KM CAPACITY ASSESSMENT
KNOWHOW3000, 2020
Tool for Self-Assessment
Version: June 2020, Petra Herout and Annika Witte

HORIZONT 3000

Knowledge Management Capacity Assessment

A Tool for Self-Assessment

Introduction

At HORIZONT3000 one of our key interests is to strengthen our partners' capacities to improve their impact and performances. We believe that systematic and integrated knowledge management is a key success factor for improving organisational capacity. Therefore, with our KNOWHOW3000 programme we offer Knowledge Management tools to our partner organisations and we support them to learn from their experiences, share their knowledge and get access to relevant experiences from our partner network.

In our work across the East African region we have noticed that systematic knowledge management is not yet widespread practice. Nevertheless, there is a growing interest in knowledge management by our partner organisations. Therefore, we have developed this capacity assessment tool that our partners can use on their own without an external facilitator.

The HORIZONT3000 knowledge management capacity assessment tool (KM-CAST)[1] enables our partner organisations to self-identify their level of knowledge management maturity ranging from Level 1 (Novice) up to Level 5 (Expert) across a range of knowledge management areas. The assessment may also help organisations to identify gaps, raise awareness, and determine areas where further attention or investment is required. It is also hoped that these assessments will encourage cross-sector learning and sharing of experiences and good practices.

Objectives and benefits

KM-CAST has been designed to help:

- Establish benchmarked levels of KM maturity (across a team, office or organisation)
- Provide a common language and framework to discuss knowledge management and its constituent components
- Identify areas of strength as well as areas for improvement in knowledge management within organisations
- Lay the basis for creating a customised and strategic knowledge management approach

Scoring

Scoring is simple. A score (1-5) is given for each of the nine levels equal to the assessment level of maturity e.g. achieving a Level 2 in Area 1 equals a score of 2 for that area. Scores should be added to the scoring table (Annex 1).

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[1] This self-assessment tool is an adapted version of the KM-CAST developed by Walter Mansfield in 2015 for the International Development Knowledge Management and Learning Network.

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The Self-Assessment Process

A KM-CAST assessment can be implemented in a number of ways. In the following, we introduce four options with is strengths and weaknesses.

Option	Strengths	Weaknesses
1) Desk based assessment by an expert or experts: The organisation's knowledge manager(s) or team complete the assessment as a desk based exercise. This may be supported by interviews with staff, organisational leaders and key stakeholders.	Without interviews it is a quick process. If done well, interviews can give in-depth insights into individual work experiences.	Without interviews it captures only the perspective of one or few persons. Interviews do not give the same voice to everyone as open discussions. Little involvement of the entire organisation in the process can later make buy-in for change difficult.
2) Desk based assessment by department teams: Each department/unit of the organisation completes the assessment as a desk-based team exercise.	Can be useful in very big organisations to discover differences between departments and encourage internal exchange	Not very useful in smaller organisations as units are not big enough and it might end up being the input of only one person. Discussions between units is missing.
3) Staff survey: The tool is circulated to staff via a survey in which they are asked to complete the tool and their results collated.	Quick to implement. Results are easy to display.	No discussion possible. Risk of different interpretations of terms used, especially if KM is a new topic to the organisation. Staff not involved in deciding on the interpretation of results. Return rate for surveys is always lower than direct interactions.
4) Facilitated workshop assessment: The tool may be applied using one or more workshops, during which participants (all staff or representatives of all organisational units) are introduced to the tool and asked to self-assess against it. Every workshop participant gets to give his personal ranking and provides examples. The different scorings are collected and then discussed. The knowledge manager(s) or team should facilitate this process. The facilitators document the workshop and in particular the individual rankings, the major discussion points, the examples, stories and anecdotes participants offer and the final decision.	The whole organisation is involved in the process creating ownership in the decisions and laying a good foundation for designing and implementing a KM approach. Especially helpful in smaller organisations. The discussions will deliver insights into different perceptions, work processes and existing KM activities across the organisation.	This approach is more difficult to implement in very large organisations as the workshop size should not get too big in order to allow for inclusive discussions. Criteria for representation would be necessary to select representatives for all organisational units.

