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## *Mid-Market Management Trends*

# Waddayaknow? Knowledge Management Can Be an Organization's Key to Survival

by Tommy Peterson

Managing knowledge assets effectively benefits mid-market companies in any economy; in tough times it can be the weapon that keeps companies one step ahead of the competition.

**A**s mid-market companies strip down to mission-critical essentials for a long march through the current recession, investment in knowledge management (KM) is not necessarily an obvious priority. But that's only because organizations often fail to recognize that what they don't know, don't know they know, or know and don't use, is costing them money now and undermining their future success, say knowledge management advocates and practitioners.

Sometimes lost in the discussion of knowledge management and its various implementations is the realization that cost reduction is one of KM's fundamental benefits, say Kent Greenes, a KM pioneer and consultant. In his own consulting practice, Greenes has, he says, documented "hundreds of millions" of dollars in savings and efficiencies that resulted from managing knowledge effectively.

"One of the first claims to fame for KM was allowing companies to leverage and reuse knowledge and experience," Greenes says. "The simplest way to think about it is matching known solutions to known problems—where people have

already solved a problem, moving that solution to other people with the same problem. It's a big driver for people to get into KM now, because they can no longer afford to be inefficient."

While cutting costs and eliminating redundancy should be enough to get any mid-market executive's attention, knowledge management also has broader strategic ramifications, according to Bill Kaplan, chief knowledge officer at Acquisition Solutions, Inc. (ASI) in Arlington, Virginia. For Kaplan, the "heart" of KM is improving performance within the organization—coming up with the best solutions to business problems, making the best decisions, and making them more quickly. That agility is crucial to survival and success, especially in turbulent times, he says.

"Organizations that can quickly leverage what they know about what they do are much more able to adapt to change when it occurs, and much more able to see change coming," Kaplan says. "It really gives you a competitive edge. When people say, 'I don't have time [for KM],' I don't see how that could possibly be if they're really focused strategically."

According to business process consultant Erick Thompson, the rippling crises of the current economy actually provide just the right conditions to demonstrate the value of KM. “This economy is the perfect storm for proving this approach,” says Thompson, who created an enterprise knowledge management system for St. Paul Companies, and later Travelers, before he co-founded Interactive Knowledge Solutions, in Minnetonka, Minnesota. “People say, ‘We have to do much more with much less and leverage what we have in new ways.’ They want much more out of the systems and resources they have. Those are the things that knowledge management can do. Maybe the pain is what it takes for people to understand the value of KM.”

This Executive Action Report aims to further that understanding by presenting the experiences and advice of knowledge management practitioners from mid-market companies.

## Watching KM Evolve

Knowledge management is tricky to define because it’s not a single set of principles or techniques, but rather an evolving amalgam of practices taken from many disciplines, Greenes says. Central to any definition, however, is the belief that knowledge is a valuable asset, and that organizations can extract and codify their knowledge assets and then leverage those assets to solve business problems.

Fundamental KM tools include technologies like social networking software, communities of practice that provide pathways for knowledge sharing, and even, some would say, well-honed conversational skills. Some of the most interesting and important aspects of KM deal with extracting value from elusive social interactions; the goal is always to improve the organization’s performance and meet business needs.

## Early promises fall short

When knowledge management first gained traction in the early 1990s, it was closely associated with information technologies of similar scope and scale as enterprise resource planning systems, that were being implemented by companies that could afford them, says Gerald Kane, assistant professor of information systems at Boston College’s Carroll School of Management. “The original philosophy underlying KM was that if we could just come up with these really good storage systems, we could teach people how to use them, and then we could capture all this knowledge,” says Kane. “I don’t think knowledge works that way, whether it’s that people don’t want to take the time to write all this stuff down, or that people can’t always write down all the things they know, or people need to be in the context to apply what they know.”

Dampened by disappointing results from many early implementations, the initial buzz around knowledge management faded in the late 1990s. Companies cooled toward the formal, technology-based emphasis that had dominated the early practice of KM. The focus in thinking about knowledge management shifted to the people in an organization—finding ways to capture the knowledge and experiences in their heads so the information could be used by others. The set of tools and techniques that support knowledge management expanded to include many taken from psychology, sociology, communications theory, and other disciplines, along with supporting technology.

