

FIVE REASONS WHY ORGANIZATIONS ASSESS THEIR KM MATURITY

Learn how Abbott Established Pharmaceuticals, NextEra Energy, Rockwell Collins, Shell, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers use maturity assessment to understand, improve, and build leadership buy-in for their KM initiatives.

Almost a decade ago, APQC developed the Levels of KM Maturity™, a five-phased maturity model to describe the status of KM programs (Figure 1). The levels range from Level 1, at which an organization is just starting to recognize the need to improve knowledge flow, to Level 5, at which KM processes and behaviors are fully embedded in enterprise strategy and culture.¹

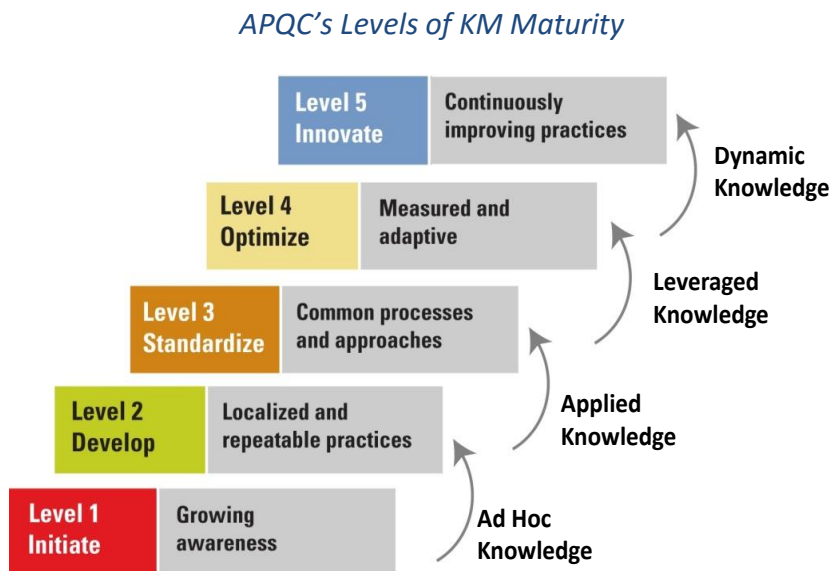


Figure 1

After creating this maturity model, APQC quickly realized that, for the model to have tangible value, organizations needed a way to measure themselves against it and obtain an objective view of where they were in their KM implementations. Thus, it spent two years creating and

¹ See [APQC's Levels of Knowledge Management Maturity](#) (Cindy Hubert and Darcy Lemons, 2017) for more information.

testing a comprehensive assessment tied to the maturity framework. This effort culminated in the launch of the KM Capability Tool (CAT), which APQC has used to evaluate more than 250 KM programs to date.

The CAT uses a series of behavioral statements to assess KM programs across four broad areas: strategy, people, process, and content/IT. However, in developing the CAT, APQC decided that participants would need more granular feedback in order to interpret and act on the results. As a result, the four categories are further subdivided into 12 capability areas that, together, represent the building blocks of effective KM programs (Figure 2).²

12 Capability Areas Covered in APQC's KM Capability Assessment Tool

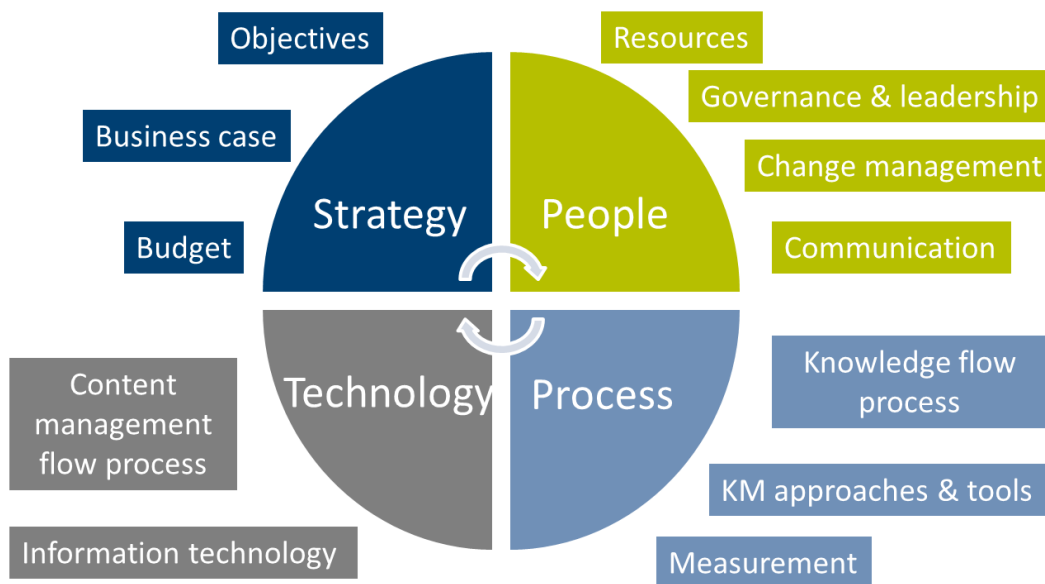


Figure 2

APQC's research consistently demonstrates the advantages of KM maturity assessment.³ Participation in the CAT or a similar diagnostic provides organizations with an opportunity for self-reflection and gives them objective feedback on their KM program development. More specifically, assessment results help KM teams identify success stories to build on, realize where they have room for improvement, envision what's possible in terms of best-in-class performance, and determine concrete steps to get there.

² See [How Mature Is Your KM Program? Using APQC's KM Capability Assessment Tool](#) (APQC, 2017) for more information.

³ See [Regularly Assess, Benchmark, and Analyze KM Efforts and Trends](#) (APQC, 2016) for more information.

However, the KM CAT is not a simple diagnostic, and gathering the required data takes time and energy on behalf of the KM program being assessed. Some organizations wonder what tangible benefit they will gain from assessment and whether participation is worth the effort. In short, they want to know specifically what they will learn and how the results will support them as they hone their KM strategies and capabilities.