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KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT CAPACITY ASSESSMENT TOOL: KM-CAST

Knowledge Management Area	Level 1 Novice	Level 2 Learner	Level 3 Intermediate	Level 4 Advanced	Level 5 Expert
1. Roles and Responsibilities for Knowledge Management (KM)	• We have not yet defined roles and responsibilities for knowledge management (KM). • We lack senior leadership for knowledge management.	• We have begun to define roles and responsibilities for KM for some staff. • Senior leaders have taken responsibility for improving KM within parts of the organisation.	• Roles and responsibilities for KM have been defined for all staff. • Senior leaders have taken responsibility for improving KM across the organisation.	• Roles and responsibilities for KM have been defined for all staff. • Senior leaders have taken responsibility for improving and supporting KM practices across the organisation. • KM responsibilities are captured and monitored within individual workplans.	• Roles and responsibilities for KM have been defined for all staff. • Senior leaders have taken responsibility for improving and supporting KM practices across the organisation. • KM responsibilities are captured and monitored within individual workplans. • Staff have the mandate and resources to fulfil their KM responsibilities.

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2. Knowledge Management Strategy	• We do not have a knowledge management strategy.	• We have started to develop a knowledge management strategy but it is not yet complete.	• We have a knowledge management strategy but it is not regarded as effective/up-to-date/fit for purpose.	• We have an effective knowledge management strategy which is aligned to wider organisational aims and objectives. • Some staff apply the strategy in their work routines.	• We have an effective strategic approach to knowledge management which is integrated into our organisational strategy and practices. • All staff apply the strategy in their work routines. • The strategy is reviewed, monitored and updated on a regular basis.

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3. Awareness and Capacity	• Our staff are not aware of knowledge management concepts/methods/tools. • There is no-one for staff to turn to for support on knowledge management. • Our leaders are unaware of the benefits of KM.	• Some staff are aware of KM concepts/methods/tools • Some staff offer colleagues support in applying knowledge management practices to their work on an ad-hoc basis. However, there are no formal mechanisms for building staff capacity. • Our leaders are aware of KM benefits.	• Our staff have some basic knowledge of KM concepts/ methods/tools and sometimes apply them to their work. • There have been some formal attempts to improve staff capacity in KM practices (e.g. through training) though these are one-off/un-sustained/not systematic. • Senior leaders have made attempts at creating formal structures for KM.	• Our staff have a good understanding of KM concepts/methods/ tools and apply them to their work. • Designated staff (knowledge champions) are tasked with building staff capacity on KM in a systematic way, using e.g. training, mentoring, sharing best practices. • Leaders encourage staff in KM practices but do not take KM practices serious in their own work.	• All our staff have a good understanding of KM concepts/methods/tools and apply them to their work. • Designated staff (knowledge champions) have as one of their objectives to proactively and systematically build staff capacity on KM. • Our leaders drive KM activities and model efficient knowledge management behaviours.

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4. Systems and Technologies	• Our IT systems and technologies meant to manage organisational knowledge are unused. • There is no guidance on our IT systems. • Documentation and storage are not encouraged or demanded.	• Our IT systems and technologies for managing organisational knowledge are not fit for purpose or are underused. • There is inadequate guidance on our IT systems. • We have identified problems in the ways we document and store knowledge but there is no clear workplan/dedicated resources for improvement.	• There is good user uptake of our well-fitted IT systems and technologies. • There is inadequate guidance on our IT systems. • We have a good understanding of the gaps in our documentation and storage and have put in place a clear plan/dedicated resources for improvement.	• There is good user uptake of our well-fitted IT systems and technologies designed with user input. • All staff know how to operate our IT systems and access training and support. • We have a good understanding of the gaps in our documentation and storage and have a clear work plan/dedicated resources for improvement.	• There is very good user uptake of our well-fitted IT systems and technologies that meet the needs of our users. • All our staff use our IT systems and receive sufficient training and support and guidance. • We regularly monitor our systems and address gaps. • We are able to quickly and easily find the documents/information and knowledge we need to carry out our work.

