



Sponsored by
zendesk

17 TIPS **FOR BETTER** **KNOWLEDGE** **MANAGEMENT** **IN 2017**



Knowledge management should be a staple IT service desk capability – allowing agents to extend their personal know-how and capabilities, and to help end users more quickly, thanks to the collated knowledge and wisdom of others.

More recently, knowledge management has found a secondary role as the backbone of IT self-service facilities, allowing employees to access frequently asked questions (FAQs) or the solutions to common IT issues and needs.

And now, as artificial intelligence (AI), and in particular machine learning, starts to conquer corporate IT departments, that collated knowledge finds a third use – as an information source for the technology itself, including chatbots.

So, how good is your organization's knowledge management? If you feel that your service desk could do, and achieve, more with knowledge management, then this booklet is for you.

Please read on for 17 tips for better knowledge management.

GET ON THE SAME KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PAGE

Before diving into the more practical tips, it's worth taking the time to clarify what knowledge management is. That, while many might see it as an IT service management (ITSM) process, it's really a capability built from people, process, and technology.

It's also important to understand that knowledge only has value when it's used. This might seem a little chicken-and-egg – in that knowledge articles need to be created for them to be used – but that “same page”, that people are hopefully on, needs to focus on how capturing and sharing service desk knowledge ultimately creates value.

THINK KNOWLEDGE EXPLOITATION OVER KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT



If you stop to think about it, the ITSM world has a lot of capabilities that are termed “something management”. And the danger is that the terminology can lull people into thinking that the need is to manage that something – knowledge in this instance – rather than to create some form of positive business outcome.

So, while “knowledge management” is the accepted term for what’s needed (for the above three service-desk use cases), ensure that the real focus is exploiting the knowledge being managed rather than simply the collection and storage of it.



RECOGNIZE THAT GETTING KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT RIGHT ISN'T EASY

Knowledge management is nothing new. It was in vogue, at a business level, at the dawn of the new Millennia (and “the next big thing” in the 1990s). When large amounts of money were invested in knowledge-management technologies which sadly then became the knowledge equivalents of elephants’ graveyards – the place where corporate knowledge went to die.

The early knowledge-management technology might have played a part in its own downfall, but the real root cause was human.

UNDERSTAND THAT KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SUCCESS IS DEPENDENT ON PEOPLE CHANGE



Knowledge management requires a change in employee mindsets and behaviors – for both service desk staff and the customers for whom self-help capabilities are provided. New technology alone won't bring about the required change.

Instead an investment in the use of organizational change management (OCM) techniques is required to help with understanding, and to move people to what will ultimately be a new way of working.



ENSURE THAT ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES ARE SUFFICIENTLY EMPLOYED

Doing “half a job” with organizational change management probably won’t get you half the desired result. Your knowledge management initiative will likely fail without a proper investment in managing people change and the removal of the resistance that manifests through the common barriers to change.

Instead, people need to be “brought along” with the change, with the standard organizational change management activities employed. From selling the change – explaining the “What’s in it for me?” – through providing frequent and consistent communications in respect of what’s happening (and will be happening), to providing the required level of education and training.

EMBED KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES INTO BUSINESS-AS-USUAL PROCESSES



If knowledge management is treated as an add-on process or activity – or is even just seen as such – then it will never work as well as it could. Why? Because it won't be seen as the real job in hand.

In such scenarios, knowledge management activities such as article creation will be pushed down the prioritized to-do list. Possibly falling off the bottom under the pressure of other critical service desk activities. All elements of knowledge management need to be embedded as part of the business-as-usual ways of working to be successful.



7 CHANGE HOW PEOPLE ARE ASSESSED, RECOGNIZED, AND REWARDED

To drive the right behaviors, people management systems need to reflect the importance of knowledge management.

In the case of the service desk, existing metrics such as number of tickets handled per hour will need to be balanced with measures related to knowledge contribution and use. Although, a savvy service desk agent will hopefully realize that knowledge use will ultimately help them with both the speed of resolution and their level of first contact resolution.

LOOK BEYOND KNOWLEDGE ARTICLE CREATION



Knowledge article creation is often cited as a critical success factor (CSF) for knowledge management. It makes sense – that without sufficient knowledge articles there's no documented knowledge to use and reuse.

But be careful – it's easy to fall into the trap of seeing knowledge management as a drive, and at an individual level a competition, to create as many knowledge articles as possible. The reality is that it's so much more, with the value in the use and reuse of knowledge.



