

# **KM<sup>Agile</sup>**

## **Agile Knowledge Management**

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**How to Rapidly Develop a Sustainable Knowledge Transfer Capability  
While Increasing Performance**

**Working Knowledge<sup>CSP</sup>**  
Concept | Strategy | Practice  
Knowledge at the Point of Execution<sup>®</sup>

**GREENES CONSULTING**  
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

## Agile Knowledge Management (KM<sup>Agile</sup>)

### How to Rapidly Develop a Sustainable Knowledge Transfer Capability While Increasing Performance

*“We believe that knowledge-based organizations value and require a dynamic, “fit for purpose” approach to KM that simultaneously builds strategy and capability while delivering measurable results in short, discreet timeframes.”*

#### **Time and Result Are Inseparable, Valued Commodities in Business**

Developing and integrating a carefully considered KM strategy and sustainable knowledge transfer capability faces many challenges, even in the most innovative and forward looking organizations. The complexity and operational tempo (op tempo) of today’s business environment requires a new, more agile approach to transforming the behavior of knowledge workers and enabling higher levels of individual and organization performance through the effective use and flow of knowledge within that organization.

Workers, and specifically knowledge workers, are more likely to invest their valued time and energy on knowledge capture and knowledge sharing activities that provide them with an immediate and measureable benefit. In other words, from the worker perspective, “If I spend time on this, how will it enable me to perform better? What benefit will I get from doing my work differently? “What’s in it for me?”

From leadership’s perspective, KM must be directly focused on the business of the organization. Agility in knowledge management, in this context, refers not only to speed in addressing business and operational performance challenges, but also the development and implementation of a fit for purpose KM strategy and enabling practices to address these challenges. We believe that Agility in knowledge management starts with quick wins and carefully selected pilot projects that not only address and improve specific, operational business performance, but also enable the necessary understanding needed for early buy-in for KM within the organization.

#### **Results Change Behavior**

We know from experience you cannot successfully impose knowledge management practices on people to make them share their knowledge and experience, nor get them to instantly accept KM as a valuable investment of their time. Both novice and mature workers, millennials and boomers, for different reasons, need to experience first-hand (1) how working differently by changing their knowledge sharing behavior can make their jobs easier, and (2) deliver for themselves the higher performance that impacts their recognition, career development, and professional maturity.

The results, whether in organizations with an existing “KM Strategy and Framework,” or applied in an organization just beginning their KM journey, must directly and immediately impact people and create value from their knowledge – individually, in teams, and across the organization. We also recognize that behavior change is hard even in the most forward looking organizations. Through an agile approach to

KM, people not only realize the benefits and promise of KM in real-time, but also change the way they act and work as part of the experience.

## **KM<sup>Agile</sup>**

Agile in the KM context means rapid implementation and results, adaptive to culture, context, and the business environment, and focused on changing knowledge sharing mindsets and behaviors. In our Agile approach to KM, business strategy and operational requirements continuously and iteratively inform and evolve KM efforts to deploy knowledge capabilities faster with meaningful results. Whether developing and then implanting new concepts, strategies, and implementing practices, or focusing on existing KM strategies to renew or revitalize them, improved performance and an appreciation of KM is integrated as part of the way work gets done. Agility in sharing and transferring knowledge emerges as an iterative outcome of the application of proven KM practices in and as part of the work environment.

Assessment, design, and development of a flexible KM strategy is accomplished in the background while proven KM techniques are applied to existing business challenges through short, quick win pilot projects. The results and key learnings from the KM pilots are then quickly and iteratively combined with proven KM practices to produce a “fit for purpose” KM strategy and roadmap to guide ongoing implementation.

Within 12 weeks, individuals, teams and leaders participating in this effort discover new possibilities, begin to shift their mindsets, and directly experience the business impact of new capabilities for sharing and transferring their knowledge.

## **Distinctions between KM<sup>Agile</sup> and Traditional KM**

In the traditional, best case approach to KM, senior leadership supports and invests heavily in the formal development of a “perfect” KM strategy and the right enabling technologies. In these cases, which typically take 6 months or longer, key deliverables take the form of comprehensive, implementation roadmaps and schedules for follow-on KM projects or programs. This means stakeholders will not typically see the benefits of the KM efforts for up to a year from when their initial investment is made.

While the support and commitment to KM from senior leadership is necessary, it is not sufficient if the immediate effort is not focused upon delivering quick, meaningful and manageable results tied to measurable business outcomes. Without this direct and visible connection between KM and business outcomes (Knowledge at the Point of Execution<sup>®</sup>), leaders and workers quickly lose interest and don't experience the benefits of capturing, adapting, transferring, and reusing knowledge. Instead, work and process remain business as usual.