“Companies that bought into the idea of KM as ‘A one-time effort to capture every bit of knowledge or information into a big KM system,’ became disillusioned long ago,” says Jean Tatalias, director of knowledge services at The MITRE Corporation. “Knowledge management should be used to address business problems using a very diverse tool set. KM encompasses information

management, collaboration, and human interaction techniques. It also includes sociological and organizational development concepts. KM is the approach that says, ‘Can people access the right knowledge to act and make the best decisions?’ ”

### Web 2.0 generates new support for KM

Frustration with the limitations of technology-centric KM may have quelled the first wave of enthusiasm for the discipline, but new technologies—especially collaboration and social networking tools—are playing a large part in the renewed interest in knowledge management, says Kane. Companies are using blogs, wikis, integrated social media platforms, and even Twitter to create and sustain communities of practice that exist to share information and experience. In addition, those tools, along with others including websites such as Facebook, support informal groups that take root in the workplace and promote peer-to-peer communication within and across organizational boundaries.

“The new tools are flexible enough that we can adapt them to the ways people really communicate and share knowledge,” Kane says. “Technology has reached the point that now you can’t separate it from the processes of capturing and sharing knowledge. Technology isn’t the center of attention in knowledge management anymore, but it has turned KM into less of an afterthought and interwoven it into business process. And it supercharges the way groups interact.”

The boost that new technologies provide also comes with a much lower pricetag than the enterprise KM systems of the past, says Andrea Sellars, managing director of the knowledge resources group at Buck Consultants. “What technology has done in the past five years is diminish the cost of entry into the knowledge management arena,” Sellars says. “The investments now are mainly in people and time.”

## Mid-Market Companies Gain a Competitive Edge through KM

Knowledge management is more widely established in large enterprises than in mid-market companies, a legacy that stems from KM’s early association with extensive and expensive IT systems. But the efficiencies offered by knowledge management can improve performance in organizations of all sizes. The aging of the baby boomer generation is one factor providing new impetus for KM, as companies want to prevent knowledge assets from going out the door along with their retiring employees.

Among small and mid-sized companies, consultancies and other organizations with large numbers of knowledge workers are the most common adopters of KM practices. The following snapshots show how knowledge management works in three mid-market companies with well-established KM programs.

### Building on fundamentals at Acquisition Solutions, Inc.

The essentials of knowledge management were built into Acquisition Solutions, Inc.’s (ASI) business long before KM became a conscious focus of the company, says Kaplan. ASI, which provides solutions to federal agencies on all aspects of acquiring goods and services, began in the mid-1990s as a virtual company, where it was essential to develop timely communication and knowledge-sharing strategies.

“There was no brick-and-mortar before 1996,” Kaplan says. “People who became part of the company knew that because [it was] a virtual organization they were only going to be successful if they recognized that they had to share, they had to collaborate, and that [sharing and collaboration] had to be a fundamental part of the way [ASI] did business. Otherwise, we never would have grown. They didn’t call it knowledge management, they just called it getting the work done.”

## More Than a Network: Communities of Practice Spur Knowledge Transfer

Collecting knowledge and connecting the people to share it are the primary tasks of KM, and communities of practice (CoP) can achieve both in extraordinary ways, says KM pioneer Kent Greenes. CoPs are voluntary groups of peers, practitioners, and other interested parties whose members regularly share knowledge to improve their performance as individuals and the performance of the organizations they are in. That sharing can take place via almost any mode of communication, electronic or otherwise—blogs, wikis, web portals, social networking software, e-mail groups, phone calls, and even the occasional face-to-face meeting.

“CoPs are the most central, sustainable element of KM because they’re all about people,” Greenes says. “The communities are the people who have the knowledge of a particular domain or practice area. That doesn’t mean they’re all experts—they’re practitioners, people who do the work, past, present, and future. They’re a core sustaining engine for a KM effort in a company, because people will come and go, but if their community persists, then the knowledge keeps being transferred and refreshed through the people.”

Communities of practice come in all sizes, levels of organization, and enabling technologies. Some have charters, formal roles, and funding from sponsors, while others materialize from Facebook. A successful CoP is, however, much more than its network, charter, or the technology it runs on. “Just because experts or practitioners in a cer-

tain domain are connected doesn’t mean that they want to share their knowledge or put any effort into helping others,” Greenes says. “That’s where the community comes in—it takes networks to the next step.”

