verbal and electronic data. For example, you may need to develop procedures for reading and transcribing paper documents or arranging for documents to be digitised.

You might also find lots of duplication of electronic and paper-based data.



### Example: gather and prepare inputs

Susan works for a health service provider. Susan's supervisor asked her to find out how privacy laws affect health care workers that deal with client information. Susan found all the information on the internet. She downloaded information on the relevant Act itself and the specific information that related to health workers. She also referred to old workplace policies and procedures.

Susan made sure all the information she gathered was complete and clear. Then she referred it to her manager before storing the information.



### Practice task 3

Identify the type of knowledge input that is occurring in these examples. The first one has been done for you.

Example	Type of input
The Accounts department emails a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet with performance ratios to the financial manager.	Electronic
A consultant gives a speech at a staff meeting, which is later circulated in the minutes on the staff intranet.	
A market research company provides senior managers with demographic information on CD-ROM.	
A new sales representative leaves a business card and a brochure.	
A WHS representative describes the correct way to lift heavy boxes to a new staff member.	

## 2B

### Check inputs for clarity, accuracy, currency and relevance

Information changes rapidly and, as a result, many organisations have out-of-date information in their knowledge management systems. If the knowledge management system houses out-of-date information, then it means that those accessing this information are using or distributing inaccurate or out-of-date information.

Sometimes the information entered into the knowledge management system is entered incorrectly. Your organisation should have a procedure in place for entering information into a database or knowledge management system. You must follow your workplace policies and procedures for entering inputs to ensure they are clear, accurate, current and relevant.



### Check your entries

Regardless of the type of inputs you are working with, you should always check your entries for accuracy. For example, if you are completing an accounting task such as filling in columns with long numbers, there is an increased chance some digits will be missed or transposed. Take the time to check the figures twice or arrange for another person to check over your inputs. Having someone check your work ensures accuracy.

Here are examples of what needs to be checked when making data entries.

#### Accurate and clear numbers

If you are dealing with figures, it is very important to input the numbers correctly. For example, workers may be under or overpaid if their pay officer accidentally puts too many or too few zeros. A checking system is important to ensure accuracy.

#### Relevant details

Check that everything you are entering is relevant to the task. Don't input more than is needed. This makes the information more usable and useful.

#### Current information

Check whether the information you are entering is current. Are the figures up to date? Do you know who you should check this with? Some organisations; for example, schools, rely on information which comes out annually and must set aside time to update all affected documents.

## Example: improve business inputs

Kay runs a small sporting goods store that employs a number of full-time and part-time staff. In the past, staff have complained because their pay was often late and inaccurate. Kay's accountant advised her to use an electronic spreadsheet to enter any weekly changes to staff holidays, sick leave, overtime, pay rates and superannuation. This information updates the pay system so Kay can easily and accurately make timely salary deposits for her staff. In order to rule out the possibility of staff receiving the wrong pay, Kay has learnt to use Excel formulas to calculate total hours worked, regular hours worked, overtime hours worked and overtime pay and also has a staff member check the spreadsheet.



## Practice task 4

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

### Case study

Colleen works as an administration assistant in the registrar's office at a regional hospital. Reception staff notify Colleen regularly when information on new admissions is entered into the hospital's central database.

Colleen's job is to check the accuracy of key information (such as Medicare and private insurance plan numbers, case types, admission dates and times) and to enter corrections where required. Each correction has to be cross-checked with reception staff and the patients involved.

1. What might the consequences be if input errors were made in a hospital's patient database?

2. What procedures did Colleen have in place to reduce the likelihood of input errors?

## 2C

## Make inputs according to organisational procedures

Workplace procedures must be followed. These procedures may cover inputting information into the knowledge management system and include guidelines for each stage. These procedures and guidelines should include the regulatory requirements that are relevant to your organisation.

Here are several laws that you should be aware of. Each state and territory in Australia has laws relating to these areas.

**Work Health and Safety Act 2011**

Workplace safety is extremely important. Every workplace is responsible for the health and safety of its employees and the business must not create health and safety problems for customers or the public.

Understanding WHS laws will help your business:

- prevent workplace injury and illness
- avoid unnecessary costs
- avoid damage to your business's reputation.

This Act replaces the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991. OHS is now known as WHS. The newest Act defines employees more broadly and is intended to harmonise all the different state WHS laws.

**Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986**

The Australian Human Rights Commission investigates complaints about discrimination in areas covered by the *Age Discrimination Act 2004* (Cth); the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth); the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) and the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth).

The Commission also advises governments on the compliance of legislation with international standards and on human rights policy in Australia.

**Age Discrimination Act 2004**

This law is an important tool for preventing age discrimination in the workplace. It also helps to promote a positive workplace attitude in this area.

**Disability Discrimination Act 1992**

The objectives of this legislation are to:

- prevent discrimination against people with disabilities
- ensure people with disabilities have the same rights as others in the community.

### Racial Discrimination Act 1975

This legislation makes it unlawful for a person to be discriminated against based on their race, colour, descent or ethnic origin.

### Sex Discrimination Act 1984

This legislation's aim is to prevent discrimination and sexual harassment and to ensure equality across the genders.

### Copyright Act 1968

This law sets out what is protected by copyright and how the law applies to different materials.

## Privacy Act

The *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) legislation protects personal information handled by government and businesses. The Privacy Act has been amended over the years, with the *Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012* making many significant changes. The Privacy Act now includes a set of 13 new harmonised privacy principles that regulate the way Australian agencies and some private sector organisations handle personal information.

These are known as APPs or Australian Privacy Principles.

