

Knowledge Management: Foster the Knowledge Ecosystem

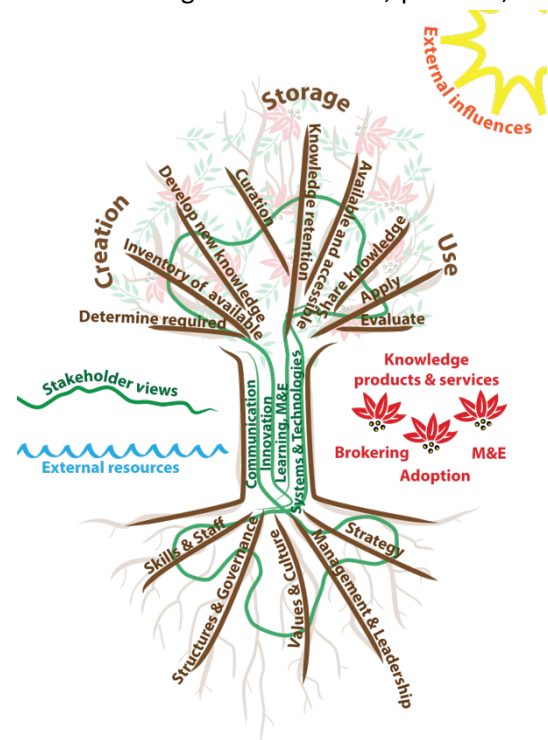
Nurture a Knowledge Management Tree | an individual, an organization, a network /community.

Introduction

In the approach explained here, knowledge management aims to develop and foster optimal 'knowledge ecosystems'. These are dynamic knowledge intensive environments in which individuals, organisations and networks interact in conjunction with their surroundings - stakeholders, partners, clients, donors, etc. The entire ecosystem evolves and interacts as a system with interdependent parts. These knowledge intensive environments create value by delivering the best knowledge products and services possible.

Such 'knowledge ecosystems' are fostered by knowledge management 'trees', here itself used as a metaphor for aspects of knowledge and knowledge management within individuals, organisations and networks/communities alike:

- **Individual:** a knowledge worker. These are workers whose main capital is knowledge, they 'think' for a living, and need to continuously develop and learn.
- **Organisation:** formalized entities with a clear objective and defined hierarchy, operating in a dynamic environment, hence the need to be continuously learning and adapting
- **Network / community:** combinations of individuals and/or organisations loosely organised.



The knowledge management tree

In these ecosystems, the knowledge management trees are nurtured to develop optimal knowledge intensive environments so that sustainable value can be created for their partners, clients and members. So optimally equipping these organisations, networks and knowledge workers (the trees), is the main focus of this approach to knowledge management.

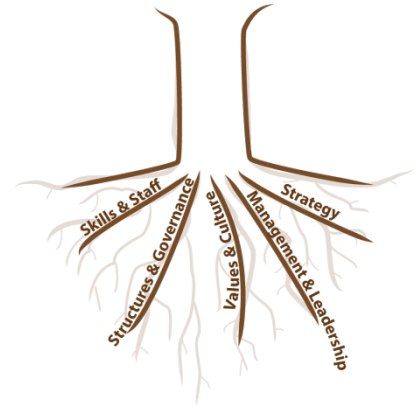
Following this approach, the knowledge management trees need to (a) grow strong roots, (b) develop healthy branches and leaves, (c) have strong flows of sap in their veins, and (d) use the nutrients, sun and water to (e) be able to grow beautiful flowers and sweet fruits. And if these trees are in good health they continuously play their important part in the ecosystem.

The fundamental and critical basis of this approach is that these five dimensions need to be looked at and worked on integrally. Optimising one dimension will not be fully successful if the other dimensions are not considered at the same time. Hence the term integral knowledge management.

Nurture a Knowledge Management Tree

a. Grow strong roots | build the foundation:

- **Strategy:** *vision and mission, objectives (within a certain time frame) and action planning.* Ideally, an organisation's or network strategy is well defined together with staff / members and stakeholders, updated at regular intervals to keep in line with internal and external developments, and is monitored throughout its implementation. A good strategy clearly defines what the organisation does and will be doing in the near future, and gives people direction. For an individual, this would be his / her personal and professional goals and ambitions.
- **Values & Culture:** *the behaviour, symbols, values, atmosphere and champions that clearly define the organisation's culture.* These are the aspects that are not so much visible, but nonetheless very important. Culture makes people feel 'part of the team' and it differentiates the organisation from others. In a network, what would be most shared are its members' values, and not always the behaviour etc. A network's culture therefore consists most importantly on the shared values of its core active members.
- **Structures & Governance:** *the way in which the organisation or network is structured;* including roles and responsibilities, departmental set-up, teams, workflows, possible external advisory bodies etc. Much of the organisation's or network's flexibility and ability to collaborate internally is based on this aspect. For an individual, this part consists of the way in which he or she works in a team, within a hierarchy, with management.
- **Management & Leadership:** *the style by which management directs, supports and leads the organisation and its staff, or the network and its members.* This largely influences the culture, the amount of freedom of staff (and the degree to which they can develop their skills). Good, motivational, consistent leadership can carry the organisation or network a long way forward. An individual can of course be a good leader, coordinator, champion, motivator etc.
- **Skills & Staff:** *the skills, experience and expertise of people, and the way in which the organisation selects staff and enables staff to develop.* The knowledge of an organisation's staff is of course the primary source of its success (or failure), and thus needs to be well maintained, developed, nurtured, and motivated. For a network, this part focuses on the qualities of its most active members. For an individual, this is about his or her personal and professional skills, experience as well as attitude.



