GETTING TO SUCCESS WITH KD/KS: THE KNOWLEDGE AUDIT
AN OUTLINE FOR PRACTITIONERS

Successful KD/KS (knowledge development and knowledge sharing) is the foundation of the organizational knowledge culture, and meaningful KD/KD supports and leads to organizational effectiveness. To achieve KD/KS success, corporate leaders turn to knowledge strategists, the company's knowledge thought leaders, to develop knowledge strategy.

As the company's knowledge strategy develops, the strategist and the knowledge strategy team start with the knowledge audit. The knowledge audit enables the strategist to:
- Identify what KM and knowledge services *should* provide for the organization
- Compare and contrast current information management, KM, and strategic learning tools and performance against future needs
- Determine strategic direction for KD/KS
- Establish resource requirements to support KD/KS
- Incorporate change management and change implementation into the operational function

The following outline is designed to offer direction for knowledge workers seeking to undertake a knowledge audit as part of the larger knowledge strategy development activity.

- Guy St. Clair

A. Why an "Audit"?

1. Regulatory environment: "audit" is an up-or-down term – an operational activity that determines specifically whether *or not* a particular regulatory requirement is – or has been – met
2. Not necessarily evaluative in the larger sense
3. With information/knowledge services/knowledge audit, seek to connect with *financial* or *banking* industry, but to broaden the evaluation: how *well* is the situation being handled? how *well* is service delivery being performed?
4. The activity itself can be described in whatever terminology is appropriate to the organizational culture: "appraisal," "assessment," "evaluation," "review," etc.

B. Knowledge Audit for Knowledge Strategy Development: Related Methodologies

1. Classic SWOT methodology:
   a. Identify internal *strengths* ("what we do well")
   b. Identify internal *weaknesses* ("where we can improve")
   c. Look at *opportunities*
   d. Look at *threats*
2. Incorporates the environmental scan as a perspective and possible framework
3. Relates to scenario planning to establish the vision, mission, and values construct

C. The Knowledge Audit

1. Characterization of an organization's intellectual infrastructure
2. Cataloging and uncovering existing components of the intellectual infrastructure
3. Includes specifying missing or underutilized components
4. Can be thought of as an inventory/catalog of
    a. Structured and unstructured content (with associated metadata, vocabularies, etc.)
    b. Formal/informal communities of practice (or simply communities of knowledge workers with similar interests) and related information strategic learning needs
5. Knowledge audit—it's a foundation or a starting point…

D. The Knowledge Audit: Implementation Overview

1. Planning
2. Data Collection
3. Analysis and Evaluation
4. Reports and Proposals, with Broad Recommendations
        (which become the foundation of the Knowledge Strategy)

E. Begin the Process

1. First steps: meet with management/determine how to create awareness/identify participants/identify advocates, champions, sponsors, *etc*.
2. Establish and be prepared to state clear objectives: know what you want to achieve and know the organization
3. Determine what resources are available for the audit: human, financial, technical, and physical
4. Understand and be prepared to consider in-source/out-source options

F. Data Collection

1. Stakeholder interviews, surveys, *etc*.:
    a. Objective: "direct target marketing"
    b. Objective: connect knowledge assets with enterprise strategy
2. Review participants/establish willingness to participate and take seriously
    a. Use sponsors
    b. Establish benefits
3. Determine format(s)
    a. Stakeholder interviews
    b. User group interviews/focus groups
    c. Surveys (electronic? hard-copy?)

G. Community/Communities of Practice Profiles

1. Obvious practice groups (by subject/function, etc.)
2. Informal or non-structured collaboration entities
3. Social networks
    a. Purely social and informal ("water-cooler" conversations)
    b. Departmental/functional unit groupings
    c. Social Network Analysis connections
4. Identify "loners" and be prepared to ascertain their community or collaboration structures

H. Existing Communities/Groups/Reciprocal Arrangements

   1. How do they work?
       a. Formal structure
       b. Informal information/knowledge/strategic learning connections?
   2. Content/Context Considerations
       a. Subjects
       b. Formats
       c. Groups/support arrangements/conversations
       d. "Stand-alone" performers
   3. Process mapping/workflow: what is the KD/KS process? how does it work? how does it contribute (or not) to enterprise-wide organizational effectiveness?
   4. Are there opportunities to add value/enhance results re: communities, content, and conversations?