CoPs are increasingly tied together by lightweight, portable collaboration and social networking tools. While the tools should not be confused with the communities themselves, emerging technologies are transforming CoPs, which had their beginnings in Internet discussion forums and bulletin boards, Greenes says. “When communities of practice were first established, the technology wasn’t that great to help you. Most of them started as ad hoc, informal groups,” he says. “With the tools we have now, CoPs are evolving again to less formal structures, and are often less persistent. You can form a community now for five minutes or for two hours on the network and share some knowledge and then it’s gone.”

The pervasiveness of new communications technologies and resulting proliferation of informal CoPs raises management challenges, says Gerald Kane of Boston College’s Carroll School of Management. “We’re assuming that sharing knowledge is good, but if companies don’t pay attention, ad hoc communities can even hurt you,” Kane says. “People in the organization are now creating and managing knowledge all the time and the company gets value from that—you save time and money when your employees aren’t always reinventing the wheel. But companies need to think about maximiz-

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In 2005, the company’s founders and president Anne Reed decided that ASI’s growth to mid-market size meant it needed more formal processes and structure, Kaplan says. Along with hiring a full-time CFO and CTO, ASI’s leadership created the CKO role to develop and oversee a disciplined process for leveraging the knowledge within the company and moving it across the organization. Upper management’s recognition that knowledge assets are just as important as financial and technology assets has been key to KM delivering value at ASI, says Kaplan. “Learning processes are a fundamental part of our business process,” he says.

“The thing that sets knowledge-enabled companies apart from their peers is that they have built the capability to learn as they perform into what they do.”

At ASI, formal mechanisms have been created to speed the transfer of knowledge before, during, and after any project, says Kaplan. Peer assists help prepare individuals and teams for the work ahead. While the project is underway, periodic action reviews allow new knowledge and information gathered from the work to be applied almost immediately, speeding progress toward the final goal. Finally, a full-blown retrospect review examines

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ing the value and decreasing things like security risks. You can't control communities, but you don't want to abdicate your voice, even if it's just to suggest that they migrate to a more secure platform.”

At MITRE, various communities of interest bubble up from the grassroots—often with the participation of high-level managers and lead engineers, but without company mandates or charters, says Marcie Zaharee, a KM principal at MITRE. “We try to minimize redundancy among the communities, and we do supply services to help them capture and synthesize the products of their discussion,” she says. “We want to enable staff to reach out and tap each other's expertise as a part of everyday work. We don't have a culture that would drive chartered, mandated products from communities, but where there are nascent natural communities, leaders can help them along, give advice and encouragement.”

Stressing interaction around relevant and changing content rather than the laurels of collaboration is the most effective way to hook members to a CoP, says Interactive Knowledge Solution's Erick Thompson. “People come for the content—what's in it for them at a particular time—and stay for the conversation, not the other way around,” Thompson says. “We know that there is lots of tacit knowledge members have that you will get to, but you have to engage them first.”

The vitality of any CoP, regardless of how it is structured and operates, is based on the mutual trust of its members, even though their ties cut across group, team, and even company boundaries. To build trust and thereby communities, it's important to manage boundaries rather than eliminate them, says Thompson. “People are much more likely to share in a defined, trusted environment,” Thompson says. “They need to know it's safe to say, ‘I don't know.’ That's one reason why even open virtual communities often have sub-communities with defined boundaries. Open structures facilitate the flow of ideas, but solutions to tough problems emerge in safe, trusted environments.”

Creating that safe space can be particularly difficult for small and mid-market companies, even though they usually have less rigid hierarchies than large enterprises, Greenes says. Small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) are frequently built around a few “heroes”—often the founders or a technology or business model guru. The challenge is to convince experts that they still have something to learn and other members of the organization that they have knowledge to share. “Knowledge very much equals power in smaller organizations, and you have to overcome barriers to get people to share,” Greenes says. “But if you have limited resources, then the whole point is to leverage everything you know and all the people you have.”

what worked and what did not, and extracts the lessons to be learned from the project and advice to be passed on. The last, very important step is to change training programs so they reflect the new knowledge gained before the next project begins, Kaplan says.

Besides buy-in from upper management and the designation of someone accountable for moving knowledge through the company, knowledge management at ASI depends on a workforce that understands the importance of learning and improving

performance, says Kaplan. And while the rewards of transferring knowledge quickly are great, the process is challenging. “The skill set that enables you to get what's in someone's head and characterize it so that somebody else can reuse it is hard,” he says. “There is no technology or software that's going to do [it]—that's art and skill. I've been working at it for ten years, and I'm still learning.”

