

KCS FAQs (please review and tailor to your environment)

Q: *How do I distinguish between two solutions as to which is the correct one?*

A: The KB does not replace people's brains; it complements their brains. People have to be able to recognize a correct answer when they see it. A user should never deliver/apply a solution they do not know enough about. They must have some level of certainty that it fixes the problem.

Q: *We don't have time to document everything the customer says and everything we do to solve a customer's problem.*

If we continue to run our business with the same workflows, structure for content and rewards and recognition practices, we cannot add the capture of the information and the experience of the customer without adding more time per incident. The savings of re-using some solutions will not offset the incremental time spent on every solution. What is to be done?

A: It turns out that reusable solutions can be created as a natural by product of solving a problem without adding incremental minutes to the problem solving processes. In order to accomplish this we must change how we do things. We must examine the workflow, content structure and the rewards practices such that it facilitates both the problem solving processes and the capture/structure processes. We have learned that focusing on a structured problem solving process and capture in the workflow can improve the problem solving time.

Q: *When is it appropriate to create a new solution rather than reuse an existing solution?*

The simple case is when the fix or answer does not exist in the knowledge base; clearly, a new solution should be created. If the fix/answer is found in the knowledge base, then the existing solution should be updated to include any new information or context that has become known because of solving the problem. Because of this experience, the solution is improved or modified with additional information. There are some cases where multiple solutions exist for the same fix. For example, two solutions may exist but one is targeted at a highly technical user and the other is targeted at a novice user. These solutions should be linked in the system so that the relationship between them is known. However, the link is visible only to those authorized to see it. Most often, the highly technical solution will be for internal use only and is not visible to the novice audience. The content standard for the organization must address the criteria and mechanics of create versus reuse based on the capabilities of the technology being used.

Q: *How do we get our engineers/analysts to capture their knowledge in a database?*

To encourage the engineers/analysts to capture their knowledge we must consider the ways in which the organization values the individual. We must examine what creates heroes in our organization. If the individuals are valued for what they know and the knowledge they have, then they will not have an incentive to contribute to a knowledge base. If, on the other hand, individuals are valued for their ability to learn and to contribute to the learning of others, it creates an incentive to collaborate. If

heroes are created based on their participation in a knowledge management practice, and if they are valued and recognized for their ability to solve problems and to contribute that knowledge to a knowledge base through capture and structure practices then there is an incentive to contribute.

Q: *How do we manage the quality of the knowledge? We do not have time or the resources to review all the solutions we create.*

The most efficient way to manage knowledge is through use. If everyone who interacts with the knowledge base accepts responsibility to contribute to the quality of the knowledge then quality management becomes inherent in the system.

Q: *How do we know which solutions should be made available to others? If we create solutions within one level of our support structure, how do we know which ones should be migrated out to other levels of our support structure?*

By monitoring reuse of solutions, we can identify which ones might have value to other parts of the organization. Frequently referenced solutions should be flagged and reviewed for relevance and context for other audiences.

Q: *We are already doing knowledge management! We publish our knowledge on a CD ROM and on the web. We have tech writers who clean up the information and publish it. What is different about KCS?*

KCS strives for new levels of efficiency and relevance in the creation of knowledge. KCS is a methodology that is focused on capture and structure of knowledge in the workflow and on the find-ability and usability of that knowledge by a target audience.

Q: *Should we let people modify solutions while we are still trying to solve the problem?*

Incomplete solutions lead to complete solutions, creating or framing a solution and allowing others with the right privileges to modify them enables collaboration and collective problem solving independent of space and time. (People in different locations and times zones can help each other solve problems).

Q: *At what point in the process do we start capturing information about the problem in the solution?*

The capture of information should start as early in the process as possible. Ultimately the capture process starts with the user or customer. For example, if the user has done a search on the web site, the search information should be captured as part of the solution.

Q: *How should we recognize people for their use of the knowledge base, what is the one objective we should focus on?*

The health of the knowledge management system is based on many factors. No one single indicator can be isolated.

Q: *What if I do not want to capture the customer's opinion on what is happening because I think it is not right? Doesn't it contaminate the knowledge base?*

The ability to classify words and phrases the customer uses about the problem enables us to capture the customer context and experience and distinguish it from the environment and fix information. This is critical for find-ability.