In 2017, APQC launched research to illuminate the reasons why organizations pursue KM maturity assessment and provide CAT participants with a concrete model to follow. As part of this effort, the research team interviewed representatives from five organizations that had assessed and reassessed the maturity of their KM programs over time:

- ◆ Abbott Established Pharmaceuticals (Abbott),
- ◆ NextEra Energy (NextEra),
- ◆ Rockwell Collins,
- ◆ Shell, and
- ◆ the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

This white paper showcases five reasons why organizations assess their KM maturity, based on examples from the featured organizations. APQC hopes that the experiences of these leading KM programs will clarify the business case for maturity assessment and give CAT participants creative ideas about how they can use assessment to spur their KM efforts forward.

Reason No. 1

MEASURING YOUR KM MATURITY ESTABLISHES A MEANINGFUL BASELINE

Organizations initiate KM maturity assessment for many reasons, but a common one is to establish a baseline before launching, expanding, revamping, or changing the direction of a KM effort (Figure 3). In addition to clarifying the current status of KM within an enterprise, a preliminary assessment provides a snapshot of base-level performance against which future progress can be measured.

Most organizations new to KM are assessed as relatively immature, with ample opportunity for growth and improvement as they enhance their KM capabilities. The initial assessment shows the KM team exactly where it is starting from, which makes it easier to establish realistic milestones and expectations for the future.

Summary of KM Assessment Journeys at Organizations in This Research

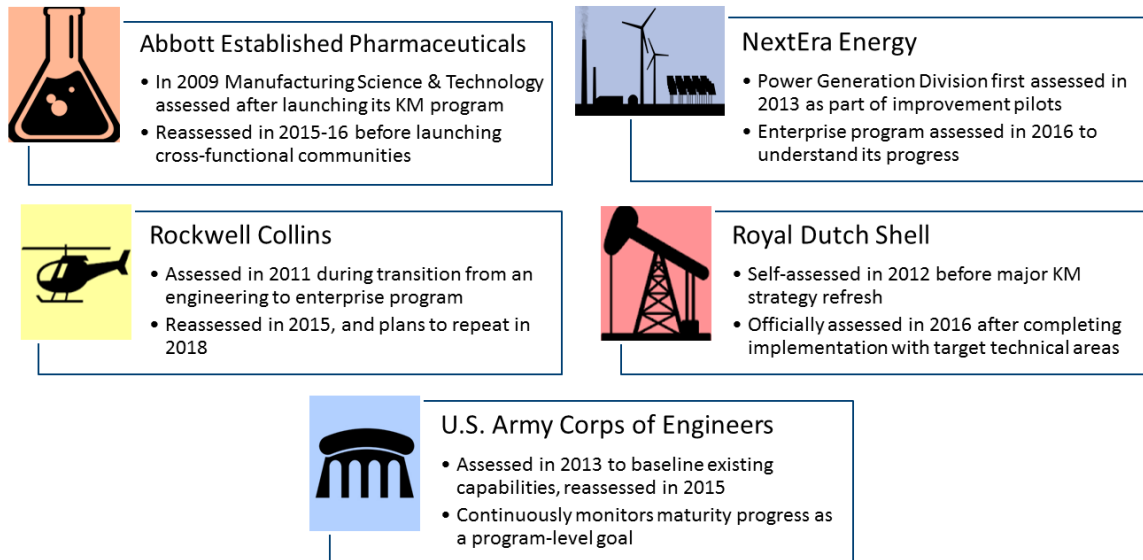


Figure 3

At Abbott Established Pharmaceuticals, for example, the Manufacturing, Science, and Technology (MS&T) business unit within the pharmaceutical division undertook its first KM maturity assessment in 2009, the same year it launched its KM program. MS&T saw the assessment as way to gauge the current KM practices within the unit, and its initial results confirmed that the team was beginning from Level 1 maturity. Since then, MS&T has used assessment as a means of goal-setting and problem-solving both before and after major activity implementations.

Rockwell Collins began participating in the CAT in 2011. At that time, its KM program was transitioning from an engineering-specific to an enterprise focus. However, Rockwell Collins' knowledge management and training (KM&T) team elected to complete the assessment on behalf of the enterprise in order to set an accurate baseline for the expanded program and measure what needed to be developed in terms of scope and mission.

Rockwell Collins completed the CAT a second time in 2015 to gauge progress against its initial baseline, and it plans to do so again 2018. "The assessment is a helpful reality check of where we stand today as compared to the rest of the industry," said KM&T Manager Reetika Bhandari. "The end goal is not to have a high score but a credible understanding of where we stand in terms of KM effectiveness."

NextEra Energy first assessed its KM maturity in 2012 when working with an external consultant. The consultant surveyed a cross-section of NextEra employees and then published a report of

the organization's overall needs and maturity level by division using APQC's CAT as a guide. Results specified the enterprise at Level 1 maturity, and the power generation and nuclear divisions at Level 2. NextEra approached APQC directly for insight into the rankings and how to progress, and in 2013 APQC officially assessed the Power Generation Division (PGD)'s maturity to validate the original consultant's results. This assessment explained the details behind PGD's Level 2 maturity status and became a yardstick against which future improvements could be measured.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began working with APQC to optimize its formal KM activities in 2012 after the then-Commanding General identified improving the flow of critical knowledge as a key goal for the enterprise. As part of its engagement with APQC, USACE participated in the CAT in 2013 to understand where it stood and set a baseline for its maturity goals. That assessment, in which USACE was assessed at Level 1, became a crucial input to the organization's KM vision and strategy, which has focused on the organization achieving Level 2 and Level 3 maturity rankings within certain timeframes.

Although it did not formally participate in the KM CAT until 2016, Shell began informally gauging its KM activities against APQC's Levels of KM Maturity in 2012. At that time, KM was a fragmented effort with what the organization refers to as "islands of excellence," but little standardization. The 2012 self-assessment provided Shell with an honest view of its existing KM efforts and became one of the factors that prompted a "reset" of the organization's KM approach, beginning with a new strategy and operational model in 2013 and enterprise-level KM solutions in 2014.

