



I believe there is some validity in these general observations, but we must be careful in that they do represent a general picture. In some cases, you find organizations that can be described with this profile precisely and in others there will be variances across the board. Regardless, these are the characteristics that one must pay attention to in order that a knowledge management effort fit the environment. As I mentioned in #19, the budget will vary depending on the organization. Knowing characteristics like the above can only help shape the knowledge management activity. For example, if IT infrastructure is non-existent, what will this mean for a knowledge management effort? Does it mean that you introduce IT infrastructure? Or does it mean you introduce low-tech solutions that are better fitted to the current state of the environment. My answer is that it depends on the culture, on management needs, on the budget, etc.

I invite other readers to respond, comment, and question.

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## 2. KnowSite

So many sites, so little time ...

a. [www.thirdvoice.com](http://www.thirdvoice.com), [www.gooey.com](http://www.gooey.com)

Perhaps you have already heard of Third Voice. This is the site that distributes a tool that allows individuals to comment on any web page they wish to comment on. It also allows other users of the tool to view these comments. I tried the tool, and think it is an interesting concept. The tool creators are also trying to suggest the tool can be used for private discussions.

Gooley is a slightly different concept. With Gooley you can see who else is viewing a web page and if desired, it is possible through the Gooley interface to chat with others viewing the page.

I found both tools to be interesting although it was disappointing to see how few users or comments I encountered when I used these tools. One realizes that the vastness of the Internet means finding the pockets of activity for Third Voice or Gooley must be like finding a

needle in a haystack and the haystack is getting larger by the moment. In my brief encounter with the tools, I did not see if the sites point to activity areas. Perhaps they do - on the other hand, this would also be a good idea if they don't have these pointers.

b. [www.questionexchange.com](http://www.questionexchange.com)

Check out this site because it upstages InfoRocket mentioned in #20. It is the same concept, targeted to technical support.

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So, You want to be a Knowledge Management Professional

You have read about knowledge management. Perhaps you want to pursue a career in knowledge work/knowledge management and are wondering what this will require. Perhaps you are in an organization where you can see the benefits knowledge management would bring. The issue of introducing knowledge management into an organizational culture has been discussed in previous newsletters, in this issue I want to focus on what it takes to be a knowledge management/knowledge work professional.

Here are some of the abilities I believe are necessary to those working in the knowledge management/knowledge work profession.

### 1. Patience

If you think mentioning knowledge management within an organization is all that's needed to get it done, think again. Most managers haven't the foggiest idea of what knowledge management is or what it might mean to their organization. Even if the executives in your organization have heard about knowledge management and have some knowledge of what it is, you will still have to make a case for knowledge management within your organization. People at various levels will need to understand what knowledge management can contribute to the organization, and this might take time. Once you are convinced of the benefits of a knowledge management initiative for your organization, you will need patience to promote the program over time. Knowledge management is organizational change, and

organizations typically change slowly, so patience is a must in this profession.

## 2. Tenacity

While you are being patient, you will also need to be tenacious. Most likely you will need to do quite a bit of evangelizing to get knowledge management accepted. You will need to "look under some organizational rocks" before you locate the "pearls" in the corporate sources of knowledge. Consider that the process of inculturating knowledge work will be a slow one with many setbacks. On the one hand, many people may seem to "get it" immediately while on the other hand, they may not seem to apply it or follow through. It is important that you continue to drive home the lessons about knowledge work and knowledge management and help institute the required behaviors. This takes tenacity.

## 3. An ability to sell

The ability to sell the idea and process of knowledge management to a corporate culture is a requirement for a competent knowledge management professional. How should you explain the benefits of knowledge management to the senior management team? How can you get their buy-in and support? Can you tie knowledge work to an increase in shareholder value? Do you know how to make knowledge management behaviors attractive to individual contributors? Before knowledge management can be of benefit to an organization, it must be adopted by the organization, and before it will be adopted, everyone has to understand why it is important. This is why it is important to be able to sell.

## 4. An understanding of the business

If knowledge work is to be of benefit to the business, then it is extremely important that as a knowledge management professional you understand the business. This is especially critical in the context of being able to sell your ideas to senior management. Specifically, if you have an understanding of the business, you possibly will be able to identify the places where a knowledge management effort will have the greatest value to the business, and (very importantly) you can describe the effort in terms of the business. One of the key problems with knowledge management, as it is currently formulated, is its

abstractness. Formulating knowledge management in terms of the business in which it will be situated makes it easier to understand and easier to see what benefits may be derived. It also makes it easier to speak with and be understood by the people in the business. I am a firm believer that knowledge management and knowledge work cannot be sold as abstract processes. They must be sold in terms clearly showing people how they will benefit from the implementation.

#### 5. An understanding of technology

At some point, you are going to have to specify how you will implement the knowledge work effort. What technology will you use to do this? You should have a good handle on the current technologies--what they do, what they cost, and where they can be used to derive results in a knowledge work effort. Some of the technology is fairly expensive - especially if the knowledge work effort is being formulated for a small organization. In these cases it may not be as viable to propose an expensive technology solution as it might be to propose a low-tech solution. By technology I am referring to both computer-based technology and non-computer-based technology that could be employed to carry out a knowledge work effort.

#### 6. An understanding of the organization

This goes hand in hand with points 3 and 4. The organization has as much to do with knowledge work as do the senior management team and the individuals in the organization. Embedded in the organization are the business processes used to carry out business activities. The processes depend on organizational features--both explicit and implicit. If you don't understand these relationships, and try to bring knowledge work into the culture, the process may be a lot more difficult than you might think. Understand the politics of the organization because this will also have significant effect on the results of a knowledge work effort.

Based on my experience and observation of knowledge work efforts, I consider the "must haves" listed above as vital for a knowledge work professional. We have seen how knowledge work can pay off to an organization and the individuals in it, but before this can happen it takes quite a bit of work (unless the organization is very

enlightened). Consider these characteristics as part of the basis of what will be needed to effectively create knowledge cultures.

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