Why Do Annual Knowledge Management Self-Assessments

Knowledge is a valuable organizational asset, and it must be managed properly to improve decision cycle effectiveness and shared understanding within an organization. If Knowledge Management (KM) is being used effectively, it can enhance mission and organizational performance. Organizational outcomes are enabled by an effective KM Program. If leaders want to gain insight into how effective the KM processes and practices are within an organization, KM self-assessments should be done routinely. The basic benefits of an annual KM self-assessment are to identify organizational strengths and weaknesses.

Self-assessments help your organization identify areas to improve, such as: training, onboarding, document locating, and content management. Conducting annual KM assessments will help improve these four organization outcomes listed below. The organizational outcomes are enabled by an effective KM program and is viewed through the lenses of People, Process, Tools, and Organization

1. **Improve Decision Cycle Effectiveness:** reduces the time and produces better decisions for more mission impact.
2. **Enhance Mission & Organizational Performance:** creating efficiency and reducing duplication of effort.
3. **Create Agile Learning Organizations:** using dynamic and iterative techniques, such as collaboration, faster design solutions, feedback, and change in order to create progressive learning and performance processes.
4. **Facilitate Shared Understanding Through Collaboration:** This improves cross-functional communication and puts the team members on the same page with respect to how the organization operates, decides, and acts.

When an organization wants to compare its current business practices against industry best practices, a KM assessment is a great way to start. You will discover where your gaps are in technology, processes, and team structure.[1]

Five Reasons to Conduct a KM Assessment

In addition to gaining insights into your strengths and weaknesses after an assessment, KM Assessments may need to be conducted for any of the following reasons:

1) Implementing a new knowledge management system with help from a KM consultant or new KM project management team.
2) Completing a significant organizational restructuring or top management redesign.
3) If stakeholders or customers can't find good answers using your resources.
4) To stay compliant with industry regulations and standards or organizational policies.
5) If your organization is upgrading its knowledge base to an enterprise KM software.[1]

These five reasons listed above can change often and unexpectedly. It is necessary to assess your current KM state of operations to determine how well these areas are performing.

1) A KM assessment will provide your leadership insight into your current state of business practices and information systems. Assessing the effectiveness of your current knowledge systems may identify the need to update software or streamline workflows. By pinpointing areas where systems are weak, you can begin the process to modernize your network.

2) If the organization has been through a significant redesign or change in several personnel, a KM assessment should be conducted. This area will assess how you are using your knowledge management practitioners and/or if they need additional training. The assessment will help identify how well the staff personnel and leadership collaborate or interact to complete projects.

3) Assessing your KM resource availability will provide you a snapshot of how well stakeholders can find what they need. This area of assessment can provide valuable information towards improving your content management and content discoverable techniques.

4) Determine how well your KM governance and policies are working. This assessment can provide leadership the information they will need to develop a KM strategy or improve on the current KM Vision if one is provided. This assessment will provide information needed to determine if your organization meets the industry standards of KM within its area of expertise.

5) An assessment may result in upgrading knowledge systems or technologies. It will provide the necessary information needed to upgrade your current KM repositories or knowledge base. It may identify any potential difficulties in upgrading existing systems related to data storage, security protocols, and user access. By understanding how users are accessing information from the repository, organizations can make decisions about how best to optimize its content for maximum accessibility.

Through this discovery process you will be able to find and use organizational knowledge to a get a better understanding of what is needed to improve operations. By identifying these gaps with a KM self-assessment, you can now develop solutions to mitigate and solve the issues. Eventually this will increase your overall performance as an organization. If self-assessments are completed annually and gaps identified and resolved, your KM processes and practices will continue to improve, resulting in a better shared understanding through collaboration, and organizational performance.

For your KM practices and procedures to stay relevant, goals should be periodically revisited, along with approaches, supporting technology, and resource allocation to ensure they align with organizational needs. According to the American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC), a KM assessment will help KM teams validate and adjust their focus to align with organizational goals[2]. This is why it is important to conduct an annual KM assessment to compare you results to current organizational goals and adjust your KM efforts to support them.

In Summary

As a result of conducting annual KM self-assessments and making the necessary improvements, your organization will stay relevant and competitive. The data collected from annual self-assessments is essential to improving how your organization captures, organizes, stores, shares, and accesses knowledge. Over time these annual KM self-assessments will highlight trends and patterns. Additionally, the KM personnel evaluating these trends and patterns can then make informed decisions on how to allocate resources. Finally, it also provides a good opportunity for self-reflection, help you stay on track, and make sure you are reaching your organizational goals.


Image (a): https://www.freepik.com/premium-photo/assessment-evaluation-measure-analytics-analysis-business-technology-concept-blurred-background_28560244

Notes

1. Shelf, Gemshelf Inc. (2022). "Conducting a Knowledge Management Assessment? 5 Steps to Follow" Retrieved from https://shelf.io/blog/knowledge-management-assessement/.
2. Authored by APQC. (2022, February 28) "K07382 APQC'S Knowledge Management Portfolio Assessment Process" Retrieved from www.apqc.org.
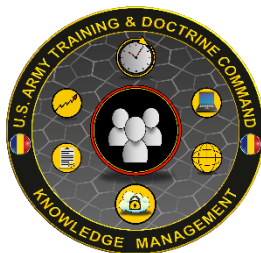
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Contact the TRADOC OCKO for support, development, and training: dashboards, collaboration sites, SharePoint, metrics, Key Performance Indicators, process mapping, Microsoft Teams, multimedia production, and much more.