## Knowledge infrastructure adds value at Buck Consultants

Knowledge management at Buck Consultants is a work in progress, with new initiatives launched almost monthly, such as a recently completed directory of the company's intellectual capital, says Sellars. While many organizations see KM as a separate effort of knowledge collection and transfer, Buck's formal KM efforts took a broader view. In 2005, Affiliated Computer Services, Inc. acquired the New York-based human resources consultancy, which it operates as an independent subsidiary. As part of the transition away from their previous parent, Mellon Financial, Buck executives took the opportunity to completely rethink how knowledge could be managed more effectively within the company's infrastructure.

"We started with a blank piece of paper," Sellars says. "We created a new internal infrastructure from the perspective of providing our organization with a single knowledge infrastructure for all of our operational and intellectual capital. The new structure and systems were designed to support our financial reporting requirements, HR, staff development, IT, sales and marketing, along with our products and services knowledge. We thought about how we would build our knowledge center so that it touched every aspect of our business and supports the entire organization."

Practitioners, along with survey, research, and training teams that report to Sellars, create knowledge at Buck. The knowledge resources group is responsible for collecting and distilling that knowledge, and then disseminating it to practitioners to use on behalf of and with their clients. According to Sellars, technology helps her team "connect the dots" represented by those three aspects of KM, but technology is not the focus of the effort.

"We always want to stay on top of the tools that are available, but we see knowledge as being derived from individuals and in their experiences. For knowledge to be properly applied to a client's situation, it needs to be moved from one person to another person," she says. "Knowledge management is a way to make that transfer as easy, quick, and accurate as possible. Today's tools offer efficiency, standardization, and sometimes offer a process to identify what knowledge is most important to impart."

The knowledge resources group at Buck brings KM expertise to bear on internal business problems as well as client needs, and the knowledge management team is the primary vehicle of Buck's staff development and learning programs. But the focus of KM at the company is largely outward, targeting knowledge sharing that is used to anticipate and fill the needs of clients. For Buck, as for other consultancies, knowledge is the product it offers its clients, and both the quality of that knowledge and the effectiveness of its transfer can translate into a competitive edge. "The value proposition of the KM effort at Buck is the identification and dissemination of knowledge across a broad spectrum of our consultants, so more of our clients can access the knowledge they need to timely address their issues, and that can be a direct contributor to Buck's success," says Sellars.

And KM doesn't cost much, considering the return, she says. "We're using the staff we have to bring new resources to our practitioners," Sellars says. "The world and how people find and use knowledge is changing, and our team is charged with understanding what's there and what we can best use to the benefit of Buck and our clients. It's a continuous improvement project."

## MITRE Corporation fosters knowledge production and sharing

For the past decade, the development of MITRE's intranet has been the catalyst of the company's knowledge sharing efforts. The MII (MITRE Information Infrastructure) is a portal to the information and the people in the company, says Tatalias. The intranet was structured so that the user could navigate across people, organizations, and projects, and the documents associated with them.

But even before the portal was envisioned, MITRE's ethos and business model encouraged sharing of knowledge. The not-for-profit company with principal locations in Bedford, Massachusetts and McLean, Virginia operates four federally funded research and development centers. MITRE provides systems engineering and advanced technology expertise to federal government sponsors such as the Department of Defense, Federal Aviation Administration, Internal Revenue Service,

## Age Influences How Information Is Transferred and Received

Despite the risks and costs of losing intellectual capital, most companies still have no plan for the management and transfer of knowledge, and even fewer factor cross-generational challenges into business strategy. The Conference Board Research Working Group on Multigenerational Knowledge Transfer explored this topic and found that in knowledge transfer, age matters. How you learn depends to a great extent on when you were born. There are four generations of learning styles:

- **Matures or veterans** (born 1925-1945) This generation has respect for authority, prefers “command and control” leadership, and will make sacrifices to get the job done.
- **Baby Boomers** (born 1946-1964) They are idealistic but realize loyalty is dead. Boomers and their predecessors are “digital immigrants” who did not grow up with computers, and were educated through traditional classroom learning.
- **Gen Xers** (born 1965-1979) They are the “business casual” generation, and trust themselves, not institutions. Their highest priority is to learn by doing in the workplace.
- **Gen Yers/Millennials** (born 1980-1995) Gen Yers are technically savvy, value diversity, have a global perspective, want feedback and communication, and are entrepreneurial. This group is composed of “digital natives” who were born into the computer world and learn by inductive discovery and exploration.