### The Australian Privacy Principles

1. Open and transparent management of personal information
2. Anonymity and pseudonymity
3. Collection of solicited information
4. Dealing with unsolicited personal information
5. Notification of the collection of personal information
6. Use or disclosure of personal information
7. Direct marketing
8. Cross-border disclosure of personal information
9. Adoption, use or disclosure of government related identifiers
10. Quality of personal information
11. Security of personal information
12. Access to personal information
13. Correction of personal information

## Organisational policies and procedures

Your workplace will have policies and procedures regarding how they require information to be entered into their knowledge management system.

They will also have policies and procedures related to their own particular operation. These will include standard operating procedures (SOPs) and policies and procedures outlining how they meet their legal requirements in relation to safety at work, privacy and discrimination and environmental protection.

Organisational policies and procedures provide guidance on the subject matter of the Act. Here is an explanation of key types of guidelines that shape the way organisations operate on a daily basis.

### Acts and regulations

Legislation passed at federal and state levels are called Acts. Regulations provide practical information about the Acts.

### Codes of practice

Industry codes of practice provide practical guidance and advice on how to achieve the standard required by the Act and regulations. A code of practice is not law, but it should be followed unless there is an alternative course of action that achieves the same or better standards.

### Standard operating procedures

You will have many guides on how to input data. Procedures may be included in standard operating procedures (SOPs), work flow charts, operating plans and manuals and memoranda from managers and supervisors. If you are ever unsure, always ask your supervisor because procedures are about ensuring the right outcomes for your organisation.

## Example: the importance of SOPs

Mike operates an ice cream mix plant at a food-processing factory. His task is to develop and upload operating parameters for a machine. These details include the times, temperatures and settings used in a mixing/blending process. If an employee does not follow the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for this, the whole batch of ice cream will be spoiled.



## Practice task 5

Use the internet to access the government website [www.business.gov.au](http://www.business.gov.au). This website provides all sorts of information for business, including information on planning, starting and running a business.

Select one of these business topics:

- Fair trading
- Intellectual property
- Work health and safety

Use the search box to find information about your chosen topic in the website. Then, access related policies and procedures from your workplace, training centre or ask your supervisor for the policies and procedures if necessary.

1. Write one paragraph that describes whether the policies and procedures meet the requirement of the related Act. Use vocabulary and structures that are appropriate to the audience.

2. List the areas where advice appears to be lacking and suggest what should be included.

# 2D

## Analyse and improve the system

Organisations need to complete a number of tasks to make sure that the knowledge management system is functional and relevant. Senior managers tend to drive this process, but you may be called upon to advise or suggest improvements based on your working knowledge.

Here are the stages an organisation should work through to analyse and improve its knowledge management system.

Process of improvement
<b>Consultation</b> Encourage continual discussion with people who use the system, to check what is working and what is not.
<b>Participation</b> Be an active user by staying involved with the system and not judging it from a distance to ensure the system remains current, relevant and accurate.
<b>Communication</b> Promote clear and concise feedback from the active users of system.
<b>Examination</b> Closely examine reports and other information coming out of the knowledge management system to determine areas that need ongoing improvement.
<b>Quality assurance</b> Ensure collection, storage and retrieval of information from the knowledge management system is smooth, reliable and accurate.

## Monitor and improve knowledge management system

Information must be relevant to the organisation. To ensure the organisation's knowledge management systems are best practice, it may be necessary to undertake a system-wide review. Inputs in a knowledge management system happen at specific points. If you carefully analyse input points, this will help you to see how the system can be improved.

Even a simple knowledge management system, such as an appointment book in a health clinic, can be analysed and improvements made.

Here are examples of steps that can be taken in this context.

### Consultation

Ask medical receptionist about appointment system capacity in light of work requirements and then act on feedback to upgrade or replace poorly functioning system components.

### Participation

Get first-hand experience of the appointment system to see how it operates and then act to remedy any problems identified during first-hand experience.

### Communication

Check that appointments are recorded accurately and any problems with the system are documented. Check if there is a standard way for users to highlight important issues. Implement feedback forms as a means to standardise and cross-check. Make sure standard wording is used when making appointments.

### Examination

Check that practitioners receive accurate and timely copies of appointment schedules. Implement more timely, accurate reporting methods as required by practitioners.

### Quality assurance

Review the effectiveness and efficiency of the current system at each stage. Act on feedback to upgrade or replace poorly functioning system components.

## People and knowledge management systems

You need to recognise the powerful role of people in knowledge management systems. People play an important part in analysing and improving the systems. People interpret, analyse and implement knowledge. The process of continual improvement involves many people, some of whom are listed here.

**People included in the process of continual improvement**

- Owners
- Managers and leaders
- Supervisors and coordinators
- Staff
- Team members
- Suppliers
- Customers
- Colleagues

## Skills for managers

In your role now or in the future you may be supporting managers, or be promoted into the position of manager. It is helpful to know what skills and goals managers can use to improve an organisation's knowledge management systems. You can then support them better or use the skills yourself when you are employed in a role with managerial responsibilities.

Managers need to ensure that people are interacting effectively with the systems in place and need people who are committed to finding ways to improve the business's knowledge management systems.

Managers should encourage linking and bonding, and an explanation of both follows.

**Linking**

Linking involves identifying the networks of people who drive company knowledge; that is, they should know who is responsible for specific inputs.

**Bonding**

Bonding involves using team spirit to strengthen the ties people have with the systems and encouraging them to feed information that allows the system to function more efficiently back to the appropriate parties.

## Example: learn to improve in a sales environment

It is possible to think of a sale as a cycle of information, a loop that should be noticed carefully if we are to learn how to keep improving the experience.

When the sale is made, you hope the customer is happy and want the customer to buy again. You want them to tell others so they come to purchase too.