Reason No. 2

DATA GATHERING CLARIFIES HOW TEAM MEMBERS AND STAKEHOLDERS VIEW KM PERFORMANCE AND IMPACT

While it's easy to see how a KM team might use the assessment results to guide its efforts, it is less intuitive that the mere act of completing the assessment can provide valuable feedback. However, if you dig into the structure of the assessment and the information that respondents must provide, the reasons for this become clear.

The KM Capability Assessment Tool comprises a series of 146 capability statements such as, "Standard methods are used to capture and retain valuable knowledge" (that's a level 3 capability within the KM approaches and tools capability area). Participating organizations must check off the capabilities that exist within their programs and then provide examples of each. To confirm the presence of certain capabilities—especially those related to the consistent application of KM tools and approaches— KM team members likely will need to confer among

themselves, talk to stakeholders across the business, and reach out to end-users to collect relevant examples.

All the organizations featured in this research mentioned the collaborative process required to collect data for the assessment (Figure 4). At NextEra's Power Generation Division, for example, data collection involved 30 representatives from the division's KM steering committee, levels of divisional management, and the division's lead management. Each representative had to provide examples demonstrating the 12 capability areas, which the KM team consolidated and validated with the KM steering committee and divisional leaders.

Examples of Collaboration to Capture Maturity Assessment Data



30

Stakeholders from NextEra Energy Power Generation Division's KM steering committee and divisional leadership involved in KM maturity assessment



7

Key contacts from participating departments that Abbott Established Pharmaceuticals' KM team interviewed about the impact of KM activities



5

Members of Shell's KM team who completed individual KM maturity assessments, which were then compiled and reconciled for the organization's submission

Figure 4

In 2016, Shell's KM team used a similarly inclusive process to collect data on behalf of the technical functions involved in its 2012 KM revamp. A team of five from the KM core team began the process by each conducting an individual assessment of the technical functions' KM maturity. After consolidating and reconciling their respective assessments, the team then assigned two members to work with business stakeholders and amass the supporting evidence required for submission to APQC.

While the collaborative data-gathering process is almost always illuminating, some KM representatives said that the conversations required to fill out the assessment were almost as eye-opening as the final rankings they received back from APQC. In these cases, data collection revealed differing perspectives, either among members of the KM team or between the KM core team and sponsors out in the business, and became a jumping-off point for necessary

discussions regarding how the KM strategy, tools, and approaches were rolled out enterprise-wide. Where perceptions differed, the KM team was able to share evidence to change stakeholders' minds or, where real gaps existed, divert resources to areas with less consistent adoption.

At Abbott Established Pharmaceuticals, for example, Knowledge and Documentation Senior Specialist Maria ter Horst-van Amstel led the assessment effort for the Manufacturing, Science, and Technology business unit. After conferring with her fellow KM practitioners, she interviewed seven key contacts in participating departments about the impact of KM activities and summarized their answers for inclusion in the assessment. According to ter Horst-van Amstel, it was important to confirm that the perceptions of KM practitioners matched those of managers and end-users throughout the unit. If the KM team believed that a tool or approach was having a certain effect, but business representatives did not agree, then that would indicate a gap in how the unit was implementing or communicating about its KM toolkit.

Rockwell Collins has also used the assessment process as a way to understand how KM is applied and perceived across the enterprise. Knowledge management and training team managers lead the CAT effort, but they realize that the assessment requires data from stakeholders beyond the KM&T team. In addition to conferring with their colleagues, they gather input from community of practice leaders, core business unit managers, and key partners in functions such as HR and IT.

Reetika Bhandari said that the process of collecting different perspectives to fill out the assessment makes the KM&T team more aware of others' viewpoints, which provides an additional reality check for program progress. When community and business leaders have significantly different perceptions than the KM&T team, this may reveal communication gaps or areas ripe for continuous improvement.

Reason No. 3

ASSESSMENT RESULTS HELP VALIDATE YOUR KM STRATEGY, IDENTIFY WEAKNESSES, AND PRIORITIZE IMPROVEMENTS

Once an organization has gathered the necessary data, gone through validation, and received its maturity rankings from APQC, it must determine a strategy and roadmap for moving forward. With detailed CAT results in hand, a KM team can determine where it is achieving its goals, what local capabilities and successes it can build on, and where it may need to rethink its approach. This then allows the team to evaluate tradeoffs and prioritize potential improvements.

The exact role of assessment in strategy development depends on where an organization is in the KM program lifecycle. For example, if it is in the process of implementing a clearly

documented strategy, the assessment can validate or reveal weaknesses in the current path while gauging the rate of progress toward predetermined goals. However, if an organization is new to KM or at a point where it is rethinking its strategic priorities, then the CAT results may more directly inform the strategic direction and related investment decisions. Furthermore, through periodic assessment over time, KM teams can start to understand the rate of change within their KM capabilities and use that data to make realistic timelines for future progress.

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Among the five participating organizations in the study, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has based its KM strategy and improvement plan most directly on assessment data. When the agency completed its first assessment in 2013, it found pockets of excellence, good examples, and the need to ramp up its ability to ensure knowledge flows across the enterprise. Quickly improving USACE’s KM maturity level became part of the then-Commanding General’s core campaign plan, with key resources allocated to improvement. The KM processes and intent catalyzed in 2012/2013 continue to be supported by USACE senior leaders today.

In summer 2015, USACE again took APQC’s CAT to gauge its progress in moving to Level 2 maturity. The KM program was assessed at Level 1 overall, showing progress toward its goals and closing the performance gap with peer institutions. It found pockets of early adopters and innovators and a demand for KM capabilities. The second assessment helped the agency to pay attention to higher-maturity-level concerns and incorporate resulting actions and recommendations from this assessment into its KM strategic plan and roadmap.

