Advocate

Assess, reflect and evaluate

Where are we?

**Phase 1 – Self-assess**

In the self-assessment chart, seven areas of knowledge management are represented in the rows (strategic approach, leadership and support, networking etc), and five levels of KM practice are represented in the columns.

- Ask each group to evaluate where their organization/office/team currently stands in each area (from level 1 to 5). Give everybody a voice.
- Explore differences in perspectives by asking for examples, such as: What are you seeing when you say we are at level 4? Get all perspectives and then agree a level.
- Ask what would it take to move to a higher level.
- Once the group has agreed on a current level for each of the seven areas, select two areas to improve. This forces group members to prioritize. This should be done according to what will have the greatest impact and what can realistically be achieved with the resources available.
- For each prioritized area, they should decide on what level they want to be at in 12 months’ time (e.g. for “innovation” they may want to move from level 1 to level 2; for “building a learning organization” from level 2 to 4).

**How it is applied**

The method can be applied individually or in groups. Groups have the double advantage of collective thinking and the application of the second phase of the exercise, the river diagram. The description that follows assumes that the exercise is undertaken in groups.

The method revolves around five questions:

1. Can we identify the issue?
2. Do we know our internal capability?
3. Does anyone do this well internally?
4. Do we know anyone who is good at it externally?
5. Is either an external or internal “expert” available to help us, either by sharing what they know or by implementing it?

**What it is**

The KM self-assessment method was originally developed by Geoff Parcell and Chris Collison (the authors of *Learning to Fly* and *No More Consultants*). It can be the basis for planning work on KM, assessing it, reviewing priorities, and identifying strengths and weaknesses. If carried out in conjunction with other entities (field presences, sections, divisions), it can indicate where you can learn from others. The KM self-assessment method can be considered as a strategic internal benchmarking exercise, allowing you to detect performance gaps in some areas and discover good practices in others.

**When to use it**

- To assess your current status in knowledge management, whether as a starting point for work on KM or as an evaluation tool to assess progress
- To help you prioritize areas where you want to progress in KM
- To identify where you can learn from others in some KM areas.

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**Table: KM Self-Assessment**

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<th>When to use it</th>
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Phase 2 - Visualize the results: the river diagram

According to *Learning to Fly*, one of the most effective ways to stimulate a learning and knowledge sharing environment is to visualize the results of the phase 1 self assessment. This is the purpose of the river diagram. You can download the Excel sheet to build the river diagram here: http://ohchrkm.wikispaces.com/file/view/KMRiverOHCHR.xls

Once you have inserted the data of phase 1 in the Excel sheet, you will see a KM portrait coming up. The diagram portrays a range of scores in the seven areas. If more than one group carries out phase 1, each group will be able to compare differences and spot areas where one or other group is weak (level 1 or 2) while others are strong (level 4 or 5) and vice versa. The river diagram visually portrays the areas where one group can help others, because it shows the areas in which that group is doing well and the areas where it could be helped by better performing groups.

The river is narrow when there is greater equality among the groups (that is, the sections, field presences, divisions) because the groups will have similar scores for the different areas. This also means that there are fewer opportunities to learn from each other because all groups are at the same level. Where the river is wide, on the other hand, there is a diversity of competence, resources and knowledge, and hence more opportunities to exchange and learn from each other.

Often people doing this exercise are surprised to see how much their strengths and weaknesses differ. What is important is that everyone has something to share and to learn.

Phase 3 - Look ahead and assess progress periodically

The self-assessment and the river diagram create a common ground for dialogue and reflection. It is a good starting point to decide where to focus your resources and what methods and technologies of this toolkit can help you best achieve your goals. You may have identified field presences, divisions and colleagues that can help you in doing so.

Repeat this exercise periodically, every six to ten months, to assess progress (and possible setbacks), to track how you are moving in the table, and to establish new goals for the months to come.

Timing

Covering phases 1 and 2 takes approximately 2 hours:
- Introduction of the method, objectives and division in groups (10 minutes)
- Group discussion based on the KM matrix (60 minutes)
- Debriefing of the different groups (20 minutes)
- River diagram exercise and plenary debriefing (30 minutes).

What you will need

- Copies of KM matrix
- Laptop for each group to see the river diagram exercise
- Flip chart for each group
- Pencils and markers.