Important customer information can be gathered in at each stage of the cycle of activity. This information can be used to enhance the business's existing products or services or offer new products and services.

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Point of sale presents a good opportunity for customer information to be gathered via a questionnaire or competition form. Other customer information can be obtained through casual conversation with the cashier; for example, have you ever been asked for your postcode by a cashier? This helps the business identify geographical location of its customers. All this is valuable information for the business and can be stored in the knowledge management system and used later when the business is looking at enhancing or developing products or services.

Information provided at the point of sale:

- The way customers prefer to pay for things
- Customers' preferences in relation to the products they buy
- The time of day or day of the week they like to shop
- How much they like to spend on certain items

## Practice task 6

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

### Case study

The sales manager at Peak Supermarket calls a team meeting to show cashiers how to get extra information from customers at the point of sale. The cashiers are asked to think about these and any other ideas to obtain and record extra customer details in the knowledge management system. The company's goal is to increase sales to existing customers and, to do this, new information is needed.

The manager pays the cashiers overtime to attend the meeting, which is held as a cocktail party in the company boardroom. The guest speaker, a prominent marketing expert, is part of the meeting. She discusses with the cashiers the importance of knowing as much detail as possible about customers.

While some cashiers feel a little pressured, most come away from the meeting happy that they have been consulted and feel part of a team. Now they know why they need to obtain information from customers and understand their role in the organisation's knowledge management system.

1. What methods does the sales manager use to make the cashiers feel important to the organisation?

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2. What effect do you think this has on the cashiers?

3. What process for maintaining the knowledge management system do the efforts of the sales manager fulfil?

## Summary

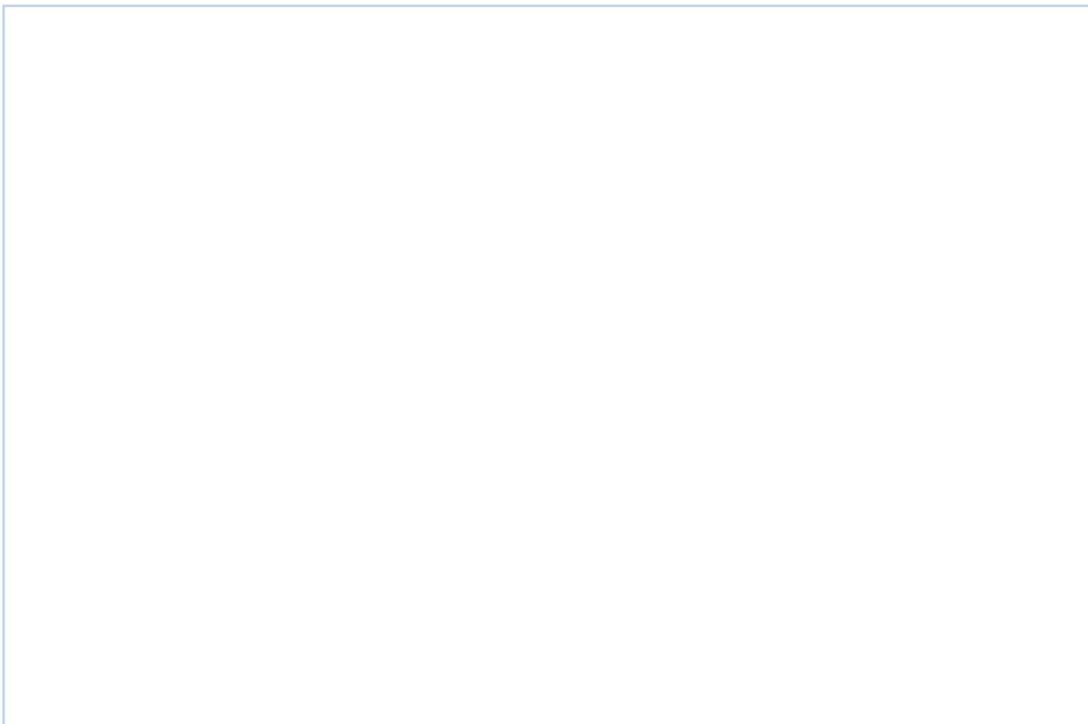
1. Organisations have procedures for making inputs to their databases.
2. Who, what, how and where questions should be asked in relation to the gathering, analysis and preparation of inputs for the system.
3. Database inputs can be verbal, electronic or paper-based.
4. Electronic data tends to dominate input in today's businesses.
5. Inputs must be checked for accuracy, currency and relevance for the system to maintain accessibility and responsiveness.
6. Procedures may be in the form of standard operating procedures, manuals, work flow charts, etc.
7. The knowledge management system must be subject to ongoing analysis and improvement.

## Learning checkpoint 2 Input to the knowledge management system

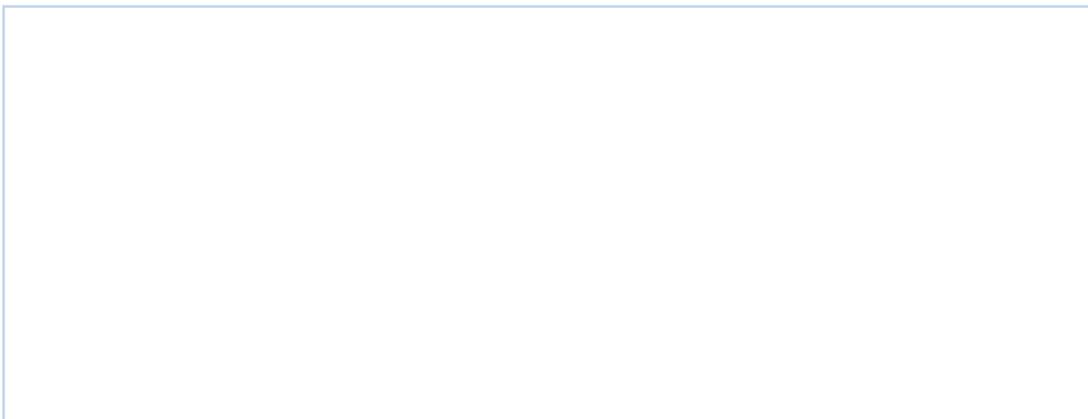
This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in inputting to the knowledge management system.