I. Inventory/Catalog of Content Repositories

   1. Knowledge resources framework
       a. Definitions
       b. Strategic connections (*e.g.*, results of mapping from the organizational knowledge strategy and identifying direct links to enterprise vision/mission/values statements)
   2. Knowledge resources database (inventory/catalog) identifying:
       a. What information resources and services people require to do their work
       b. Which information resources and services are actually used, and how (for what purpose
       c. Knowledge and research assets (how produced, and by whom)
       d. Formal or standing resource collections
       e. Services provided (owned by whom? implemented by whom?
       f. "Level of criticality" of knowledge resources, tasks, *etc.*

J. Inventory/Catalog of Content Repositories (Format-Based)

   1. Physical (explicit) knowledge/research assets catalog or inventory
       a. Numbers, types and categories of
           i.   Documents
           ii. Databases
           iii. Libraries
           iv. Intranet websites
           v.   Links and subscriptions to external resources
           vi. Other
       b. Knowledge/research assets locations
           i.   Internal
           ii. External (in other locations in enterprise-connected sites)
       c. Knowledge/research assets organization and access to them
       d. Knowledge/research assets purpose, relevance and quality
       e. Knowledge/research assets usage

K. Inventory/Catalog of Content Repositories (People-Based)

1. Expertise (tacit)
   a. Enterprise (corporate or subject) experts – understood to be sources of tacit knowledge
   b. Staff directory including qualifications, skill & core competency levels and experience (when appropriate)
   c. Training and learning opportunities
      i. Strategic learning activities
      ii. Informal KD/KS in the environment
   d. Career management
2. Shared beliefs and values (cultural) – in some cases
   a. Generally not given attention in theoretical organizational management
   b. Nominal presence in most organizations – can influence and affect KD/KS performance

L. Technology Infrastructure and Capacities (1)

1. Critical institutional/organizational success factors:
   a. Role of IT/information services in the organization
   b. Perceptions/established policy re: information management and KM/knowledge services
2. Match basic functional tools with enterprise-wide capacities
   a. Where are the barriers/impediments to smooth KD/KS?
   b. Are the problems
      i. Technology-related?
      ii. Management-related?
      iii. Political?
      iv. Institutional?
3. Includes evaluation of the capacities of non-traditional access/connection tools: blogs, wikis, social networks, etc.

M. Technology Infrastructure and Capacities (2)

1. Begin with a list of electronic content management tools (what's in place):
   a. Electronic access to unstructured content
   b. External content (contractual/subscription)
   c. E-collections
   d. Other internal/external collections required by users
2. Connection between audited services *vis-à-vis* intranet/extranet services provision
3. Capacities of non-traditional access/connection tools: blogs, wikis, social network tools, etc./links to audited services

N. Current Information/Knowledge Acquisition, Use, and Generation (Respondent Describes):

1. Tasks and information/knowledge required for successfully completed the tasks
2. How (where) the information/knowledge is currently obtained
3. Reports/other types of information made available by respondent's business unit to others (internal or external users)
4. How information/knowledge acquired matches that needed for the task
5. Importance (ranking) of information/knowledge attributes to respondent's task
6. Importance (ranking) of specific resources

O. Current and Future Knowledge Needs Relevant to Knowledge Flows in the Organization (Respondent Describes):

1. Categories, types, and sources of knowledge and frequency of usage
2. Key knowledge and time spent in dealing with:
    a. Stakeholders
    b. Processes
    c. Deliverables
    d. Resource sharing partners
3. Perceptions about KD/KS in the organization
4. Perceptions about the management of knowledge assets in the organization
5. Local and external knowledge assets and how used
6. Key knowledge experts/knowledge "owners"

P. Data Analysis

1. Data preparation
    a. Tools
        i. Spreadsheets
        ii. Database programs
        iii. Qualitative and quantitative data analysis programs
        iv. Business modeling tools
    b. Analysis methods
    c. General analysis
    d. Significance analysis
    e. Knowledge mapping/workflows
        i. Bottlenecks/inefficiencies/gaps and duplications
        ii. Dead ends
        iii. Over-provisions and imbalances
2. Workflow and performance issues

Q. Data evaluation

1. Identifying problems and opportunities
2. Choosing the battles to fight
    a. Connecting with enterprise mission and enterprise culture
    b. Relating to management expectations
3. Problems: determining strategic significance
    a. Effects on the achievement of organizational objectives
    b. Effects on relationships with parallel information-focused functional units
    c. Why is the problem a problem?
    d. Who is affected (or what processes impacted) by solving the problem?
    e. Will the change management process bring worthwhile results?

R. Conclusion of Audit

1. Findings analysis and recommendations statement
2. Establish audit as functional methodology (present exercise is a beginning – develop action plan for established audit cycle)
3. Knowledge audit establishes a KD/KS services baseline or starting point and subsequent audits provide points of departure for future comparison