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5. Institutional Memory	• We do not have an institutional memory. • We do not have any processes or tools in place to adequately capture and store knowledge. • We frequently experience knowledge loss e.g. when staff leave their knowledge leaves with them.	• We are aware of our lack of institutional memory but we do not have a plan to address this issue. • Capturing and sharing of knowledge takes place on an ad-hoc basis through different processes and tools. • We are vulnerable to knowledge loss e.g. when staff leave.	• We have started to encourage informal knowledge sharing among staff to build institutional memory. • We have clear guidance on KM tools and processes to use for knowledge capture but they are not yet well implemented • At times we still experience knowledge loss.	• To build institutional memory, we have put in place a formal knowledge capture and transfer process for all instances of staff changing roles or leaving. • We strategically and systematically use KM tools and processes to capture and share knowledge. • We experience knowledge loss less often as strategic knowledge/ experiences are documented.	• We have built our institutional memory with a formal knowledge capture and transfer process for all instances of staff changing roles or leaving. • We strategically and systematically use KM tools and processes to capture and share knowledge. • We have found our own style for documenting strategic knowledge/ experiences. • We review the lessons learned from outgoing staff and seek to apply learning to inform future activities. • We do not experience serious knowledge loss anymore.

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6. External Knowledge	• We have not defined gaps in our organisational knowledge. We do not know what knowledge our staff need for their work. • We do not prioritise or incentivise learning from outside the organisation.	• We have started to identify our organisational knowledge gaps and what knowledge our staff need. • We acknowledge the importance of learning from outside the organisation but this does not happen in a strategic way. • Some staff members are incentivised to seek out external knowledge relevant to their work.	• We have identified gaps in our organisational knowledge and started to act upon them. • We acknowledge the importance of learning from outside the organisation. • All staff are encouraged and incentivised to seek out external knowledge relevant to their work.	• We continuously identify and address gaps in our organisational knowledge. • Learning from outside the organisation is continuously documented, saved, and used to inform ongoing work and to address gaps. • Our staff actively seek out relevant external knowledge and have specific goals for sourcing and capturing knowledge.	• We continuously identify and address gaps in our organisational knowledge. • Learning from outside is an integral part of how our organisation works. Learning brought into our organisation is systematically documented and shared with colleagues. • Our staff actively seek out relevant external knowledge and have specific goals for sourcing and capturing knowledge. • We have developed a learning culture and allocate, time recognition and resources to learning from outside. • We reward and promote innovation and good practices in learning.

Knowledge Management Area	Level 1 Novice	Level 2 Learner	Level 3 Intermediate	Level 4 Advanced	Level 5 Expert
7. Internal Knowledge Sharing	• Knowledge resides in silos with little knowledge sharing across our organisation. • Sharing of knowledge is done only on request and reluctantly. Staff feel sharing knowledge might be disadvantageous for them.	• Cross-organisational knowledge sharing has started but practices lack integration. • We encourage knowledge sharing but we don't reward it. • Some of our staff share knowledge but mainly ad hoc and via personal networks.	• We encourage cross-organisational knowledge sharing with simple methods. • We have developed incentives and have defined spaces to encourage and reward formal and informal knowledge sharing. • While some staff actively share knowledge, others don't or are reluctant to do so. • We appreciate the importance of knowledge sharing but we don't have systematic procedures.	• We have put in place a formal knowledge sharing process across our organisation. • We have developed incentives and have defined spaces to encourage and reward formal and informal knowledge sharing. • All staff regularly and proactively engage in knowledge sharing. • We appreciate the importance of knowledge sharing	• We have put in place a formal knowledge sharing process integrated into our organisational practices. • We have developed incentives and have defined spaces to encourage and reward formal and informal knowledge sharing. • Our staff have clear responsibilities for knowledge sharing and regularly and proactively engage in it. • We appreciate the importance of knowledge sharing. • We have fit for purpose systems for sharing and accessing knowledge across our organisation.