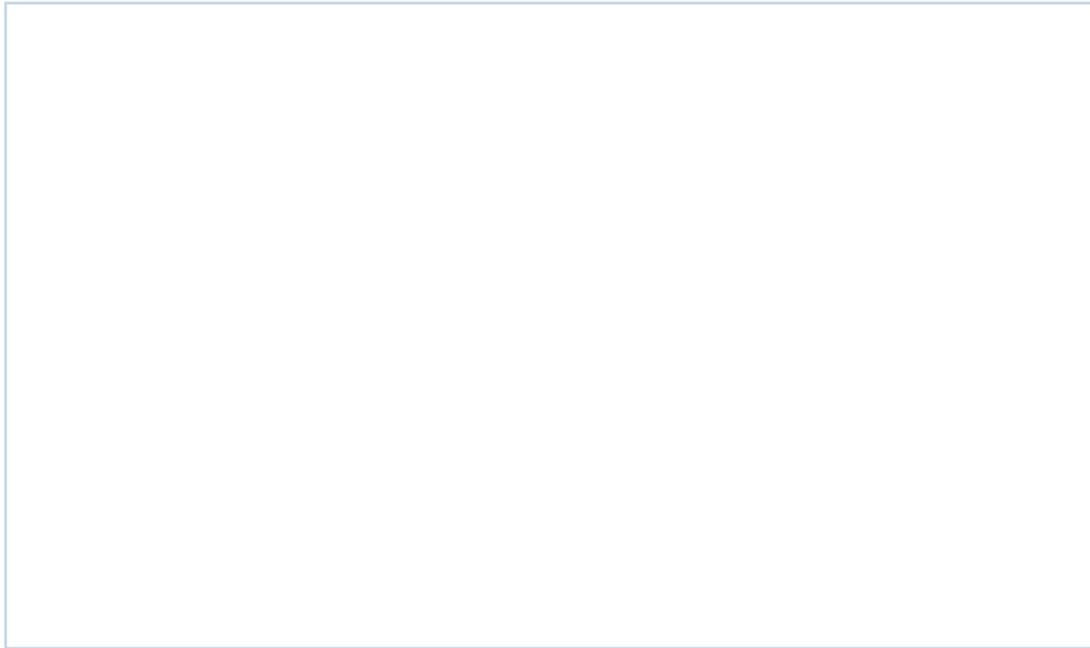
### Part A

1. Draw a knowledge cycle that goes with the purchase of a meal in a restaurant, beginning with booking the restaurant. Identify what information the restaurant should obtain from the client/customer if it is to provide the best experience for them. In two paragraphs, suggest strategies the restaurant could use to obtain the information from the customer.



2. Why is it important that data inputs are made to the knowledge management system in line with knowledge management system procedures? Give some specific examples. Write about half a page.

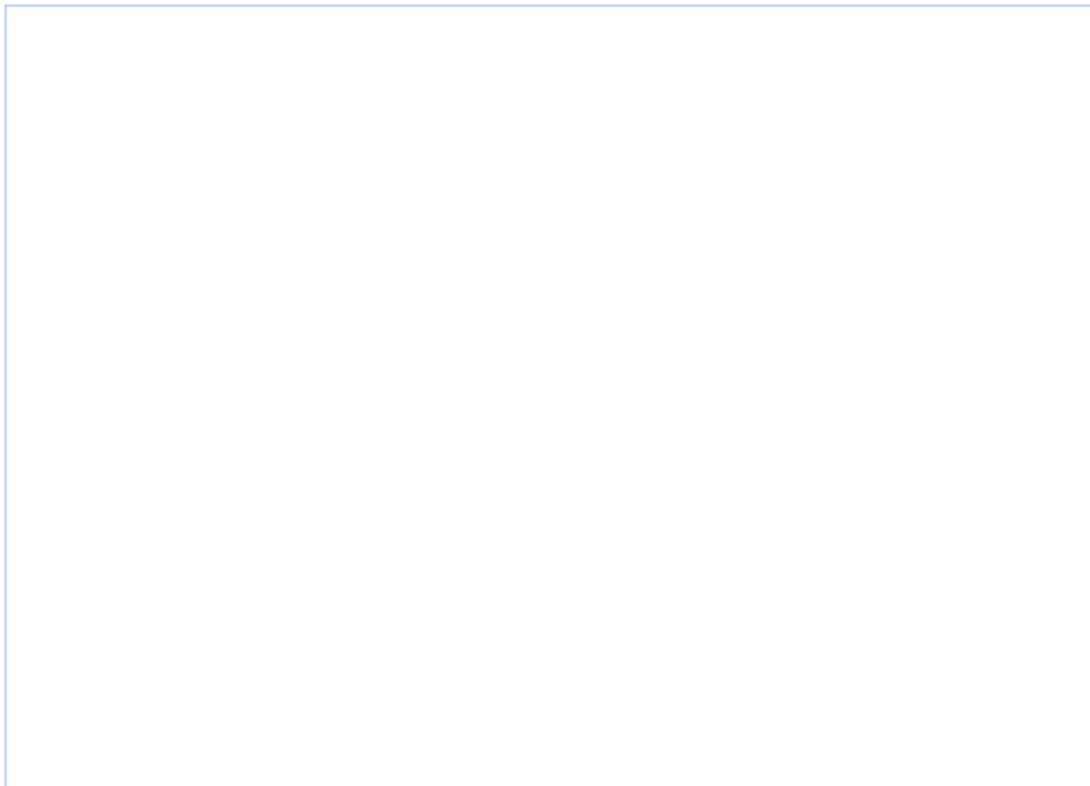




3. To monitor and improve a knowledge management system, an organisation can undertake actions such as:

- consultation
- participation
- communication
- examination
- quality assurance.

