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# Knowledge Management

*A roadmap to implementation*

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*Knowledge management (KM) has been the key differentiator in the knowledge related industries recently. Companies, which have implemented KM solutions, are better equipped to deal with business situations, which require information and know-how.*

*In the following paper, we at Icicle Consultancy would like to present two possible approaches to implementation of KM; the applications powering them, and the benefits to be had.*

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# Knowledge Management: Approaches

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Knowledge management (KM) has been the key differentiator in the knowledge related industries recently. Companies, which have implemented KM solutions, are better equipped to deal with business situations, which require information and know-how. Typically, organizations follow two kinds of approaches for implementing a KM solution

## Blanket Approach

This approach involves analyzing the entire organization in its entirety, identifying its data, informational and knowledge needs and trying to cater to them. This approach needs a strong support from the top management, and is more costly.

This approach has the advantage of being relatively quick, since its done in one phase. But at the same time its fraught with some inherent risks like

- End users might not use the system as its too complex or it does not serve the real purpose
- Scalability might be an issue here, since solution was built in one phase

## Brick Approach

Ideal for small and medium enterprises, this approach involves identifying the needs of the organization, prioritizing them, and implementing them in different phases. One big advantage of this approach would be cost distribution over a longer period of time and seeing what works.

Since approach is divided into different phases, the implementation time for the entire system is longer compared to the previous approach. Scalability is factored into the system, and the end-user feedback can be incorporated in the subsequent phases, which will result in necessary buy-in.

## The phases of Knowledge Management Solution

The different phases for implementing a KM solution would be:

1. An organization wide Intranet
2. Project Management Module Implementation
3. Knowledge Management Module Implementation

Knowledge Management in a firm can be approached in two ways:

The **Blanket Approach** that involves deployment of a complete KM system in one go.

The **Brick Approach** which involves a phased rollout over the three phases of Intranet, Project Management system, and Knowledge Management System.

# Intranet

Intranet basically consists of utilities and productivity applications that allow employees to carry on their day-to-day work. These applications give the end-user the first feel of the system and also help in getting more user involvement in terms of ideas and participation.

## Components

Application	Features	Benefits
File Management System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Browser based file management</li> <li>▪ Centralized location of files on the server</li> <li>▪ Accessible from remote locations</li> <li>▪ Security access levels for each file, depending upon the groups or projects</li> <li>▪ Search capability on the files, which are tagged with keywords and description</li> </ul>	<p>A faster way to find relevant files. Search, browse and view files of previous projects, which are relevant to current project/work.</p> <p>Archiving and backing up important files can be done from one space, which removes the danger of important files being lost.</p>
Contact Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A common interface to store information about business and personal contacts</li> <li>▪ Uniformity in the information captured about each contact</li> <li>▪ Access levels can be set for each contact</li> <li>▪ Categorization according to the business areas of contacts</li> <li>▪ Retention of contacts even after the exit of the referrer employee</li> </ul>	<p>A contact manager would ensure that the business contacts which the organization has made over the years of its operations stays with it irrespective of employee turnover.</p> <p>A common pool of contacts ensures that the employees have access to external business associates they don't know</p>
Calendar/Scheduler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Task manager allowing the user to set tasks, prioritize them, track the status of each task</li> <li>▪ All the employees can be</li> </ul>	<p>Being a productivity tool, a calendar allows the user to schedule his tasks, prioritize them or share them across with</p>

	<p>communicated important dates, events through the calendar module</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tasks can be shared across the groups, divisions or any other functional group, which is defined</li> <li>▪ Notification to the user with the task details</li> </ul>	<p>their groups. This will ensure that the tasks are prioritized, but also help in tracking of different tasks, which have been set for employees etc.</p> <p>Calendar acts as an effective means of communication in letting employees know important dates, events that occur from time to time.</p>
<p>Bulletin Boards/Forums</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provides a space for intra-office communication</li> <li>▪ Serves as the Notice board for employees to post information about happenings</li> <li>▪ Users can interact on issues related to projects, office etc.</li> <li>▪ Multiple boards can be created depending upon the nature of interaction, the kind of users using that board etc.</li> <li>▪ All interactions can be stored for future reference if required</li> </ul>	<p>Bulletin boards can act as both formal and informal meeting places for the employees where they can share ideas, issues or just talk.</p> <p>Serves as a effective medium to be a help-line since the messages can be stored for reference, which is important while dealing in future projects</p>
<p>Bookmarks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Users can bookmark a site, which they might find useful for their work</li> <li>▪ Bookmarks can be categorized as business or personal bookmarks</li> <li>▪ The websites can be rated according to the content, relative importance etc, which is helpful in deciding to browse the site</li> <li>▪ A short description can be added to the site that informs the user, what to find on the site</li> </ul>	<p>Websites being one of the major sources of information, an effective database of sites, which are useful, becomes an added advantage in employee productivity</p> <p>Removing the bottleneck of going through search engine every time someone has to find a site</p>