Using feedback from the assessments, USACE designed a KM strategic plan to close its gaps and elicit results from its divisions. A KM Operations Order and corresponding Lines of Effort (LOEs) provide specific guidance on the implementation of the KM program. The LOEs, listed in Figure 5, focus USACE teams on specific KM initiatives tied to the strategic plan, with the overarching goal to achieve Level 3 KM maturity by the end of 2017.

KM Lines of Effort at USACE

LOE #	LOE Name	LOE Goal
1	KM strategy and leadership	◆ Codify USACE policy and infrastructure changes to implement the KM strategy
2	Community of practice	◆ Establish requirements for and improve quality of USACE communities of practice
3	KM infrastructure	◆ Establish team-based learning across USACE and launch prototype efforts

4	Lessons learned/Best practice	◆ Update USACE Lessons Learned Program and establish a best practices program
5	Knowledge flow and process improvement	◆ Improve the understanding of critical knowledge and how that knowledge moves through USACE
6	Expertise	◆ Develop processes and procedures to identify, validate, and locate Subject Matter Experts (SME) in specific disciplines across USACE
7	Content and records management	◆ Develop an interim taxonomy and metadata approach for the USACE SharePoint document repository
8	Strategic communications	◆ Ensure that aims and objectives of the USACE KM Strategy and its implementation are clear and understood

Figure 5

The KM Operations Order and LOEs direct the entire USACE workforce on how to execute KM as the agency builds its KM capabilities and becomes more mature. In addition, senior leaders have articulated a vision for what KM will look like across the agency once it achieves Level 3 maturity. Namely, at Level 3, USACE would:

- ◆ fully partner across the U.S. Army organizational spectrum, identify resource constraints hindering execution, and synchronize USACE leaders behind KM efforts;
- ◆ develop more seamless coordination between headquarters and local offices in a system where each division supports enterprise KM efforts;
- ◆ establish an effective KM core team with strategic ownership as well as defined roles and responsibilities.
- ◆ establish KM representatives at every level and hold monthly KM representative workshops/summits to facilitate learning and collaboration;
- ◆ standardize knowledge flow processes, KM approaches, and supporting tools, including a KM portal with optimal search capabilities;
- ◆ develop an engaging KM brand and communicate goals and activities through videos, twitter, brochures, newsletters, training, and established strategic communications; and
- ◆ use key performance indicators to monitor the health of effectiveness of KM efforts.

In short, USACE’s close attention to the assessment data means that both the specific lines of effort and the broader strategic vision established by leadership use the CAT as an inspiration and guidepost. This is demonstrated by the organization’s KM fiscal year 2020 campaign milestones, which include an explicit timeline for KM maturity progress (Figure 6).

USACE Fiscal Year 2020 KM Campaign Milestones

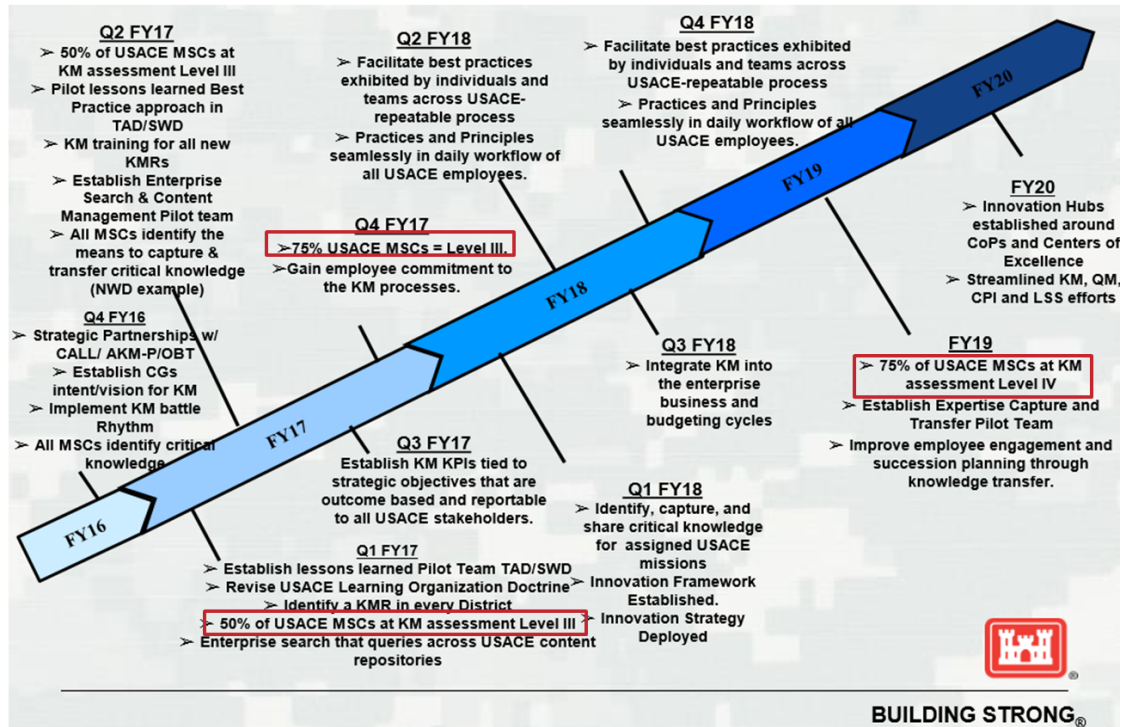


Figure 6

ROCKWELL COLLINS

Like USACE, Rockwell Collins has participated in the KM CAT multiple times, using the assessment results to refocus and refine its KM strategy over time. Since the organization has an engineering mindset and leadership predisposition to objective assessments, it sees the CAT as an apt tool to help it set priorities and guide future direction.

Rockwell Collins' initial 2011 assessment confirmed that its communities of practice were mature, it had a structured budget in place, the core team had necessary resources, and the enterprise had some KM tools. However, it also revealed certain gaps in the then-nascent enterprise program.