Identify and describe one workplace example for each of the actions listed.



4. Explain how the actions mentioned in question 3 contribute to the organisation's knowledge management system.

5. Identify where inputs for this process are gathered, analysed and prepared.

6. Describe how inputs into an organisation's knowledge management systems can be checked for clarity, accuracy, currency and relevance in line with system procedures.

7. Why is it important to check inputs for clarity, accuracy, currency and relevance?

## Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

### Case study

A local council requires information from various sources on a wide range of topics. To use this information effectively, the council must convert the information into knowledge. There are three main kinds of inputs into a knowledge management system.

1. Give at least three examples of each type of input the council may receive.

2. Explain why it is important for the council to have set procedures to be followed when inputting into the knowledge management system.

3. Discuss how the council can ensure that inputs are checked for clarity, accuracy, currency and relevance as part of its knowledge management procedures.

4. Explain why it is important for the council to ensure that the requirements of the knowledge management system are constantly reviewed and analysed. In your response, include ways in which the council can gather suggestions for system improvements. Give examples of where suggestions for improvements could come from.

5. Describe three regulatory requirements that impact the development and practice of the council's knowledge management system. Explain why each one should be included when defining procedures. Give an example of an issue that could occur for each of the regulatory requirements if it is not built into a procedure that people adhere to.



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## Topic 3

# Review and improve work practices

It is important that you regularly review and improve your work practices. The more you know about the knowledge management system in your organisation, the more likely you are able to improve the way you use the inputs and outputs. You will also be able to offer suggestions to improve the system as a whole.

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 3A Provide feedback on the system's output to relevant personnel
- 3B Document learning that results from using the system
- 3C Learn to improve work practices

## 3A

## Provide feedback on the system's output to relevant personnel

Every day at work you will need to respond to output from your organisation's knowledge management systems.

Examples of outputs include:

- memos from a manager
- procedures and guidelines
- the outcomes of a staff meeting
- your job description
- requests from your supervisor
- emails
- postings on a staff bulletin board
- postings on the intranet.

## Improve the clarity, accuracy, currency and relevance of a system

Some outputs may contain inaccurate information that needs to be rectified or rewritten so that it is clearer. When you identify and take action to correct these inaccuracies, you are monitoring and improving the output of a knowledge management system. You need to identify the most appropriate way to communicate about inaccuracies or other issues with output. Communication protocols have been designed so that workflows are not disturbed by interruptions that are not necessary.

In some instances there will be an organisational form that you can use; for example, a continuous improvement request form. When completing one of these forms, write as clearly as possible about the issue you have identified. If there is a register for feedback, learn where it is located and the format that you are required to use.

Sometimes, especially if an issue is urgent or there are no protocols about how to communicate, it is more appropriate to speak to your manager or other relevant personnel. It may be appropriate to provide a written record of your feedback before or after you have provided verbal feedback.

Here are examples of inaccuracies and how you might take action.

<b>Action on inaccuracies</b>
A set of guidelines contain an error and you notify your supervisor or the publisher of the guide ext
An email about a staff meeting contains the wrong venue information so you notify the organiser of the meeting
Your job description does not include the full extent of the tasks you perform at work so you alert your manager
A customer complains to you and you discuss the problem with them and lodge details of their complaint in a register or contact your supervisor

## Monitor and improve the system

Continually monitoring a knowledge management system to look for ways to enhance it may be a requirement of your workplace. For example, if your organisation has quality assurance accreditation, it will be standard practice to monitor and improve all kinds of things, including components of the knowledge management system. Even without quality assurance, monitoring is essential.

Why monitoring is important:

- It helps to keep information up to date.
- It alerts people to changes in operations, the market, rules, procedures and so on.

## Automated computer monitoring

Computers are often important to your organisation's knowledge management system. If a virus infects the network it can cause a lot of damage. Virus detection software must be installed, kept updated and regularly run to detect and repair virus invasions. Virus software can be viewed as a component of your knowledge management system that monitors and enhances the performance of that system.

Automated computer monitoring is increasingly necessary. Technical personnel are necessary to support these systems.

Technical personnel have responsibilities to ensure:

- databases are operating correctly
- procedures are up to date
- machine settings are correct/appropriate
- staff are trained in correct procedures
- the right operators are assigned
- remedial procedures are put into place.

## The system's output

While technology and knowledge do interact, don't rely too much on computers to do your thinking for you. Technology only provides a support role to the major goal, which is getting hold of useful knowledge.

General knowledge systems include formal and informal communication such as books, journals, reports, industry associations, networks, conferences, internet and mail. Supporting technologies include data retrieval and storage systems of all kinds such as computers or otherwise.

Information is valuable if it is useful or relevant. A good way to check if information is valuable is to check the business's mission statement. For example, if the information helps the organisation move closer to achieving its mission, it is probably in the useful knowledge zone. If it is just a technical description of some rarely used computer process, it probably falls into the supporting technologies area.

The most useful knowledge zone is made up of information that is relevant or strategically important to the organisation.



## Respond to feedback

People make technology and knowledge systems work.

