

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT TEAMS

Obviously, knowledge management teams need to know the basics of how to design and deploy a KM tools and approaches. But what other skills are vital to success? APQC has defined a list of core competencies for KM teams, divided into four categories: **project and program management, consulting and customer centricity, communication and influence**, and **digital and data fluency**. Each competency is outlined below with a definition, why it matters to KM, and an example of it “in action” at an organization APQC has studied.

Project and Program Management

COMPETENCY	WHAT IS IT?	WHY IT MATTERS FOR KM	EXAMPLES IN ACTION
Foundational Project Management Skills	Knowledge of project management processes (e.g., waterfall, Agile) and problem-solving and time-management skills to carry them out	KM must be able to scope and deliver projects, actively manage its portfolio of KM approaches, and integrate KM into organization-wide project management.	At Grant Thornton , the KM team uses Agile methodology to develop and deliver solutions to user needs around content discovery, harvesting, and collaboration across teams.
Innovation and Strategic Problem Solving	The ability to identify emerging needs and address big-picture, cross-disciplinary, and complex problems with logic, synthesis, and creativity	KM must navigate the ever shifting goals, needs, and capabilities of different business areas and then develop creative solutions to challenges and opportunities.	TechnipFMC 's KM team used collaborative ideation to bring disparate business areas together to source ideas to improve product design and streamline the business.
Dexterity and Continuous Learning	High absorptive capacity to take in and apply new information (e.g., new methodologies, evolving requirements); closely related to "adaptive leadership"	KM needs to evolve with the business and shift gears along with business priorities, technology options, and end-user needs/preferences.	At the U.S Central Command , the KM team is always ready to adjust. When the organization faced challenges planning exercises with other countries due to network access restrictions, KM created new networks to enable all participants to collaborate.
Consistency and Accountability	Following through and building a track record of integrity by taking ownership (including when projects do not go to plan)	KM must be a trusted partner to related support functions such as IT and HR, as well as its internal business clients and stakeholder groups.	The Knowledge Solutions team at Bupa Health Insurance evolved from an administrative to a strategic role by building trust with the business.

Consulting and Customer Centricity

COMPETENCY	WHAT IS IT?	WHY IT MATTERS FOR KM	EXAMPLES IN ACTION
Business Acumen	Foundational knowledge of business strategy, operations, and related knowledge domains (or the intellectual curiosity to acquire it quickly)	KM needs to understand how the enterprise works in order to develop solutions that align with employee workways and business needs.	Ubisoft 's KM team has a dual reporting structure to both HR and the production intelligence group. This helps ensure KM is aligned to business objectives <i>and</i> employee experience goals.
Foundational KM Knowledge	Knowledge of available and potential KM approaches, tools, and capabilities (including those owned/managed by IT)	KM must understand the different options (including unconventional ones) available to serve internal customers. It also must stay abreast of new approaches to meet evolving needs and shift course, if necessary.	Mercer 's KM team runs a professional development program to continually upskill KM staff on skills and expertise they need now and in the future. Learning sessions include foundational KM topics as well as emerging digital capabilities.
Customer Focus	Steadfast focus on the needs and point of view of customer groups (i.e., employees or others who use KM tools and approaches)	KM must stay "people-centric" and not be distracted by new technologies that do not meet user needs. In addition, it must recognize when a KM approach that worked previously or with a different internal audience is not the best fit for the group it is currently supporting.	Shopify builds KM into the systems its primarily remote workforce uses every day, such as Slack and Google Chrome, and closely monitors KM metrics to evaluate employee engagement.
Emotional Intelligence	The ability to demonstrate genuine empathy for customers (i.e., employees or others who use KM tools and approaches), appreciate their needs and challenges, and use this understanding to inform the design and maintenance of KM approaches	KM needs to show that it understands end users' pain, hears their perspectives and opinions, values their input, and adjusts to accommodate their feedback.	The KM team for Jones Lange LaSalle 's product management group uses design thinking and service design methodologies to fully understand user needs and develop tailored approaches, content, and training to meet those needs.