“The assessment gave us real data to act on and a way to develop specific actions for our KM team to focus on based on business need and leadership direction,” said Lynda Braksiek, who managed the team during its initial CAT assessments and facilitated that effort. For example, the 2011 assessment confirmed the existence of siloed KM activities across the enterprise and an opportunity to improve how employee skills were assessed and managed. This led the

knowledge management and training team to seek a closer partnership with HR and leverage the new human capital management platform it was rolling out.

The knowledge management and training team continues to use the CAT to measure progress and learn how its program stacks up against industry norms. Reetika Bhandari said that, by breaking the analysis into 12 categories, the APQC reports provide a framework for moving forward. The KM&T team then refines this framework during follow-up meetings with APQC to discuss the results and set goals based on current performance. The results inform the opportunities that the team pursues while providing context for success stories.

Ultimately, the CAT helps Rockwell Collins' KM&T team gauge its rate of change so that it can make realistic expectations regarding future progress. "It's always a little eye opening to see where you're at and then understand that you're not going to jump up a big level in one year. So we're making little steps to get there," said Tim Wendt, agile program consultant on the KM&T team.

By adhering to a two- to three-year assessment cycle, the KM&T has been able to implement changes from one assessment and then allow those changes to have some impact before returning for a point of comparison. In its last assessment, the organization achieved Level 5 maturity in terms of strategy, people, and processes. It is currently completing Level 3 in measurement, Level 4 in content management, and Level 5 in IT.

Although the KM&T team continues to focus on raising the organization's KM maturity, it is not necessarily pursuing Level 5 ratings across the board. Instead, its goal is to raise maturity in areas prioritized by senior leaders. For example, KR&T is currently forging a partnership with IT to improve the use of enabling technology for knowledge capture, knowledge access (e.g., via enterprise search), expertise, and collaboration in order to better embed KM in the flow of process-based work. This was identified as a more urgent strategic need than improving KM measurement, even though the organization is still completing Level 3 in that area. Senior leadership "believed in the impact of KM and didn't want to waste time trying to measure something that was subjective in nature," Lynda Braksiek said.

"We are trying to see what makes most sense for us, what will give us the biggest bang for our buck, and going toward that direction as a strategy," said Reetika Bhandari. "That is really important."

NEXTERA ENERGY

When NextEra Energy's Power Generation Division participated in the CAT in 2013, its KM team was already engaged in pilot projects focused on people connections (i.e., expertise location), content management, and the transfer of critical information and technology. The division validated its strategy and prioritized its efforts based on the CAT results, which showed strengths in KM strategy and budgeting and a need to further develop KM processes. The division also began to develop its communities of practice and to integrate KM into its

operational model in order to improve how knowledge flows between individuals and teams, said Cynthia Barlow, general manager of strategic planning and quality services.

By late 2013, NextEra energy's senior leadership team decided to leverage PGD's KM efforts to develop a corporate-wide program. This newly established program developed a strategy based on the findings from APQC's maturity assessment as well as a model of 10 critical success factors developed by consultant Vitesse Solutions. The organization hired this consultant to help it establish communities of practice and launch the enterprise program, using the assessment data to help the KM team expand its cope beyond communities.

Since launching its enterprise KM program, NextEra has built a robust, multi-tiered governance model with leadership representation from across its business units. It has expanded division-level efforts around communities of practice and content management, focusing its KM tools and approaches on findability. The program also implemented processes to enhance knowledge flow, including creating enterprise collaboration and content access portals, and improved employee connectivity by breaking down business silos and providing broader access to enterprise knowledge, technology, and financial support groups.

The enterprise knowledge-sharing program participated in the KM CAT in March 2016 and found it was on the right track in terms of making meaningful improvements.

"Our long-term vision and strategy now encompass a lot more than communities," said Barlow. "We definitely see the benefit of incorporating training and collaboration, both at the business-unit level and at the enterprise level, and of coupling that with the discussions taking place in the communities of practice. We also see a huge benefit in developing employee profiles and using them to connect people who may not have been connected before. If you look at our overall strategy, it touches on each of the categories in APQC's assessment."

ABBOTT ESTABLISHED PHARMACEUTICALS

At Abbott, the 2009 assessment results spelled out exactly what the team needed to accomplish to progress its KM maturity. In late 2015/early 2016, Manufacturing, Science, and Technology repeated the assessment to gauge its progress as part of an initiative to implement communities of practice both within its department and cross-functionally. "It just makes sense to know how your company is doing, in terms of the ability to benchmark and measure your KM performance versus best practices," said Maria ter Horst-van Amstel.

As of the most recent assessment, MS&T's KM program had progressed to an average of Level 3, with capabilities ranging from levels 1 to 4 by area. The KM CAT results revealed the unit's KM strengths and opportunities to improve, which allowed ter Horst-van Amstel to both communicate progress and address weaknesses. "When you fill in the KM CAT, you immediately realize what you need to do to take the next step," said ter Horst-van Amstel. "Simply filling in the tool gives you insight into what other activities you can do."

The 2015/2016 assessment encouraged the MS&T unit to establish a strategy that would further formalize its KM efforts and provide a framework for improving. Interpretation of the KM CAT results allowed MS&T to generate a plan, including specific steps to take in maturing the KM program. For example, ter Horst-van Amstel found opportunities to improve the unit's KM measurement capabilities by establishing measurement baselines before any new KM activities are implemented.

Building on the 2015/2016 results, MS&T plans to focus on change management, measurement, and communications for 2017, with a goal to move up at least one maturity level in all three capability areas.

SHELL

As stated earlier, Shell used its self-assessment against the KM Cat in 2012 to help guide a full-scale transformation of its KM strategy and solutions. The KM team's primary focus in these efforts was to support its technical organizations, comprising 11 technical functions, with the implementation of a single standardized KM solution.

By the end of 2016, Shell had completed implementation of this new strategy, including the integration of its KM governance, processes, IT support, and other activities through a central KM core team. To gauge its progress, the organization completed the CAT on behalf of the technical functions that were the initial focus of the 2012 revamp. When the validated results showed that the technical organizations were at or near Level 5 in every category, the KM team was pleasantly surprised with the progress it had made.