If the right person finds out about a problem in a knowledge management system then the problem may be fixed; however, not everyone in an organisation is motivated, empowered or skilled enough to fix certain problems.

An organisation's employees, the users of a knowledge management system, should be factored in when a judgment is made about whether output is clear and relevant. Information needs to be in a form that they can use easily. It must be written using vocabulary and structure, which is clear and accessible to people who will use it.



### Example: improve the system

Jo is a caseworker in a community-based employment agency. Every day she reviews the files of people who are unemployed and matches them with the criteria required by the employers in the system.

To speed up this process, Jo set up an electronic spreadsheet with certain criteria and then merged data from the employee and employer files. This gave her the short list she needed. She described her solution to the other caseworkers at the next staff meeting and they all decided to adopt it.

### Practice task 7

1. If you saw an out-of-date meeting notice pinned on the staff bulletin board, what course of action would you take?

2. Does this action contribute to improving the knowledge management system? Explain why or why not.

3. Imagine that a worker storms into the CEO's office to complain about an improvement that was made while they were on leave. Comment on this situation.

## 3B

## Document learning that results from using the system

Learning and ideas for improvement often come out of discussions, meetings, internal and external communications and informal interactions between people but this information may not be documented. Later on, no-one remembers the information and it cannot be retrieved from a knowledge management system.

Ways to record learning activities:

- Record learning in a workbook (perhaps provided by the teacher/trainer).
- Keep a diary.
- Provide a written report to supervisors.
- Present a summary of learning to colleagues.
- Use a voice recorder to record key ideas and revelations as you have them.

## Learn in the workplace

Many organisations have a policy on professional development which requires workers to participate in professional development opportunities to stay current in their skills and knowledge. There are benefits to organisations that facilitate staff participation in external events if the staff member learns about current best practice strategies and standards.

A key to staff obtaining the most from training that they have attended is applying appropriate new strategies to their workplace soon after receiving training.

In many organisations, if staff have attended a conference, seminar, trade show, training session or meeting they must prepare a report and present it to the relevant people. The presentation should provide a summary of the events, key points discussed, the benefits to the organisation and a collection of any material gathered from other speakers or participants. The knowledge gained from external learning activities should be brought back into the organisation and documented for future reference.



## Example: document learning

After attending a training session on developing an effective Complaints Management System with her manager, Sue is required to fill out a feedback form on what she has learnt and submit it to human resources for their records. However, she finds it a useful process for getting clear in her own mind how she will apply what she has learnt when she returns to work. She and her manager find one part of the presentation particularly interesting. They notice that most staff in their own organisation view complaints in a negative way, but learnt from the session that it is beneficial to organisations if complaints are viewed as opportunities to make positive changes. They realise that it is necessary to recruit the support of senior management if they are going to change the culture and bring in measures to strengthen the way their organisation handles complaints.

They both make notes and keep handouts from the day. They will use these to put together a presentation for senior management.



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## Practice task 8

1. List three opportunities for learning about the way in which parts of an organisation's knowledge management system is effective or ineffective.

2. List three ways of documenting strengths or weaknesses of organisational systems.

# 3C

## Learn to improve work practices

As an employee of an organisation, you will be involved in one or more learning processes at different times. Some learning is accidental while some is guided. Some is formal, some informal.

Here is an outline of the three broad types of learning processes in organisations: intelligence, experience and experimentation.

### Intelligence

Intelligence means collecting and interpreting information from outside the organisation. Important information may include intelligence on customers, competitors, regulations, socio-political trends, etc. This information is used by the business to review and improve its knowledge management system.

### Experience

Experience involves the learning that comes from participating or engaging with tasks or projects and then seeking feedback.

### Experimentation

Experimentation is testing an idea to see if it works. This is a systematic test designed to generate knowledge about a process.

## Continual improvement

Knowledge management systems should be continuously improved. There are a range of activities that can help improve knowledge management systems.

Activities to improve KMSs:

- Learning and sharing information
- Exploring the possibilities
- Providing a supportive environment
- Creating the right culture

## Learn and share information

Education, training and professional development are central to improving knowledge management systems in the workplace. Productive workplaces ensure that all improvement measures are communicated effectively to the appropriate people. Sometimes this is achieved through learning forums, which bring together relevant people to generate discussion about a key issue or problem. Learning forums can stimulate thinking, creativity and strategic solutions to improve the knowledge management system.

Here are several examples of ways an organisation may approach the need for continual improvement.

### Structured discussions

Discussions in learning forums, meetings or through one-on-one conversations can support learning. In formal discussions, a facilitator may guide the discussion to ensure everyone focuses on the issues and helps to achieve a positive outcome. Participants must feel included and listened to. They must also clearly understand the process. For people to embrace change, they must feel included in the decision-making process. If a decision is made in the course of a discussion, all participants must understand why the decision was reached.

### Communicate initiatives

Improvement initiatives often result from discussions, formal learning forums, questioning and feedback; however, an important part of the improvement process is to ensure the improvement is incorporated back into the knowledge management system. To do this, all initiatives must be communicated clearly and concisely to the appropriate people.

### Team spirit

An organisation with a team spirit or culture that encourages people to talk openly about their working experiences fosters positive learning opportunities. When experiences are shared, there is a higher chance that solutions to problems will be found more quickly.

## Explore the possibilities

Exploring new ideas and developing and testing work practices is important when initiating change without interrupting the daily functioning of the organisation. For example, you might be asked to work on a new customer database that is kept separate from the main system until it is fully tested or a new performance appraisal system may be trialled on a few key people before full implementation.