We learned from our early work as pioneers in KM that measurable results are the most effective way to hold the attention of key decision makers. In KM<sup>Agile</sup>, decision makers directly experience the benefits of KM in the first few months of their investment. The early demonstration of business impact from

implementing context relevant KM practices highlights the business and operational value of KM in organizations where people are pedaling as fast as they can to get work done.

As KM practitioners, we also learned that nothing begins to change mindsets like results. And, since mindsets drive behavior, measurable results from an initial, relevant KM investment provides the foundation for building sustainable change in the way people and organizations act and work. This is another important distinction between traditional KM and KM<sup>Agile</sup>. Mindsets and behavior, not just results, are key to sustainable KM implementation. The impact of results on behavior is typically short-lived.

***An agile approach to KM changes behavior while delivering results, which keeps KM on the leadership agenda.***

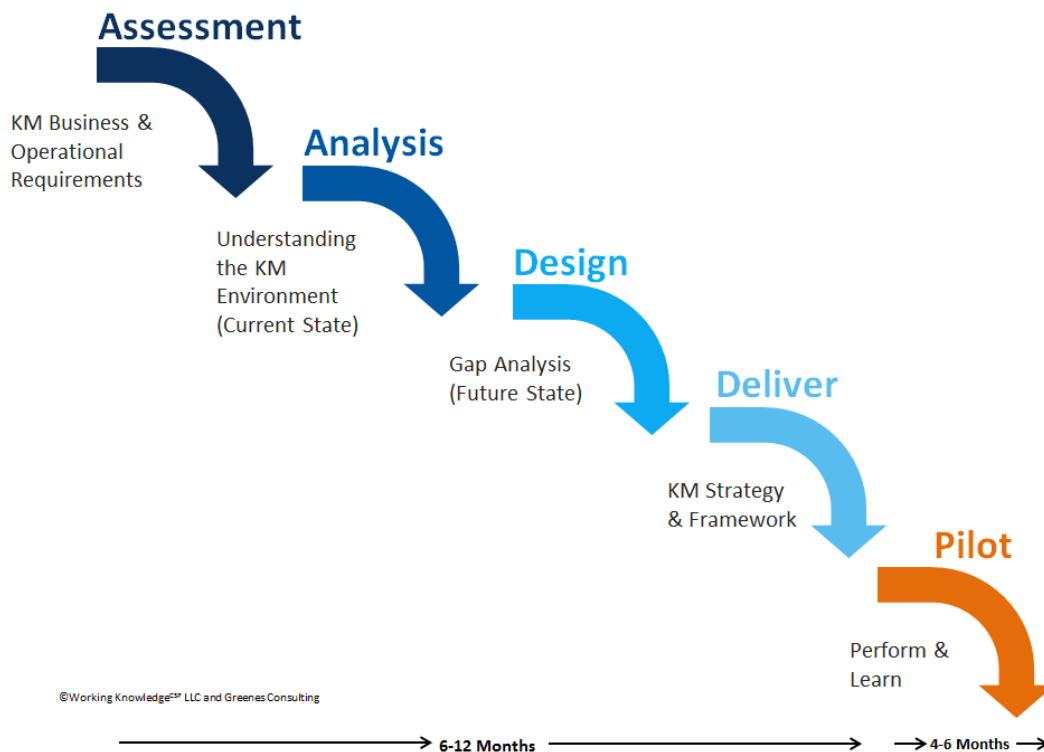
### Traditional KM Strategy and Framework Development and Implementation

There is a “need for speed” in a business environment, public sector or private sector... a need to operate “faster than the speed of change” for competitive advantage or to achieve critical mission goals. Businesses and other organizations also have short attention spans for performance results. In many environments, there are also budget and resource constraints.

KM projects often follow a standard sequence: problem, requirements definition, research, analysis, assessment, strategy recommendation and framework development, pilot and execution, followed by

### Traditional KM Strategy and Framework Development and Implementation

Figure 1



broader implementation across the organization. This is the Waterfall approach to KM Strategy and Framework Implementation (**Figure 1, Traditional KM Strategy and Framework Development and Implementation**).

The timeline from project inception to strategy and framework delivery fairly takes a minimum of 6 months, and often up to 10-12 months. This is due to strains and stresses of the organization's normal op tempo, competing projects, initiatives, and distractions requiring attention, along with the necessary resources required from across the organization. Pilot projects are identified to prove the value and validity of the strategy, and they often can take an additional 4-6 months to implement.

### **KM<sup>Agile</sup> Is a Co-Delivery Process**

Agile KM is a co-delivery process with our clients that allows us to:

1. Plan, develop, and execute a KM framework in an organization through the rapid use of carefully selected pilot projects focused on delivering the **highest business value in the shortest time.**
2. **Rapidly and repeatedly evaluate practically applied KM concepts, strategies, and implementing practices in real time,** and to continuously refine a context relevant KM operating framework as the pilot's progress.

