

# **Knowledge Management in Event Organisations Instructor's Manual**

## **1: Introduction, Concepts and Definitions**

This is the instructor's manual produced to accompany the book *Knowledge Management in Event Organisations*, by Raphaela Stadler, 2021, published by Goodfellow Publishers Ltd.

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# Chapter 1 - Introduction, Concepts and Definitions

## Lecture 1

### Learning objectives

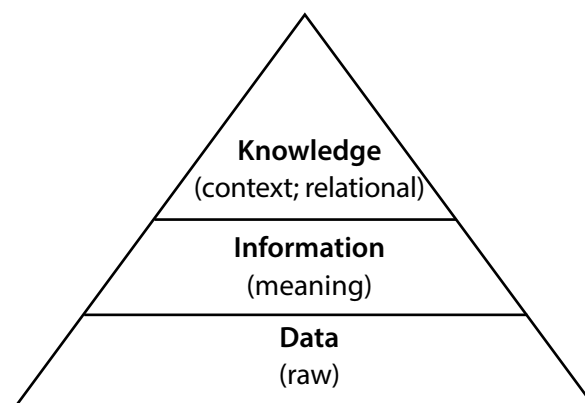
- Learn key terms, dimensions and definitions of knowledge management.
- Understand different types and different levels of knowledge.
- Explore the relationship between knowledge management and organisational learning.
- Be able to define knowledge management

### Introduction

If students have little previous understanding of information and knowledge management, a discussion of key terms, concepts and definitions will be very important. This should include an understanding of the difference between data, information and knowledge; as well as different types of knowledge (explicit – tacit), and where knowledge resides (at the individual, group/team or organisational level).

### Definitions

In a first step, Figure 1.1 can be used to explore the terms data, information and knowledge, and to ask students to add their own examples of them at each level. They can also add arrows (upwards) and think about how data can be turned into information, and how information can be turned into knowledge. Some specific processes for this include, categorising/calculating/condensing data in order to turn it into information; and comparisons/conversations/connections to turn information into knowledge.



Secondly, the difference between explicit and tacit knowledge is key to understanding how knowledge can be acquired, used, shared, or stored. An example of tacit knowledge is given in the book around riding a bicycle. Students can come up with their own examples here from working or volunteering at an event. Such as,

- ◆ **explicit knowledge** (can be expressed in words and numbers; can be shared and communicated easily through, for example, formulas, principles and procedures; can also be documented to some extent): examples include, instruction manuals and to do lists;

- ◆ **tacit knowledge** (very difficult to capture and share with other people; part of people's actions, experiences and beliefs, and therefore very individual, relational and context-specific; can be a source of competitive advantage): for example, beliefs about what the event should aim to achieve and values of how employees should work together.

Lastly, it is important to highlight that some of this explicit and tacit knowledge will be individual, other knowledge will be relevant at the group level, and some knowledge will even be important for the organisation as a whole. Remind students here that the organisation as a whole should ideally 'learn' over time so that successes and best practices can be repeated and shared, while making the same mistakes again can be avoided. This is a particular challenge in event organisations where a lot of staff members move on once the event is over and will be discussed further in Lecture 2. But any organisation (and event organisations in particular!) should aim to develop an institutional or corporate memory, which consists of archived experiences, routines, processes, actions and decisions. Any knowledge management activity or practice will of course contribute to this and hence, organisational learning and knowledge management go hand-in-hand and mutually reinforce each other.

### Knowledge management

Based on the above defined key terms, it is then crucial to explore the concept of knowledge management a bit further. Students should be able to come up with their own definitions of 'knowledge' and 'knowledge management' now, but it might be worth directing them to some of the ones used in the book. Another great resource for this is John Girard's collection of over 100 definitions of knowledge management: <https://www.johngirard.net/km/>

Some of these are rather generic, such as: "Knowledge Management is the way you manage your organisation, when you understand the value of your knowledge" (Nick Milton, Knoco), whereas others are a bit more specific: "KM is a discipline that promotes an integrated approach to identify, manage, share and leverage an organization's knowledge and information assets through policies, organizational structures, procedures, applications and technologies. Knowledge needs to be shared; employees need to be ready, willing and able to share it and the organization needs a culture that promotes knowledge-sharing in a climate of trust and openness." (International Public Management Association for Human Resources; HR Management Glossary: Knowledge Management)

#### Suggested further reading:

- Girard, J., & Girard, J. (2015). Defining knowledge management: Toward an applied compendium. *Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management*, 3(1), 1-20.

A further analysis of these definitions can be a way of getting students to start thinking about everything that knowledge management entails. Working through some of the examples provided and highlighting the similarities across the definitions will allow them to see that knowledge management generally tends to focus on the following four key elements:

- ◆ processes of knowledge management, such as acquiring, using, sharing, or storing knowledge;
- ◆ IT systems and organisational structures;
- ◆ organisational cultures, open climate, and trust; and
- ◆ people – the way they work together, communicate with each other, and collaborate.

The definition of knowledge management in event organisations provided in the book can then be used to bring all these elements together and explore them in an events context:

*Knowledge management in event organisations: The effective use of organisational systems, processes and practices which allow both explicit and tacit knowledge to be created, identified, acquired, utilised, shared and stored, in order for the organisation to produce a successful event experience and to sustain a competitive advantage over time (p. 10).*

### **Sample short-answer questions:**

- ◆ Explain the difference between explicit and tacit knowledge and provide examples for each
- ◆ Define individual, group and organisational knowledge and provide examples for each

### **Sample long-answer or essay question:**

- ◆ Based on the key terms and definitions explored in this lecture, debate whether knowledge can be 'managed'?

More specific discussion around this will become clearer in later chapters of the book, but it is important to understand that knowledge, which has been defined as context- and process-specific, relational, and constantly changing, always requires human interaction and can never entirely be captured by a computer or a database. It does not simply exist; it needs to be understood, interpreted and reinterpreted. This makes it difficult to effectively 'manage' knowledge, because it also includes practical experiences, insights, and know-how which cannot be written down or stored. It is therefore important to understand the context in which this knowledge operates and to create a 'knowledge-friendly' culture in an organisation, where people want to share their knowledge rather than hide or hoard it. An excellent answer will conclude with something like: it is the structural and cultural elements of an organisation that can be managed in a way to support and enhance knowledge utilisation and transfer, but knowledge itself cannot be managed.