Knowledge transfer involves new graduates to the same extent as those about to retire. The RWG suggests the following:

1. **Focus on the receiver, not just the source** Knowledge transfer efforts need to shift from a major emphasis on older workers about to retire and focus on receivers, who are often younger workers from different generations.
2. **Pay attention to the digital divide** Gen Yers experienced a rapid introduction of new technologies from a young age, resulting in a preference for digital learning. This technology gap also means that younger employees have something of value to impart to older members of the organization.
3. **Younger employees should be involved in deciding how they want to receive knowledge** Boomers and Matures often want to have and share a lot of context and history, while Gen Y employees usually want “just the facts.” Knowledge transfer practitioners need to take this into account.

Sources: Diane Piktialis and Kent A. Greenes, *Bridging the Gaps: How to Transfer Knowledge in Today's Multigenerational Workplace*, The Conference Board, Research Report 1428, 2008, p. 9-11.  
Susan Stewart, “Capturing Butterflies and Making Them Talk,” The Conference Board, Executive Action Report 264, 2008.

Department of Veterans Affairs, and Department of Homeland Security. The company's workforce is made up almost entirely of knowledge workers, says Tatalias.

“We've long had a standard in the company for making sure that when a staff member is working on a project, they can know what the company knows,” says Marcie Zaharee, a KM principal at MITRE. “One of our basic principles is to create as open an information space as possible. Part of the value we bring to our customers is our reachback capability—leveraging colleagues' expertise. We strive to have an environment in which everyone is both a knowledge producer and knowledge sharer.”

Parts of the KM toolkit are MITRE's efforts to facilitate collaboration: in teams and distributed communities of interest; in ad hoc groups; and in a more focused collaborative environment with sponsors or partners. Various technologies are used for the collaborations, the purpose and longevity of which vary greatly. The workforce has welcomed Web 2.0 tools such as wikis and blogs, but their introduction represents an evolution in capability, not a major culture change. MITRE has long strived for a highly-collaborative environment,” says Tatalias, “these tools made it easier.”

For MITRE, the impact of knowledge management is most apparent in services provided to customers and sponsors. Knowledge management strategies are thought of as mechanisms for sharing expertise in the technical realm, says Tatalias, “while business process improvement is a parallel approach to solving internal business problems. But they both include getting people the right information to make decisions.”

The knowledge services group does, however, work with managers as they address business problems, says Zaharee. “We help them see the problem through a KM lens, and see if improved knowledge processes can contribute to the solution.”

## Seven Tips to Make KM Work for You

A knowledge management initiative within any company is shaped by the culture, technology, and existing business processes of the organization, which means that KM is unique everywhere it’s practiced. But several pieces of advice surface repeatedly in interviews with experienced practitioners.

**Start with a business need** The goal of KM is to solve business problems, so begin by using KM to ease a specific pain felt by the organization, rather than by discussing benefits of knowledge sharing in the abstract. The best proof that KM concepts work comes when they produce measurable successes. “You should be asking, ‘Where’s the business problem that a better knowledge approach, whether that’s a structured process, or communities, or capture, would help you?’ ” says MITRE’s Tatalias. “Start from the business driver.”

**Start small** A quick win with tangible benefits will demonstrate to other departments and members of the workforce “what’s in it for them,” says Zaharee of MITRE Corporation. ASI’s Kaplan stresses that even, or perhaps especially, a small pilot project requires the marshaling of all the KM forces available. Clearly define success before the beginning of the project, and then bring all necessary internal and external knowledge resources and KM techniques to bear on the problem.

Kane of the Carroll School offers a slightly different take on the virtues of beginning KM on a modest scale—starting small allows the freedom to experiment. “You can explore questions like, ‘Is there real business value for us? What is it? And what are the appropriate tools to use?’ ” Kane says. “Dabble before you sink a lot of time and money into a site or redo all your processes.”

**Build buy-in** As with any business initiative, upper management support is critical for effective knowledge management. That support manifests itself in many ways, from the creation of the chief knowledge officer position at ASI to MITRE’s annual awards for KM achievement. The president of MITRE Corporation personally hosts the awards ceremony, which makes a clear statement of support to the entire workforce, says Zaharee.