The organization sets the priorities based on culture, workforce dynamics, and the business or operational problem to be addressed where leveraging knowledge will **have a measurable difference in business performance or mission outcome.**

Pilot projects are identified and facilitated. KM consultants work side-by-side with the organization's KM practitioners to determine the most effective way to **deliver the highest value business outcomes through the evolving KM framework in the shortest amount of time.**

On an ongoing basis, the organization can see **real additional knowledge (performance) capability** and decide to share it or continue to enhance the evolving capability for later transfer and reuse.

### **KM<sup>Agile</sup> Principles**

This approach is driven by several key principles to achieve success:

- The priority is to satisfy the client through early delivery of a sustainable KM Framework.
- Welcome changing requirements at any time during development and implementation because "KM is a process of continual renewal."
- Client and consultant must work together daily throughout the project.
- Build the KM framework around early adapter organization (business/operational) units since they are most willing and likely to change behavior.
- The ability to quickly leverage knowledge to solve business or operational challenges is the primary measure of progress.
- Continuous attention to culture and workforce dynamics enhances sustainable KM framework success.

- Simplicity—the art of maximizing the amount of work to be done—is essential.
- Technology is an enabler, never the solution.
- At regular intervals, the team reflects on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjusts its behavior and execution accordingly.

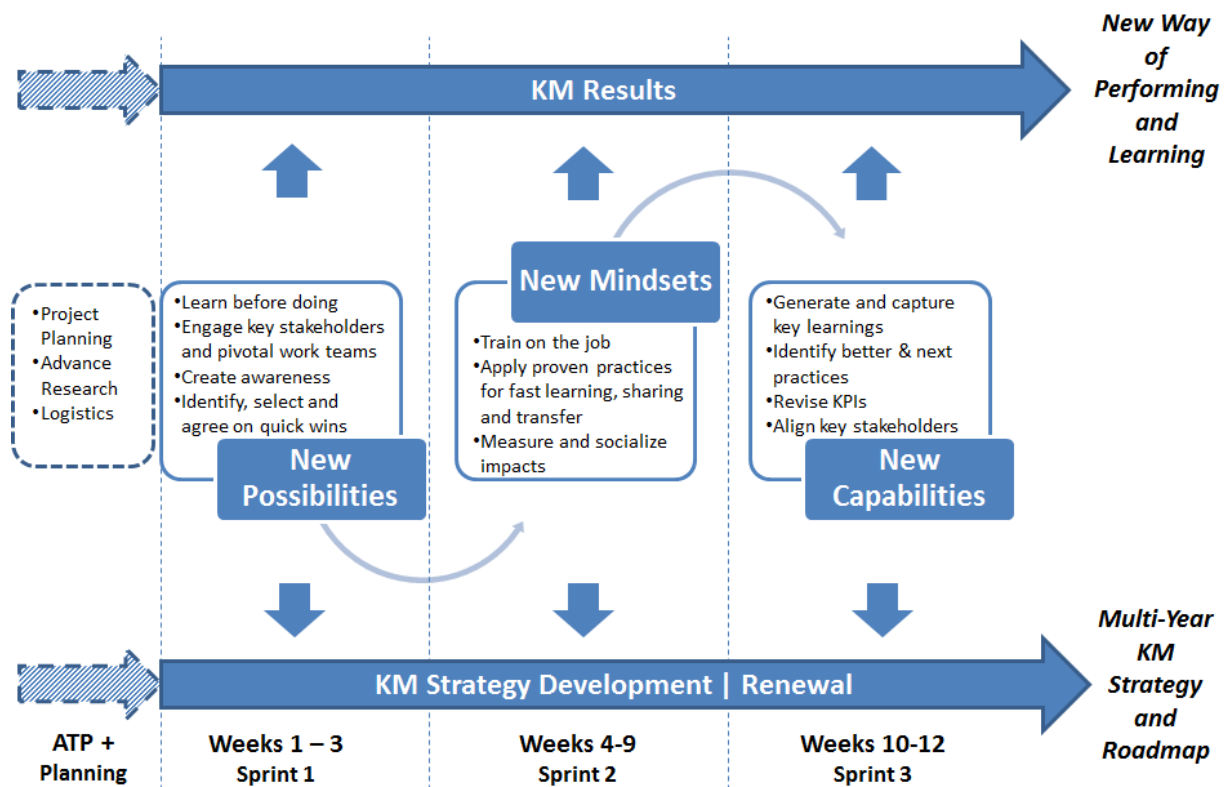
### $KM^{Agile}$ Approach Explained

Our agile KM approach (**Figure 2,  $KM^{Agile}$** ) is based on the following elements and tradeoff priorities:

- People and practices over high-level processes and tools;
- Performing and learning over strategy in a vacuum;
- Collaboration over traditional consulting; and
- Responding and adapting to change over following a perfect plan.