UNDERSTAND THAT SOMETIMES LESS IS MORE

Your knowledge articles might look great but please consider the reader. Do they want to know everything about a particular subject or do they just want a quick solution to their immediate need?

It's most likely the latter, so ensure that knowledge articles are focused on quickly delivering an answer rather than demonstrating how knowledgeable the author is. It's more answer management than knowledge management.



APPRECIATE THAT DOCUMENTING KNOWLEDGE ISN'T ALWAYS THE BEST SOLUTION

While it's great to have what people know captured and available to share, it's not always the best way to store and share knowledge.

Sometimes it's better to have a more flexible knowledge exploitation capability – one that not only points people to relevant knowledge articles, but also quickly identifies people who can help. For instance, a subject matter expert on a particular technology rather than pages of technology-based information.

UNDERSTAND THE COMPLEXITIES OF TURNING TACIT KNOWLEDGE INTO EXPLICIT KNOWLEDGE



Tacit knowledge is what's in our heads versus explicit knowledge which is the documented version of it. And [research](#) into real-world knowledge management has concluded that the accurate “extraction” of what people know is complicated, because:

- Knowledge is volunteered, never conscripted
- We only know what we know when we need to know it
- We know more than we can say, we say more than we can write down, and
- The way we know things is not the way we say we know them.

So bear these statements in mind when looking to document what people know (or think they know).

12

THINK LONG AND HARD ABOUT THE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT METRICS EMPLOYED

Knowledge management metrics are a great way of measuring success. For instance, how frequently new articles are added, how often they're refreshed, and – importantly – how often they're used. Plus, how easy it was to find and use the right knowledge.

But be wary about how the employed metrics drive staff behaviors – and ensure that they drive the right behaviors not the wrong ones. For example, if service desk agents think that creating new articles is the most important facet of knowledge management, then the knowledge base might quickly become little more than the aforementioned knowledge graveyard.

DON'T TRY TO REINVENT THE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT WHEEL

13

There's already a wealth of knowledge management best practice out there to exploit. From a service desk perspective, there's:

- Knowledge-Centered Support (KCS), a well-known knowledge management methodology for ITSM and service desks
- Level Zero Solvable (LZS), a technique that helps to prevent organizations from launching self-help capabilities before they are fit for purpose.



RECOGNIZE THAT KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGY IS MORE THAN A KNOWLEDGE BASE

It's easy to be overly focused on the knowledge-management technology element that's commonly called the “knowledge base” – the place where captured knowledge is stored and retrieved from.

Your ITSM or service desk tool will most likely provide a knowledge base, but it also needs to be able to help with the ability to easily capture, find, and manage knowledge too – including quality-based capabilities such as the ability to rate the appropriateness of knowledge articles and alert on the need for revisions and refresh.

WHEN USING KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT FOR SELF-HELP, DON'T FORGET THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

15

If a knowledge management capability isn't user-friendly and easy to use, then it probably won't get used (or used enough). And now, as employees bring their often-superior consumer-world experiences and expectations into the workplace, there's a growing emphasis on customer experience.

In light of this, knowledge management processes and technologies are no different to any other customer touchpoints and, as such, need to be designed and deployed with the customer in mind.



16

DON'T STAND STILL!

While what you might have now, or will have soon, is great, as with other IT support capabilities, the knowledge management landscape is changing – particularly in terms of the technologies employed.

New technologies such as machine learning can already provide a wealth of knowledge management improvement opportunities. These include the ability to use bots to respond to email queries with a high degree of accuracy, recommendations, the automatic creation of new knowledge articles from ticket information, more intelligent search capabilities, and using the technology to identify knowledge article gaps.

REALIZE THAT KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT WILL BE NEEDED TO FUEL NEW IT SUPPORT TECHNOLOGIES



As alluded to in the previous tip, AI and machine learning is being, and will increasingly be, employed to improve service desk operations, the quality and speed of service, and the overall customer experience. Probably reducing costs along the way.

However, the technology needs rich data and information sources to be successful, including the knowledge already collected to assist both service desk agents and the customers using self-help facilities. Take chatbots for example, for them to understand and to accurately respond to customer questions they'll need to both understand the words and context of the query plus know what the most appropriate response should be.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IS NOT AS EASY TO GET RIGHT AS PEOPLE MIGHT EXPECT.

So, please use these 17 tips to help ensure that your IT service desk is fully aware of the best practices it can employ and the potential pitfalls to avoid.