## Provide a supportive environment

Organisations are made up of diverse groups of people with their own ideas about what works and what doesn't. It is important to strike the right balance in terms of listening to each other, motivating each other and counteracting any negativity within the group. Negativity



can arise if an improvement initiative is interpreted as a personal attack. A workplace culture that encourages feedback and suggestions from people is more likely to accept change as part of the improvement process. Training and supporting staff to change is also a key factor.

Listening to ways you can improve your performance can lead to improved job satisfaction. Special forums where constructive criticism is encouraged can be very useful learning opportunities. Managers and supervisors with an open-door policy who are accessible to their staff can encourage workers to find the best way to achieve organisational objectives.

## The right culture

If a workplace is a supportive environment in which employees receive feedback, the organisation has gone a long way towards creating the right culture for managing change. In a supportive environment, further positive organisational characteristics can grow.

Every employee, from the person in the mailroom to the executive director, has the power to influence the environment of an organisation. Improving the performance of a whole organisation really needs to involve everyone – from managers through to administrative staff. The best culture is one where everyone understands they can contribute to workplace improvement and have the opportunity to have their say. Workplaces where people feel threatened when they speak up are not good for encouraging improvement.

### Example: experiment to learn

The information systems manager of a large construction company invited two staff members to participate in the trial of new project management software. It was to be used only on a hypothetical project and only a few people would have access to it. The results of the experiment were to be recorded and, if positive, compared later with a small exploratory test on a real project. The results were positive and testing commenced on a real project.

### Practice task 9

1. Give examples of the ways in which the following people could influence an organisation's knowledge management system:
  - a) The person who handles the mail
  - b) The receptionist who answers the phone
  - c) The person who handles customer complaints

*continued ...*

... continued

2. If all three people work in a supportive environment, how does this provide them with greater opportunity to influence an organisation's knowledge management system?

## Summary

1. Responding to various kinds of output from the organisation's knowledge management system is a daily task for workers.
2. It is every worker's responsibility to be aware of the need to monitor and improve the organisation's knowledge management system.
3. When you recognise a problem in the knowledge management system, you need to know who the right person is to approach about it.
4. Technology is only a tool. People are the most important resource.
5. Computer virus detection software is an example of technical monitoring of a knowledge management system.
6. The learning processes in an organisation include:
  - intelligence: gathering external information
  - experience: workers taking part in learning activities
  - experiment: testing new ideas.
7. Organisations have many ways of increasing the learning of their staff. All of them include open communication between colleagues and managers.
8. The results of learning activities should be documented for future discussion and/or use.

## Learning checkpoint 3 Review and improve work practices

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in reviewing and improving work practices.

### Part A

1. Do you agree or disagree that the output from an organisation's knowledge management system is usually correct? Explain your answer in half an A4 page using appropriate vocabulary and an appropriate structure for this task. Provide examples to demonstrate why you agree or disagree.

2. Does the executive manager of an organisation need to know every time an output error is found in the knowledge management system? Explain why or why not. Provide examples of the types of errors the executive manager may need to be informed of.

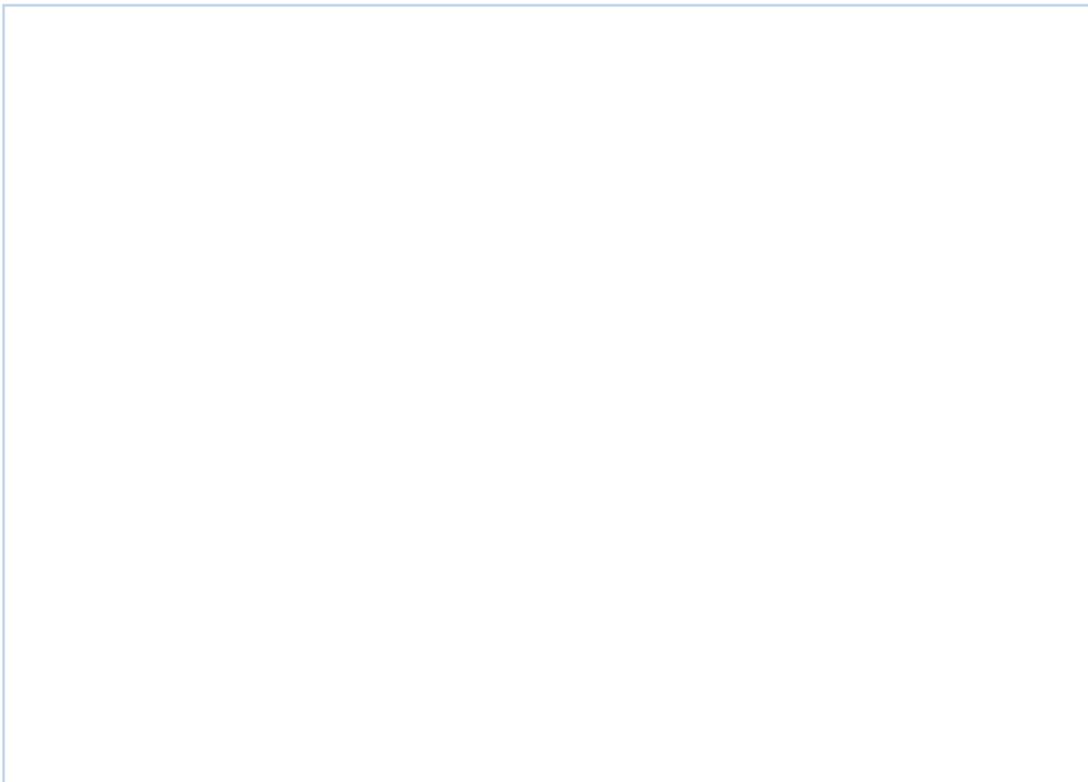
3. Think about a time when a company made an output error that affected you and you followed the matter up verbally with your own observations and opinions using clear and specific language to relevant personnel. An error may have been made in your pay, your mobile bill was incorrect, your car insurance was too high or you were sent the wrong goods/brochures in the mail.

