


Purpose of this Flyer

Knowledge is the basis for self-reliant social development and for effective operations undertaken by development agencies. The SDC deems that knowledge management is a corner stone for a learning organization. The challenges are to know what knowledge is vital to carrying out the mission, to know who knows what both inside and outside the Organization, how to access this knowledge, how to share, cultivate, multiply, and store this knowledge, and how to gain and utilize new common insights. Five principles outline the path to be taken and guide our concrete actions.

Do you desire to enhance your awareness in dealing with knowledge in your group or organization? Are you in a condition to set up a system of knowledge management? Do you support colleagues or organizations in doing so? If so, then this Flyer is addressed to you.

- ▶ What is already in place?
- ▶ What is still missing?
- ▶ What should be done?
- ▶ Who is responsible for what?

Let the five principles below, along with the questions and the methodological tips  serve both to inspire and to guide you.


The 5 Principles

A learning organization...


Principle 1 forms the basis as it creates the relation to the organization or enterprise's tasks and goals.

1. ... develops and secures organizational competencies related to its core tasks and roles. It secures the knowledge needed to successfully meet the challenges of the future.


Are the core competencies and the knowledge needed secured both in-house and via external sources? Are they kept up to date and enhanced?

-  Knowledge Map («Who knows what, and where can he or she be reached»), building up Communities of Practice (CoPs) and other knowledge networks, external consultancy

Are career pathways and, where applicable, job rotation procedures geared to securing competencies?


-  Career specializations, procedures to transmitting knowledge and for initiating new personnel

Does work on policy and programme levels facilitate learning processes across programmes and units?


-  Experience capitalization, formulation of core/key processes, organization-wide agenda of learning themes

2. ... recognizes that its staff and personnel are bearers of knowledge.


Are the individual competencies of collaborators and thus, the internal competence basis both acknowledged and further developed?

-  Continual training courses, external coaching, training with partner organizations (secondments), participation in external knowledge or competence networks

Is knowledge sharing a core task of all the personnel?


-  Organizational values, objectives and performance agreements, recognition and rewarding of cooperative learning

By using incentives, how can the personnel's readiness to learn be supported?


-  Providing motivation and creating an atmosphere conducive to learning (e.g., story-telling techniques), access to media, exchange platforms, shaping the processes of learning, recognition awards

3. ... valorizes practices of knowledge development and learning.

How can it be ensured that one's own experience and the knowledge of others be assimilated into strategies and programmes?

-  Formulating rules and assigning responsibilities: shaping core processes as learning processes, studies and research

How can existing and innovative practices of experience sharing and learning be further developed and promoted?

-  Communities of Practice and similar knowledge networks, virtual platforms

Do we have access to learning aids on practices of knowledge development and learning?


-  Tool-Kit

4. ... opens up access to knowledge and experience.

Is there an information management and database available which facilitate access to both explicit (documented) and implicit (stored in the brains of the personnel) knowledge?

-  Yellow Pages, document management system, research mandates, mentoring

Do all collaborators have access to the appropriate information, learning and sharing opportunities?


-  Access to Intranet and internet, personal e-mail address, access to networks

Do you publish the insights gained and experiences acquired from programme and policy work?


-  Documentation, publications, Internet and Intranet

5. ... cultivates a learning culture.

Are learning practices and a learning culture anchored and fostered in the organizational values?

-  Values, agenda of key learning themes, principle of binding decisions, practices like «management response» (by which the management expresses its position on suggestions made), recognition of cooperative learning, construction measures

Is learning appropriately embedded in job profiles, performance tasks, agreements on objectives, partnership accords, etc.?

-  Sharing / learning as an inherent component in performance agreements, assignments, and tasks; individual commitment

Practical Applications

Management of the Country Programme und **the fight against poverty** are the two core tasks of the SDC Cooperation Office team in Pakistan. The challenge consists in professionally executing these tasks and in acquiring and maintaining the knowledge necessary. The team made use of a planning workshop to identify the capacities needed to master the challenge. They determined how they would go about acquiring them, who would be the one to conduct in-house training courses on these topics, and how the lessons learned would be stored. A Community of Practice on poverty monitoring, formed with the participation of various partner organizations, facilitates experience sharing and capitalization, and the conditioning of the final product into a practical working instrument that can be part of programme management.

Advocacy – promoting respect for humanitarian principles with a view to influencing the relevant political authorities, – «championing the cause of the victims» – is one of the four key tasks of Swiss humanitarian aid. The Africa Division held a half-day workshop in order to compile the lessons learned from its operations to date and subsequently submitted the results to the management of the Humanitarian Aid Department. The latter, in turn, created a competence group mandated to develop ideas as to ways in which SDC personnel's knowledge and advocacy competency could be embedded in practice and in the Organization. Essential tasks in this respect are awareness-raising, training and information, experience capitalization, coaching one's colleagues, and networking.

For further information, feedback, and exchange:

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This flyer is based on the strategic orientation: «Strategische Orientierung und prioritäre Aktionslinien: Lernen und Wissensmanagement in der DEZA»

Definition of Knowledge Management

Knowledge Management is ...

... a conscious strategy aimed at **getting the right knowledge to the right people at the right time**, and helping people share and put information into action in ways that strive to improve organisational performance. KM needs to focus on **creating a culture of knowledge sharing and learning**.

Knowledge Management is a permanent striving for learning, for adapting to new conditions and challenges, and for changing practices (including programmes, procedures, organisational structures) accordingly with a view to improving, doing the job better and increasing effectiveness. Knowledge management illustrates the fact that knowledge – basically with people and in people's heads and hearts – is itself a resource.

Knowledge Management contributes to Empowerment

Development work has always been centred on people and their resources, including experiential knowledge. Knowledge management points at the need to build or continue to build capacities to learn and to change based upon what people know, and at strengthening this same resource in people. This is where knowledge management contributes to the empowerment of the poor (**Knowledge for Development**) and where the business and organisational development agenda converges with the poverty and development agenda. This is also the place where platforms (for learning) are most adapted.

Knowledge Management in Practice

The Five Principles

How to conceive a comprehensive knowledge-management strategy in five steps and use it as the basis for formulating appropriate measures.