For Shell's KM core team, the results were a confirmation that KM efforts should be business-led rather than IT-focused. "We have achieved a degree of integration of the IT components and the behavioral components and placed the focus on the business value, rather than the shared processing in our conversations with key stakeholders in the business," said Geoff Kitt, head of KM change & communications for Shell Group.

The KM team plans to build on its KM CAT results by increasing the maturity of its enterprise capabilities. KM team members are evaluating APQC's report for opportunities to improve and as a reference for building the enterprise governance and operating model moving forward. The benchmarks will be used to drive tactical improvements, such as to the enterprise lessons learned approach, as well as to inform the broader strategic direction.

Reason No. 4

ASSESSMENT CAN HELP SPUR THE TRANSITION TO A MORE CONSISTENT ENTERPRISE KM STRATEGY AND TOOLKIT

Assessment results can move a KM program in many different directions, as the examples in the previous section demonstrate. However, one of the most common improvements that organizations pursue in response to assessment is the standardization of KM strategy, governance, tools, processes, and approaches across the enterprise.

APQC believes that Level 3 maturity is the most important milestone in an organization's KM journey because it denotes standardization. Once an organization reaches Level 3, its previously ad hoc and localized efforts become more consistent, allowing it to leverage economies of scale and systematically integrate knowledge sharing and collaboration into daily operations. Independent research has found that such improvements help organizations achieve significantly better financial performance than peers at lower maturity levels.⁴

When an organization participates in the CAT, both the conversations required for data collection and the final rankings reveal opportunities for standardization and consistent application of KM (Figure 7). In some cases, one function or business unit is shown to have a successful local program, and leaders realize that the broader organization would benefit from replicating that group's effort. In other cases, the assessment points out weak points where enterprise processes and approaches have been inconsistently rolled out or poorly adopted.

As an organization works toward standardization, business units and functions with successful local approaches for knowledge capture and sharing may be hesitant to change what is already working in favor of a new enterprise strategy. However, CAT results can help the KM team communicate with such groups, overcome local pockets of resistance, and motivate the behavior changes required for true enterprise adoption.

Shell is an organization where assessment has served as a catalyst for the development of a coherent enterprise KM strategy. As indicated earlier, Shell performed an initial self-assessment against the CAT in 2012, when KM was a fragmented effort comprised of "islands of excellence" across the organization. The self-assessment was one of a number of factors that prompted a "reset" of the organization's KM approach, which led to the rollout of a more coherent enterprise strategy and toolkit.

⁴ See [KM Maturity and the Potential Return on Investment](#) (APQC, 2011).

Timeline of Assessment and Development of Enterprise KM Approaches

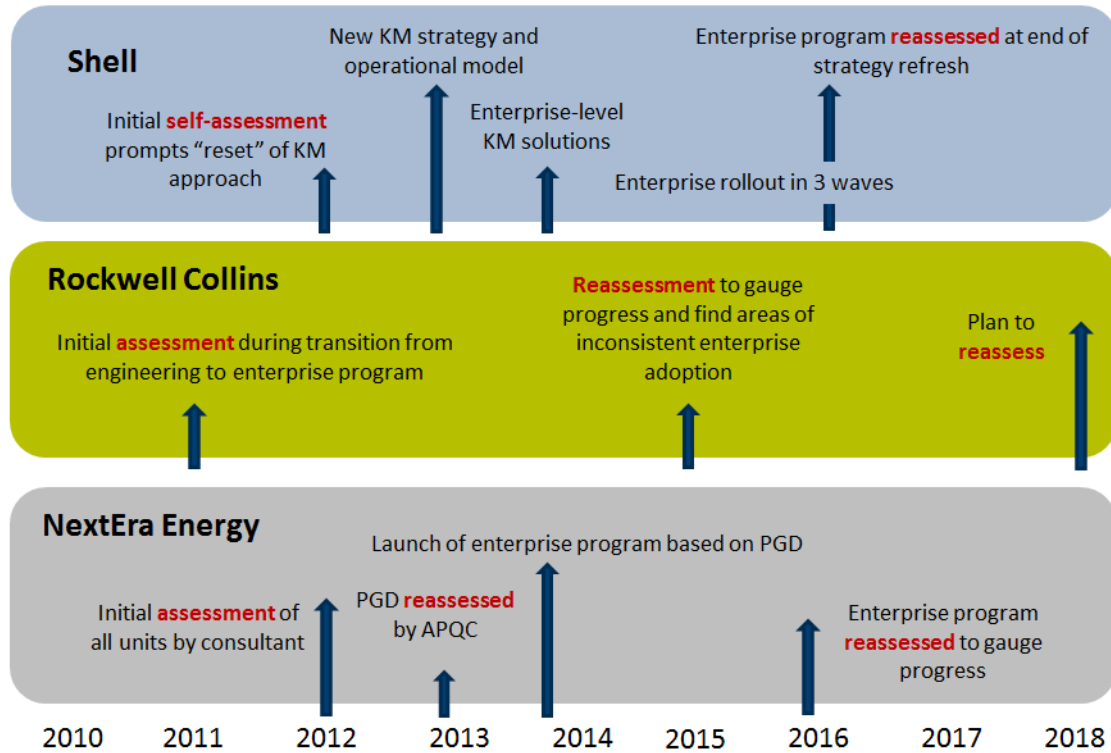


Figure 7

More specifically, Shell’s 2012 CAT results provided the objective proof it needed to standardize KM activities so that the entire enterprise could reach the levels accomplished by leading technical functions.

In the process of enterprise rollout, Shell’s KM team experienced pushback from some areas that felt strong ownership over their local KM activities. For example, a key sponsor within the safety function requested proof that a proposed enterprise KM solution was better than the function’s existing KM solution. Being able to offer the KM CAT results as evidence of achievement, in addition to validated business success stories, helped prove the KM team’s point.