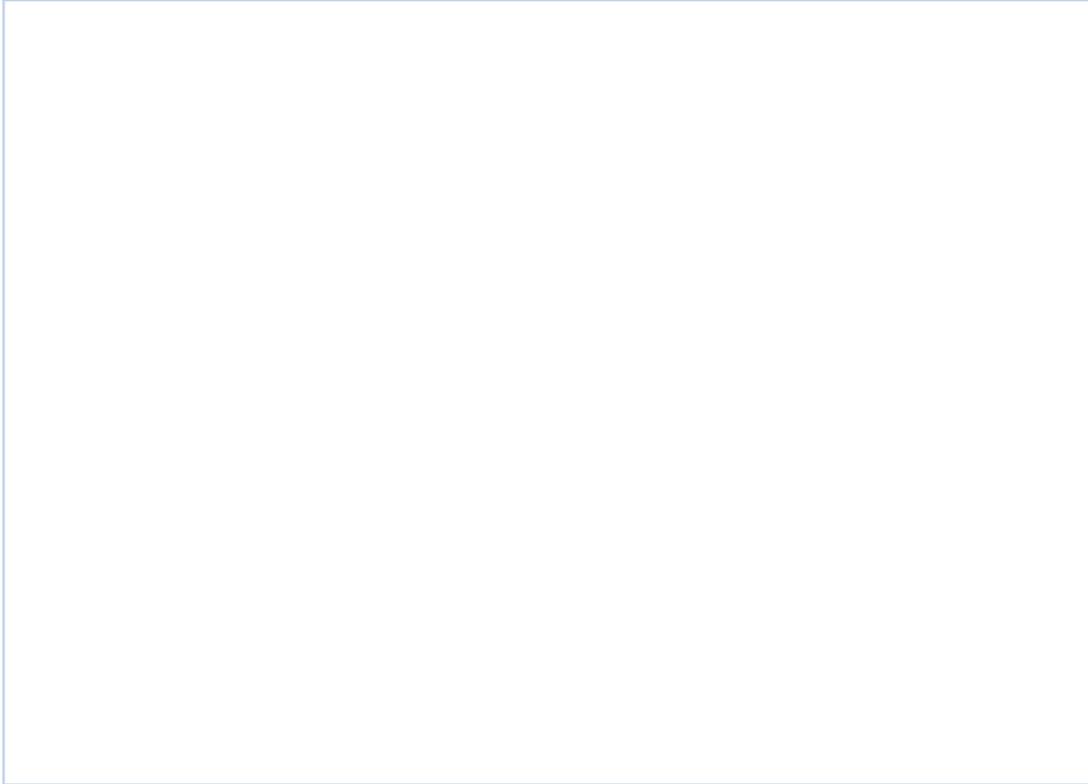
Describe how you dealt with the problem and how the feedback you provided to the organisation enhanced their knowledge management system.

4. The sharing of experiences among staff is one method of learning an organisation can use to improve work practices. Discuss why you think sharing experiences is an important form of learning and how the information gleaned through this process could be used to improve work practices.



5. Imagine that your supervisor has asked you to bring back the main things you have learnt by completing this course in knowledge management. In one A4 page, prepare a plan for a presentation that would share your knowledge and explain how it would benefit the organisation. Which digital technology tools would you use to create the presentation? Include timing for each stage.





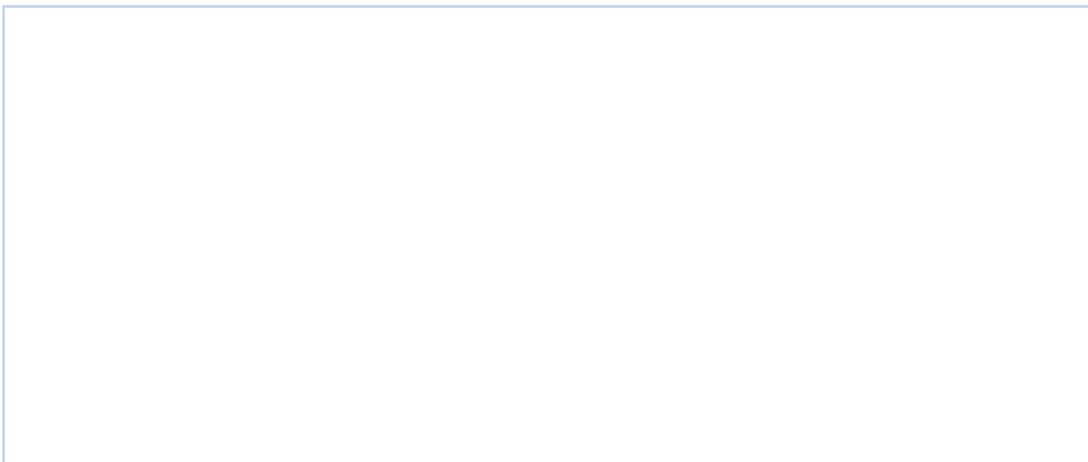
## Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

### Case study

Sally works in the finance department of a company that manufactures ladies shoes. She has noticed that some of the financial system outputs have been inconsistent over the last month or so; in particular, the factory production figures. Production figures seem to decrease one week and increase significantly the next.

1. Explain the actions you think Sally should take to ensure the outputs of the knowledge management system are accurate. Include a method of record outcomes resulting from her use of the system.





2. Describe why it is important that Sally mentions the outputs of the system to management and identifies the impact on the organisation if errors in the system are left unchecked.