b. Develop healthy branches and leaves | develop the knowledge processes:



Knowledge Creation:

- **determining the required knowledge:** the way in which and the extent to which it is determined what knowledge is required to realise the organization's or network strategy, or an individual's goals.
- **Inventory of available knowledge:** the way in which and the extent to which the knowledge within an organisation or network, or an individual's own knowledge (and of those around him) is mapped out, and made explicit when possible.
- **developing new knowledge:** how and to what extent new knowledge is generated or acquired, both in a structured (as a result of planning, strategizing) and in a spontaneous way.

Knowledge Storage:

- **making knowledge available and accessible - retention and curation:** concerns how knowledge is made available, and how (easily) accessible it is. Is the available knowledge easy to find, is it stored systematically, and is it retained properly?



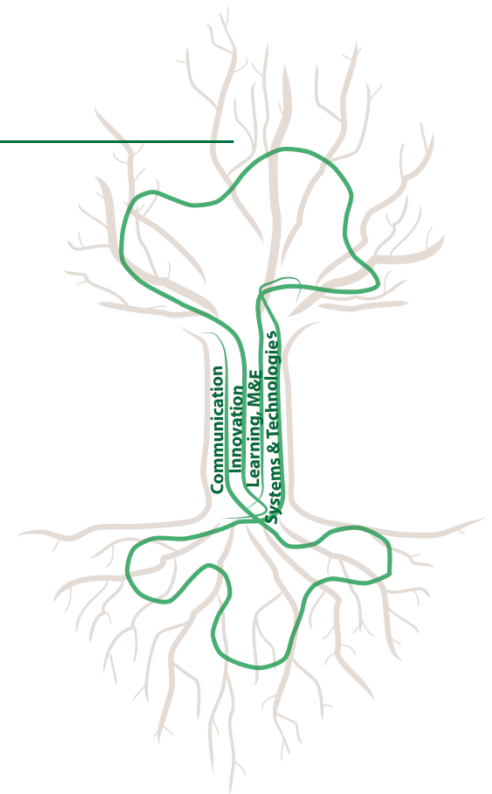
Knowledge Use:

- **sharing knowledge:** the way in which and the extent to which knowledge is shared between colleagues within an organisation, members of a network or individuals, both formally and informally.
- **applying knowledge:** how and to what extent people are willing, able, and apt to apply (new) knowledge in their work.
- **evaluating knowledge:** in what way and to what extent existing knowledge is evaluated and valued for its current status use and appropriateness for work.



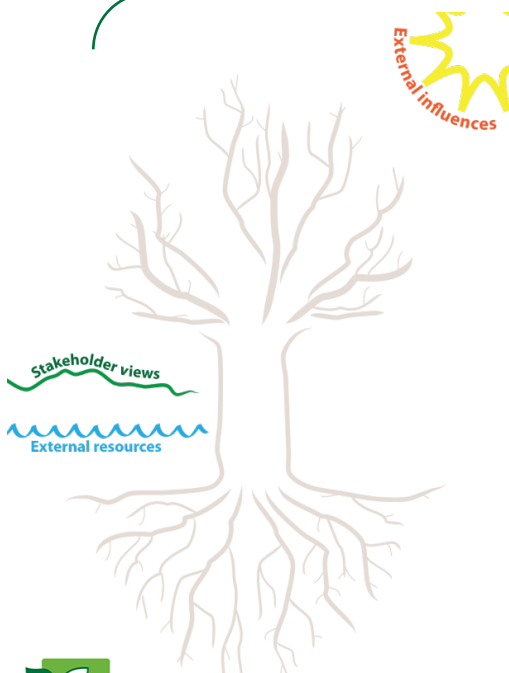
c. Have strong flows of sap in the veins | optimise the enablers:

- **Communication:** the way in which (important) decisions, information and knowledge is shared, among peers as well as among different departments, management layers etc.
- **Internal innovation:** being creative and out of the box to renew or change internal processes.
- **Learning, monitoring & evaluation:** monitoring and evaluation of current and past actions, and use of the experience and lessons to continuously learn, to inform and improve current and future actions.
- **Systems & technologies:** the ICT systems, technologies, applications as well as procedures and rules used to communicate, store knowledge products and learn.