As with Shell, NextEra Energy’s maturity assessments were part of a chain of events that led to the launch of a consistent enterprise KM program. Historically, the Power Generation Division has outpaced the broader enterprise in terms of KM strategy and implementation. In 2012 and 2013, PGD worked first with a consultant and then with APQC to assess KM maturity at the divisional and enterprise levels. By November 2013, NextEra Energy’s senior leadership team

decided to leverage PGD’s KM efforts to develop a corporate-wide program and created a KM program manager position.

“We started to take a more holistic view of knowledge sharing across the enterprise,” said Ari Lima, manager of corporate operational excellence for NextEra’s enterprise knowledge sharing program. Although the decision to launch the enterprise program was not explicitly linked to CAT participation, the assessment helped reveal opportunities that could be exploited only with a more uniform and wide-ranging KM approach.

At Rockwell Collins, the organization had already decided to expand the decade-old KM effort within its engineering division into an enterprise-level program when it first assessed its KM maturity in 2011. However, the initial assessment helped the knowledge management and training team anticipate and prepare for some of the challenges involved in transitioning the KM program from an engineering focus to serving the broader enterprise. The process of collecting input from internal stakeholders revealed where there was reticence to shift from engineering-specific to enterprise solutions. This focus, said Lynda Braksiek, trickled down into how well enterprise tools initially were being managed.

Even now, six years after that initial assessment, the CAT process continues to reveal opportunities for Rockwell Collins to implement KM more fully at the enterprise level. “True knowledge-sharing practices are still not built effectively into our program management process, so we still do not have a closed-loop system,” said Braksiek. “This is one of our biggest opportunities for lessons learned and applied. We have pockets of greatness with communities, knowledge bases, and the use of social media. But it’s not consistent or managed well; therefore, we have siloed solutions.”

As Rockwell Collins continues to hone its KM capabilities, it plans to use each iteration of assessment results to address inconsistencies in how KM is applied and integrated into business processes across the organization.

Reason No. 5

MATURITY RANKINGS ARE A POWERFUL WAY TO COMMUNICATE KM PROGRESS AND VALUE TO LEADERS AND EMPLOYEES

As stated, KM maturity assessment provides insight into the evolution of an organization’s KM capabilities over time, how the program is progressing, and how it compares to industry peers and top performers. This information is valuable in its own right, but also can be leveraged to guide communications with senior leaders and the workforce as a whole. While the maturity assessment does not directly measure the business value or return on investment from a KM program, it can measure the advances an organization has made as a result of program

development. For some senior leadership teams, this evidence of forward progression is sufficient to secure continued funding and support.

This is certainly true at Rockwell Collins, where prior to participating in the maturity assessment, the knowledge management and training team had experienced challenges with leader buy-in. According to KM&T representatives, the assessment has allowed the team to communicate more effectively with leaders, showing them how the KM program compares to industry benchmarks and confirming the steps KM&T should take to continue adding value.

Because Rockwell Collins' KM program continues to report to engineering leaders, the management culture gravitates toward evaluation against objective, third-party models. Thus, the CAT results have become a way for leaders to validate the KM strategy and refine the direction moving forward. Once the KM&T team reviews the analysis from APQC, it is presented to the KM program sponsor (the vice president of engineering), department manager, and senior director. (During certain periods, the CEO also has reviewed the results, but this does not happen currently.) After comparing the newest results with previous iterations, the organization assesses progress to date and decides on appropriate actions, which are integrated into strategic planning. This is a combined effort by the KM&T team, the community of practice leads, and the engineering leadership team.

According to Rockwell Collins' KM&T team, routine assessment has provided hard numbers to present to leaders and assured them of appropriate progress over time. The team believes that this has helped it garner trust from management, even without strong quantifiable measures of KM's business value. To enhance ongoing communication, the team is working with management to create a scorecard highlighting KM measures tied to its maturity goals. This will ensure a more continuous flow of data to leadership regarding KM accomplishments and maturation.

As at Rockwell Collins, senior leaders at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers use CAT results as a proxy to gauge KM's progress and value. After USACE's initial assessment, leaders decided they wanted to outperform the government sector, where the average overall maturity ranking is Level 2. The agency is currently working to attain top-performer status among government organizations (which average Level 3 in strategy and process and Level 2 in people and technology) and then proceed beyond these benchmarks.

At the then-Commanding General's request, USACE's KM office created a dashboard viewer of KM activity, project status, and feasibility by region (see figures 8 and 9 for examples). This dashboard tool, which rolls up data from quarterly "mini-assessments" at the division level, helps leaders monitor the program and gives decision makers easy access to information about KM milestones, status, and specific lines of effort (e.g., lessons learned).

USACE KM Maturity Assessment Dashboard: Example of Overall Status of One Division