The support of the workforce is also essential to any effort with knowledge-sharing and collaboration at its heart. To that end, once those first KM successes have been achieved, spread the word within the company, says ASI’s Kaplan. “Talk about why you were successful and what the value was to the organization,” Kaplan says. “Recognize the early adopter who stuck his or her neck out to take on the KM pilot project. Make a big deal out of it. People are heroes or heroines and their colleagues will go ‘Whoa, that works, I want some of that.’ ”

**Secure a seat at the decision-makers’ table** Upper management support should translate into accountability and access for knowledge managers, says Kaplan. He advises that an organization should have a high-level executive charged with managing knowledge, just as there are parallel positions overseeing finances, technology, or physical infrastructure in most companies. The title for the role may vary—chief knowledge officer, director of knowledge resources—but the person who fills it must be a senior decision maker.

“You want a seat at the table, where knowledge is viewed at the same level of importance as any other asset,” Kaplan says. “It’s a very important message. In organizations—especially mid-markets—where KM managers are not seen as part of the senior team, knowledge management has not been as wildly successful as in ones where leadership stood up and said ‘This is important.’ ”

## Getting Personal

Companies care about knowledge management because it provides a way to improve the performance of the organization as a whole, but some of the most important benefits of KM come to individuals. “One of the biggest aspects of KM is how it relates to on-the-job development,” says Russell Morris, associate director of the councils department at The Conference Board. “People want to relate learning to their jobs.”

KM can be applied specifically to training, but the emphasis on the individual still pervades the entire discipline, says KM pioneer Kent Greenes. “The benefit of a community is first and foremost to the members,” Greenes says. “Then, if you’re doing it on company time, you take that knowledge from the community and you apply it in your day job as a driller, or marketing person, or whatever, and that benefits the company.”

While an organization’s individuals may reap tremendous benefits from KM, they can also be the biggest hindrance in gaining and sharing that very same knowledge, says Morris. And efforts to capture, codify, and transfer knowledge are doomed to failure if practitioners forget they are trying to find an effective way to manage the knowledge that exists in people’s heads, Greenes says. That’s why conversation and trust will always be more important than technology to successful knowledge management.

“Knowledge is a very personal thing—there’s no way you can force someone to share their hard-earned knowledge and experience unless, maybe, if you used a waterboarding technique,” he says. “People have to want to share what they know, or the best thing you’re going to get is old knowledge they don’t care about anymore and that they don’t think will detract from their future viability. In the worst case, you’ll get disinformation, bad knowledge, or they’ll lie.”

**Avoid turf wars** Collaboration should be a basic principle of any KM effort, but rivalry is common, especially over the role of technology, says Sellars. “We didn’t encounter it here, but I’ve heard of organizations that have had a clash between the knowledge management interests and the IT interest,” she says. “My advice is to form a collaborative team to undertake the KM effort, don’t look at it as one department trying to get resources from another department. Everyone owns a piece of knowledge management at Buck.”

**Use existing processes and technology** A central point of knowledge management is extracting more value out of the knowledge and resources your organization already has, says Thompson of Interactive Knowledge Solutions. “The idea is to leverage what you have in new ways,” Thompson says. “People want much more out of the systems they have. They want to reduce training time and effort and save capital—they are not as interested in buying new systems in today’s economy as they are in extracting more value from their existing investments.

This is when the value of simple, proven processes emerges over the buzz of new tools.”

Improvements can often build from familiar foundations and thereby be more easily accepted, Zaharee says. “Try to leverage an existing process for change, as opposed to coming in with something completely new,” she says. “Piggyback on the natural flow and the current activities of the company.”

**Remember that KM never ends** Knowledge management practices can and should be used tactically to solve specific business problems, but ideally, its practices become embedded in the fabric of the organization, says Tatalias. Continuous learning, knowledge-sharing, and improved collaboration become an integral part of how the company does business. “KM is not one thing, or something you do and you’re finished,” Tatalias says. “It’s a continuous improvement process. It’s a lot of little things that you can do incrementally to improve, and that’s the path you want to go on.”

## About the Author

Tommy Peterson is a freelance journalist who focuses on business and technology. She has been an editor and managing editor for a group of community newspapers in the Boston area, as well as the technology editor of *Computerworld* magazine.

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