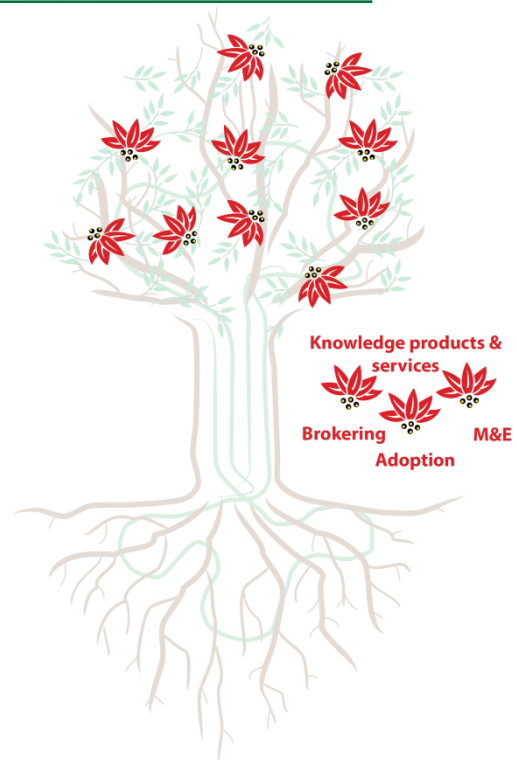
d. Use nutrients, sun, water, etc. | operate within a given environment:

- **Stakeholder views:** the inclusion of views of those who are not directly part of the work or project but do have a stake in it, are taken into account when decisions are made, and how their views and knowledge are used to improve the work.
- **External influences:** taking in account external influences - such as sector developments, local political, socio-economic and environmental developments.
- **External resources:** how external resources - such as research findings, funding - are sourced and used.



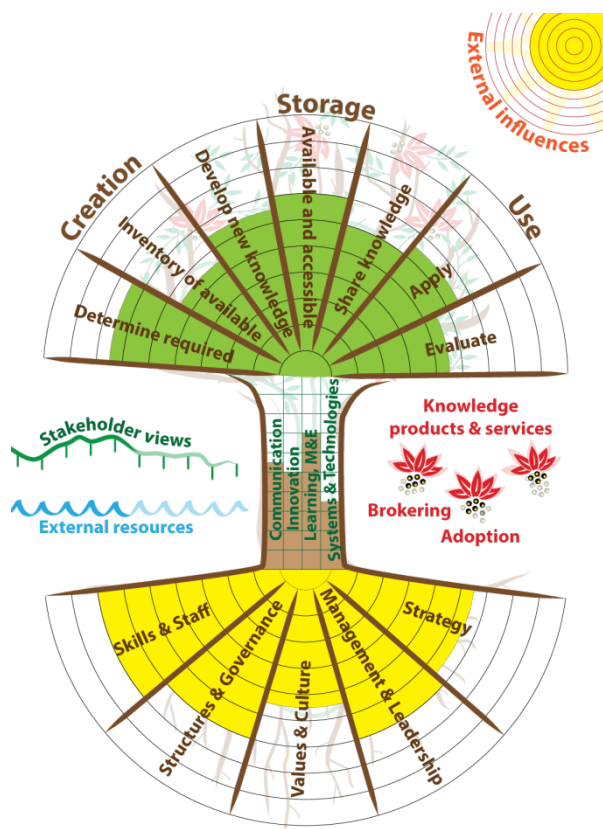
e. **To grow beautiful flowers and sweet fruits
[create value by providing knowledge products
& services:**

- **Broker products & services:** the ability to effectively translate knowledge into products and services for one's target audience, clients, partners or customers.
- **Facilitate adoption:** the extent to which it is made sure that knowledge products and services are understood and adopted.
- **Monitor & evaluate products & services:** the monitoring and evaluation of past and current products and services, measuring of client or partner satisfaction, and the adoption of what is learned in current and new services.



Knowledge Management Scan

Based on the concepts described above, a knowledge management scan is available. The primary objective of this knowledge management scan is to assess the current status of the knowledge management tree. As mentioned these trees can be an individual, an organization, or a network / community. The knowledge management scan is available at these three levels.



The secondary objective of this knowledge management scan is to provide insight into the different aspects of the knowledge management tree, at the level of an individual, an organization or a network / community. This insight can be important for awareness raising as well as for providing practical ideas on how to further nurture the knowledge management tree.

The KM scan could also be applied in the context of managing projects and/or programmes which might show resemblances with an organization as well as a network in terms of its knowledge management approach

*Knowledge Ecosystem approach:
Knowledge Management Explanatory sheets series*

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