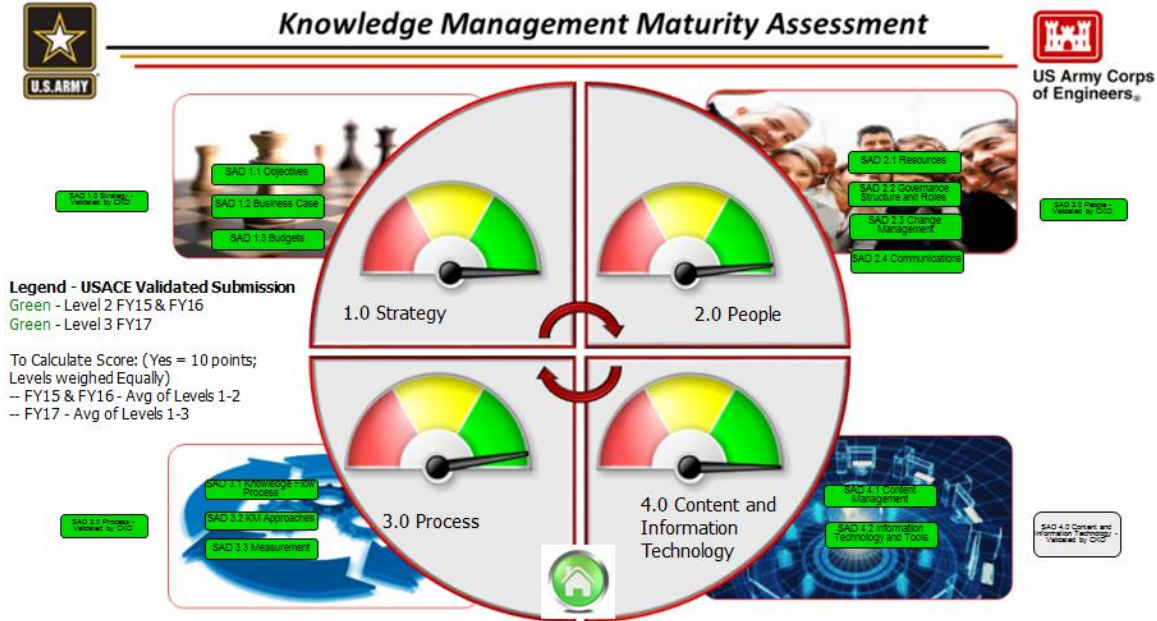


Figure 8

USACE KM Maturity Assessment Dashboard: Example of Category Drill-down for One Division

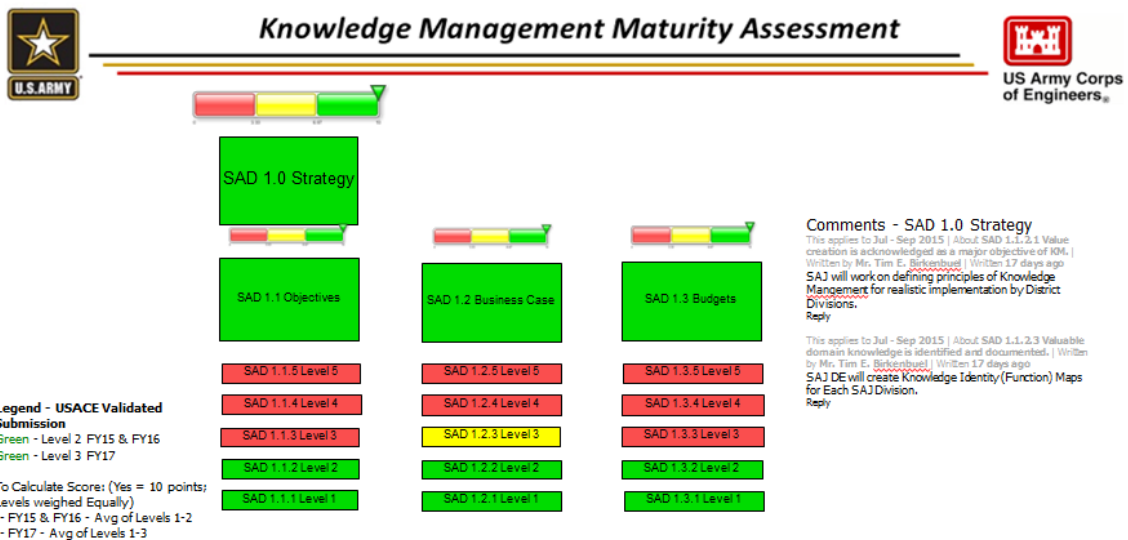


Figure 9

According to John Davis, KM representative for USACE's Southwestern Division, senior leaders regularly use assessment data to communicate about KM progress, grab employees' attention, and encourage KM participation. For example, both the divisional KM representatives and local KM teams participate in a Command Week where senior leaders and division heads conduct policy meetings. During this week-long session, each district demonstrates how it incorporates KM into the flow of project work. By tracking regional participation and having districts present their results, senior leaders encourage cross-divisional benchmarking and knowledge sharing while keeping employees motivated to implement KM.

Vincent Docherty, head of KM strategy for the Shell Group, reports a similar relationship between the KM maturity assessment results and ongoing leadership buy-in. According to Docherty, the assessment rankings have been an important tool in communicating to senior leaders and the KM steering body. Despite external challenges such as a drop in oil prices, the KM team was able to secure ongoing support from senior leaders and functions such as IT and HR thanks to clear evidence of value added and changed behaviors. The Shell KM team also uses its maturity rankings to show, when asked, that although the program is delivering results there is still more work to do to sustain and grow what has already been achieved over the longer term.

At NextEra Energy, the assessment ratings present an opportunity to communicate with leaders and business stakeholders, who in turn share information about KM efforts and status with employees at large. The organization has also used the assessment results as a vehicle to publicize its accomplishments to industry peers. For example, at the invitation of its executive vice president, the Power Generation Division shared information about its maturity rankings with Association of Edison Illuminating Companies (AEIC) executives from across the utility sector.

"We have an aggressive goal of being one of the best KM companies, not only in the utility sector but also in all sectors," said Cynthia Barlow. The maturity assessment is one way in which the organization measures and promotes its progress toward that goal.

Although its structure for doing so is not as robust as some others, the KM team at Abbott Established Pharmaceuticals has also found the assessment to be an effective vehicle to showcase progress to leaders. Specifically, Maria ter Horst-van Amstel said that the leadership team was pleasantly surprised by how much the program had matured between the 2009 and 2015 assessments, and the results provided confirmation that the Manufacturing, Science, and Technology could maintain and advance its KM program even after the corporate reorganization.

Beyond interactions with management, promotion of the CAT results has helped Abbott MS&T generate awareness across the workforce regarding the unit's KM activities. This boosts KM participation and, in turn, helps the unit advance further toward its maturity goals.

IS ASSESSMENT RIGHT FOR YOU? NEXT STEPS

After learning how Abbott Established Pharmaceuticals, NextEra Energy, Rockwell Collins, Shell, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have used maturity assessment as a springboard for their KM efforts, APQC hopes you will consider conducting a comprehensive evaluation of your organization's KM program and capabilities.

Annual participation in the KM Capability Assessment Tool is a benefit of APQC membership. To learn more, visit [the APQC KM CAT information page](#) where you can [take the 15-question mini-assessment](#) or download a copy of the data collection tool to start your assessment.

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