This Agile KM approach establishes a foundational operating capability for KM accomplished in three “sprints” or cycles of work.<sup>1</sup>

$KM^{Agile}$   
Figure 2



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<sup>1</sup> A **Sprint** is a regular, repeatable work cycle, for an established period of time, during which specific work has is completed and made ready for review.

In the **Planning** phase which begins immediately after contract award (ATP) and prior to the start of Sprint 1, we work with the KM Project Owner<sup>2</sup> to compile and request a list of background information required such as organization charts, contact information, details of any existing KM efforts (strategy, framework, implementation plan, metrics and learnings) and develop the final details of the logistics planning to support the project. At this time, based on best available information provided by the client, we identify the key stakeholders, thought leaders and pivotal<sup>3</sup> work teams with whom we need to engage and interview at project start. User stories<sup>4</sup> are very effective in this phase in gaining insight to focus areas. We also begin to draft the survey instrument to be used during Sprint 1. This preparation enables our KM team to start quickly and effectively. We understand the management of KM projects is a continuous effort that begins immediately upon award. It requires a disciplined approach like any other major project or program.

In **Sprint 1**, we quickly engage key stakeholders and pivotal work teams to create new possibilities about how KM can impact their individual, team and organizational performance and gain their commitment to success. Using a proven and unique approach to interviews, we work together with the designated internal RTA KM Team to identify, select, and gain the license to apply KM with the stakeholders and work teams on a handful of manageable and meaningful quick wins. Measures of success<sup>5</sup> are agreed upon between consultant and (pilot) pivot team. The necessary “just-in-time” KM training is delivered as part of the sprint. Daily scrums<sup>6</sup> occur involving each team as part of the sprint. At the end of this two to three week period, everyone involved has a clearer line of sight between KM and their work and is committed to moving forward.

In **Sprint 2**, we train work teams in simple, proven KM practices and apply them to the handful of quick win opportunities in specific work operations. Over this six (6) week period, knowledge is shared, transferred and applied to make a measurable impact to individual and team performance. This begins to change the thinking and behavior of those involved. The outcomes are validated, made highly visible, and shared as appropriate across the organization.

In **Sprint 3**, we use another proven technique (Retrospect/Learning After) to generate and capture the key learnings and advice from the quick wins planned and delivered in the previous sprints. This reusable, internal knowledge is made sense of and characterized for reuse in the context of RTA operations. The key learnings from the overall engagement are integrated with our inventory of external best practices, knowledge of relevant benchmarks, and what we have together been learning about the organization and its business throughout the engagement. We leverage this understanding and insight to design and develop a revised and renewed set of KM strategies, tactics, metrics and milestones. By

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<sup>2</sup> **KM Project Owner** is the person championing the KM framework project who sets priorities and outcomes representing the interests of the stakeholders and ensuring the value of the work the co-delivery Team accomplishes

<sup>3</sup> **Pivotal Work Team** is the pilot team where a structured change in framework development and implementation takes place to test a new approach to strategy or implementation

<sup>4</sup> **User Stories** capture the 'who', 'what' and 'why' of the KM requirement(s) in a simple, concise way

<sup>5</sup> **Measures of Success** are actionable measures (to metrics) that drive changes in framework implementation and pilot project execution

<sup>6</sup> **Scrum** is a daily face-to-face communication among all team members and disciplines in the project

the end of this two week period, these findings and recommendations are shared and socialized in the form of a realistic and sustainable KM roadmap and timeline. This roadmap reflects sequencing of priority changes across people/culture, processes, content, enabling technologies and organization structure essential to delivering the change necessary for RTA to become a high performing, knowledge-enabled organization where “performing and learning” is part of the way work gets done.

***KM Strategy and Roadmap Development or Renewal***

In parallel with the three sprints, our KM Consulting team is *working in the background to review and assess the clients current and future knowledge management environment (KME)*. This includes an assessment of previous and ongoing KM strategy, framework and implementation projects, if any.

A distinctive element of this parallel approach is (1) the focus on identifying and building on what is already working, and (2) weaving in our findings through the sprints to renew and enhance the existing KM framework to continue to fit within the unique cultural and business dynamics of the client. This renewed KM framework clarifies five KM elements we commonly find in every sustainable, knowledge-based organization: People/Culture, Processes, Content, Technology, and Structure.

**A final conversation with the client leadership and the internal client KM Team** provides the opportunity to review the project and its outcomes, answer any questions that still remain, and discuss any ongoing support that may be desired by the client.

**For more information, contact:**

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