<p>HR Forms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ HR forms, like Leave application form, Travel allowances, Expense vouchers, which can be filled online, are presented on the Intranet</li> <li>▪ Relevant approvals etc are made in the flow and are forwarded to the HR department</li> <li>▪ Archiving this information for future reference.</li> </ul>	<p>Smoothing the functioning of the information flow about employee and HR division, online forms help both the parties keep communicate and track the status of each form.</p> <p>Archiving of the forms in the soft format for future reference and enabling search facility on them</p>
<p>Policy/Guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Information related to different policies can be referred by the user</li> <li>▪ Policies/guidelines are categorized according to the division or functional group</li> <li>▪ Relevant guidelines/policies for each policy are referred which will enable the user to have a whole idea about the entire guideline/policy</li> <li>▪ Search facilities on the policies and the guidelines</li> </ul>	<p>Employees are given access to the policies/guidelines online, which will enable them to check them whenever they need.</p> <p>A clearer understanding of policies will lead to better organizational relations</p>
<p>Employee Profiles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee profile are kept on the intranet, which give information about the background of the employee, her interests, previous experience, projects worked on and the current projects handling</li> <li>▪ Employees can be categorized according to the organizational structure, divisions, or simply by alphabetical order</li> <li>▪ Search for an employee with specific profile, interests, name or division belonging to</li> </ul>	<p>Employee profile helps the employees to know each other better, even though they haven't met personally.</p> <p>An online repository of profiles, from which project team profiles can be chosen to give it to the clients.</p>

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### **Expectations from implementation**

- A smoother acceptance from the end user, since all the applications are aimed at improving the work environment
- User feedback, which is of paramount importance in choosing what is required in the knowledge management system
- Significantly low cost, the system can be built on the existing IT resources of the firm
- Quicker implementation than a KM solution. This also serves as the reality check for the course of the initiative

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# Project Management Module

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Nearly ninety-two percent of the information flow in an organization is internal. This includes information on carriers like memos, notes, documents related to projects, day-to-day activity reports, etc. Most of the organizational knowledge and know-how stored on these is lost over time or in the vast amount of records. A codified system of documenting this information is the basis for the project management module.

The Project Management Module does not involve calculating project costs, or schedules or man-hours needed etc. This module involves tracking the information related to a project like project documents, schedules that were made, and assigned responsibilities for each individual. Other than this, information about the project meetings conducted, notes and memos etc, work-notes that form the core of the project are stored. At the end of a project, a profile of each project can be made which gives good grasp of the learnings from the project that adds to the collective knowledge base.

The methodology followed by each organization in categorizing their day-to-day activities and executing the projects is unique to that organization. The specific sub-modules can be worked out by the organization while analyzing the requirements.

A Project Management system captures information that is of immense value but usually lost in the organization.

It involves tracking project documents, schedules, and assigned responsibilities, in addition to storing minutes of meetings, notes, and reports.



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# Knowledge Management Module

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The third and significant phase of the entire exercise would be implementation of Knowledge Management Module. This module captures information from various sources and codifies it according to the predefined structure for storage of information. Normally, there are various business activities during which knowledge is deemed to be created such as training sessions, presentations and seminars, client meetings, or research conducted. Knowledge at these points (called inflection points), is where an organization should start capturing knowledge.

A Knowledge Management system captures knowledge at inflection points of training sessions, presentations, meetings etc.

A full KM system should be built on a foundation of Organization culture, structure, and vision.

The KM module will capture information not only from these sources, but will also enable the users to make computer based training kits (CBT), take online tests, provide for a comprehensive feedback mechanism on projects, work schedules, personnel etc.

KM for a particular organization is more ingrained in the organization culture, structure and vision than in applications. So there are no specific applications, which cater to all requirements, all the modules are customized and are built as per the needs of the organization.

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## About Icicle Consultancy

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Promoted by alumnus of the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, Icicle Consultancy is a firm providing Technology and Strategy consulting in the Internet Technologies realm. Started in August 2000 as Alchemy Ventures, the firm has grown from 'startup' roots to an organization that has serviced numerous clients in diverse sectors from Entertainment to Financial services.

Our core areas span CRM and Call Centers, Knowledge Management, Content Management Systems, and Information Architecture. For further information on Knowledge Management, or our services in this realm, please contact us.

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