Communication and Influence

COMPETENCY	WHAT IS IT?	WHY IT MATTERS FOR KM	EXAMPLES IN ACTION
Communications	The ability to develop a targeted, multi-channel communications strategy and leverage the right messages and communication techniques for different target audiences	KM needs to ensure its messages reach every member of the intended audience and to deliver messages in a way that resonates.	Air Traffic Navigation Services caters to the preferences of its young workforce with quick, simple messages distributed across multiple platforms, including enterprise and public social media channels.
Change Management	The ability to develop a comprehensive strategy to guide change, apply established change management techniques, and understand the prevailing organizational culture(s) and how to operate within them	KM needs to guide people through KM-related changes and manage the pace of KM changes in alignment with other organizational changes (e.g., digital transformation, mergers, reorganizations).	Prudential Financial 's KM team customizes change management for each impacted audience via tailored communications, engagement opportunities, trainings, and gamification. It also maintains feedback loops to continuously improve its strategy and toolkit.
Persuasion	The ability to "read" people, effectively communicate a point of view, and win people over to a particular opinion way of thinking	KM must persuade people to both experiment with and consistently use knowledge-sharing and reuse approaches, tools, and systems.	The KM team at Consolidated Contractors Company gradually persuaded leadership and employees to buy into KM by capturing compelling success stories of KM's value and then promoting them in meetings, newsletters, and other channels.
Networking	The ability to connect and build trusted relationships with partners in and beyond the organization	KM needs a circle of internal and external peers to consult for advice, expertise, operational support, and lessons learned.	At Swagelok , KM has relationships with business stakeholders including the CEO, business transformation roadmap owners, communications, and HR. Stakeholders help recalibrate KM's strategic focus, ensure people use KM tools and approaches, and provide feedback.

Digital and Data Fluency

COMPETENCY	WHAT IS IT?	WHY IT MATTERS FOR KM	EXAMPLES IN ACTION
Content Management and Curation Knowledge	An understanding of good content strategy, including how to manage assets throughout their lifecycle, the role of metadata and taxonomy, and structuring and providing access to content so that it is findable at the point of need	Many KM teams must manage content, either internally or for customer-facing sites and repositories. Furthermore, content management is often a pain point that KM teams are tasked with fixing.	Berry Appleman & Leiden follows a strict content management lifecycle to ensure everything in its knowledge library is valuable, vetted, and up to date. It uses taxonomy, metadata, search, and automated workflows to connect employees to data and knowledge in the flow of work.
Knowledge of KM Tools and Systems	Knowledge of existing systems to support knowledge flow, their history, and strengths and weaknesses (or the intellectual curiosity to acquire this knowledge quickly)	KM must understand how current systems work so that it can proactively resolve, or at least work around, the limitations of these systems. Understanding of the current state is also required to build a business case for upgrades.	Allstate 's KM team selected a new, unifying tool for knowledge content based on functionality, usability, business disruption, cost/benefit, and target state architecture alignment as well as specific needs such as automated workflows and pre-built APIs to connect to existing systems.
KM Data and Analytics Knowledge	Knowledge of available KM data that can be collected and analyzed, as well as how to interpret and leverage that data	KM needs data to inform its strategy, toolkit, the people and business areas it should focus on, and what it should do to increase adoption. It can also recommend KM data to support other business systems, processes, and decisions.	Infosys uses a business value articulation framework to show how KM supports business metrics. KM is correlated to project outcomes including project cycle time and resources required to execute projects.
Aptitude to Assess Emerging Technology	The capacity to quickly understand and evaluate new technologies	KM needs to be able to interpret jargon from the IT group and vendors, understand how new tech can be applied for KM, and evaluate the maturity of technologies to decide whether to implement.	To meet new user needs, Cognizant integrated AI and machine learning into its KM platform and developed recommendation models to auto-serve knowledge to employees based on their roles and projects.

How to Use This Competency List

The KM competencies described in this document should be viewed as a general guide, rather than a definitive checklist. Every KM program is unique, and the objectives and types of services you focus on will determine the capabilities required to carry out KM work. It's also important to recognize that the competencies are necessary at the *team* level—not everyone will have the requisite skills and knowledge in every category. Instead of upskilling everybody on everything, make sure your team has a good mix of leadership skills, KM-specific expertise, technology acumen, and communication and change management know-how.

APQC recommends using this list as a jumping-off point for an informal assessment and discussion with your team. Encourage participants to evaluate the team's strengths, as well as any areas where it is lacking. This frank conversation can inform decisions about future staffing needs, strategic partnerships with other parts of the business (to compensate for missing competencies), and group training opportunities. The conclusions can also feed into individual team members' learning and development goals.

Use [APQC's KM Competencies Gap Analysis Template](#), an editable Microsoft Excel tool, to document which team members possess these competencies and to identify your team's biggest gaps.

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