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8. Learning from Successes and Failures	• We do not critically review and improve our practices, strategies or objectives. • If we reflect on our activities, we do it only on (donor) demand.	• We do not prioritise reflection but we use it in an ad-hoc and unstructured way to critically review and improve key practices, strategies or objectives • Reflection practices such as learning from success or failure only occasionally change or enrich the way we work.	• We have developed clear guidance on how to critically review and improve key practices, strategies or objectives. • We begin to feel the positive impact of reflection practices on our work.	• Planned and structured reflection processes routinely take place for key areas of work. Reflection focuses upon changes that can be made to improve practice. • We appreciate the positive impact of reflection on our work. • Staff are encouraged to learn from failures.	• Planned and structured reflection processes routinely take place for key areas of work. • Lessons learned from reflection practices are used to shape and improve future practice. • We feel free and encouraged to acknowledge and learn from our failures. • Our leaders lead by example and reflect on their own successes and failures. • Reflection is at the core of how we work.

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9. Measuring the Impact of Knowledge Management	• We have no processes or systems in place for monitoring actions to improve our knowledge management.	• We have some measures in place for monitoring our knowledge management practices, but these are not consistent. • We lack robust outcome/impact indicators for our knowledge management activities.	• We have a clear measurement framework for our knowledge management activities. • We have some outcome/impact indicators. These indicators could be more robust, and we'd like to test and update them more regularly. • We recognise the need to allocate sufficient resources to tackle problems found. • Senior leaders are aware of the measurement framework.	• We have a clear measurement framework and effective processes for our knowledge management activities. • We have developed indicators for the majority of knowledge management areas. Many of these indicators are relevant and robust but we don't regularly review them. • We recognise the need to allocate sufficient resources to tackle problems found. • Measurements are routinely reported to senior leaders.	• We have clear measurement framework and effective processes for all knowledge management activities. • We have developed relevant and robust measurements and indicators for all strategic knowledge management areas that are updated regularly. • We assess Knowledge Management as part of organisational wide monitoring and evaluation cycles. • Where shortcomings are found recommendations are made to senior leaders and these are acted upon with sufficient resources.

Annex 1: Benchmarking score table

Indicator Area	Score /5	Comments	Potential Actions/Next Steps (optional)
1. Roles and Responsibilities for Knowledge Management			
2. Knowledge Management Strategy			
3. Awareness and Capacity			
4. Systems and Technology			
5. Institutional Memory			
6. External Knowledge			
7. Internal Knowledge Sharing			
8. Learning from Successes and Failures			
9. Measuring the Impact of Knowledge Management			
Total:	**/45**		

Glossary of Terms

INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY: a collective set of facts, concepts, experiences and know-how held by a group of people within an organisation

KNOWLEDGE MANGEMENT: the processes, tools and culture required to enable people to capture, manage, synthesise, share and re-apply knowledge to create and innovate and effective organisation.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT CHAMPIONS: 'activists' or facilitators, for example - providing local support for KM initiatives and channelling information from localised teams to and from central KM functions.

KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS: any kind of IT system that stores and retrieves knowledge, improves collaboration, locates knowledge sources, mines repositories for hidden knowledge, captures and uses knowledge, or in some other way enhances the KM process.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PROCESSES: the methodical replication of the expertise, wisdom, and tacit knowledge of critical professionals into the heads and hands of their co-workers. It is more than just on-the-job training. It is the planned movement of the right skills and information at the right time to keep a workforce prepared, productive, innovative, and competitive.

LEARNING: the acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience, or being taught.

LEARNING ORGANISATION: An organisation which builds and improves its own practice, consciously and continually devising and developing the means to draw learning from its own and others' experience.

ORGANISATION: an organised group of people with a particular purpose.

REFLECTION: using critical thinking to examine presented information, question its validity, and draw conclusions based on the resulting ideas. It requires us to think more deeply about experiences and unpack what happened, why and what this means for future actions.

SILOS: a mind-set present when certain departments or sectors do not share information with others in the same department or sector. This type of mentality can be planned or accidental. It normally reduces efficiency in the overall operation.

STRATEGY: a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim.

TECHNOLOGY for KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT: for example – software to allow collaborative working, work flows and notifications around document approvals, document management and storage, e-learning, project planning etc.