Where to learn more

- KS toolkit: http://www.kstoolkit.org/KM+Self+Assessment
- Geoff Parcel: www.practicalkm.com
- Chris Collison: www.chriscollison.com

“I found the KM Self-assessment useful as it helps to identify what exactly is missing and where steps are most urgently needed. We should repeat it once in a while to ensure that we are making progress.”

(Birgit Kainz, OHCHR)
## KM Self-Assessment for OHCHR: Share, learn, innovate!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1 (Awareness)</th>
<th>Level 2 (React)</th>
<th>Level 3 (Act)</th>
<th>Level 4 (Consistently apply)</th>
<th>Level 5 (The way we work)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Taking a strategic approach</td>
<td>A few people express that know-how is important to the organization.</td>
<td>There is no framework or articulated KM strategy. Some job descriptions include knowledge capture, sharing and cascading.</td>
<td>Discussions ongoing about organization’s Intellectual assets. A KM strategy exists but is not yet linked to business results.</td>
<td>Clearly identified intellectual assets. KM strategy is embedded in the business strategy. Framework and tools enable learning before, during and after.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership and support</td>
<td>KM viewed as a management fad. Leaders are sceptical as to the benefits.</td>
<td>KM is viewed as the responsibility of a specialist team. Some leaders talk the talk, but don’t always walk the walk!</td>
<td>KM is everyone’s responsibility; a few jobs are dedicated to managing knowledge. “Knowledge sharing is power.” Leaders set expectations by &quot;asking the right questions&quot;, and rewarding the right behaviours.</td>
<td>Leaders recognize the link between KM and performance. The right attitudes exist to share and use others’ know-how. Leaders reinforce the right behaviour and act as role models.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Networking and communities</td>
<td>Knowledge hoarders seem to get rewarded.</td>
<td>People are networking to get results. Networks are created.</td>
<td>Networks are organized around business needs. Networks have clear terms of reference. Systems and technology are in place and are well used.</td>
<td>Clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Networks have a clear purpose, some have clear deliverables others develop capability in the organization.</td>
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<td>Building a learning organization</td>
<td>People are conscious of the need to learn from what they do but rarely get the time. There need to be more incentives to consider learning as a priority.</td>
<td>People capture what they learn for others to access. In practice few do access it. It happens on a ad-hoc basis and it is rarely shared beyond the team.</td>
<td>Activities such as learning events and brown bag lunches are in place for sharing and re-applying knowledge.</td>
<td>Departments/divisions and peer groups review and validate learning to improve and revise existing processes.</td>
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<td>Capturing and re-applying knowledge</td>
<td>Some individuals take the time to capture their lessons in any number of cupboards and databases. They are rarely refreshed, few contribute, even fewer search.</td>
<td>Teams capture lessons learned after a project. Teams look for knowledge before starting a project. Access to lots of knowledge, though not summarized.</td>
<td>Networks take responsibility for the knowledge, collect their subjects’ knowledge in one place in a common format. Searching before doing is encouraged. Little or no distilling and condensing.</td>
<td>Knowledge is easy to get to, easy to retrieve. Relevant knowledge is pushed to you. It is constantly refreshed and distilled. Networks act as guardians of the knowledge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>People are bound by procedures and hierarchy. Innovation happens when people find a supportive environment and when good solution exists.</td>
<td>Successful innovations are upscaled and replicated in headquarters and field. New knowledge is generated and acted upon.</td>
<td>Innovation priorities are decided by organizational priorities and strategies. Good ideas get implemented.</td>
<td>Innovation and knowledge sharing are core competencies and a trademark of OHCHR.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measuring the value</td>
<td>People have faith that sharing knowledge can add value but are not evaluated for learning and sharing knowledge.</td>
<td>Institutional qualitative and quantitative indicators are devised, but not used. Evaluations provide some measures and evidence for knowledge sharing.</td>
<td>Individuals and organizations design, measure and add continuously to improve and add value.</td>
<td>OHCHR’s knowledge is recognized and valued by external partners. Effective use of knowledge is acknowledged as a central driver for designing and implementing key organizational processes such as policies and projects.</td>
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</table>

This self-assessment is an adaptation from the self-assessment model developed by Geoff Parcell and Chris Collison (Learning to fly, 2001) and inspired by the model used by IFAD.