EXPERT INSIGHTS ON KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Featuring Case Studies from
HDI Knowledge-Centered Support Award Winners

HDI®

Contents

CLICK/TAP ON TITLES BELOW TO JUMP TO ANY ARTICLE

Why Knowledge Management, and Why Now?

by Roy Atkinson
Senior Writer/Analyst | HDI

Knowledge management (KM) can be a touchy subject in the world of support. Many organizations struggle with it, and far fewer have managed to create a mature KM process. Along with tackling the questions posed in the title, maybe we should look at the other side of the coin and explore what is keeping so many organizations from realizing the value of KM.

We're smart people.

Many analysts pride themselves on their level of technical and institutional knowledge. Looking things up all the time seems like it's "for rookies." If people want to work there, they should be able to figure out how these things work, right?

Well, as we all know, things change. Too often, even the best veterans are left saying, "When did *that* change?" about a procedure or a system. Having accurate, up-to-date knowledge can ensure that the staff are aware of changes and are using the correct procedures.

It takes too much time.

Documenting what we do does take time and effort. Even when Knowledge-Centered Support (KCS) processes are integrated into the handling of each case, there's still effort and time involved. In the world of support, where every minute is measured, time is precious. In a world where success is measured by *how many tickets L1 closed today*, the time to document work simply doesn't exist, or so it would seem.

Consider this: The few minutes you spend now documenting your solution to an incident will save others—possibly many others—the time it took you to troubleshoot and test and document the solution. Documentation is money in the bank.

We're trying to do knowledge management, but our tool doesn't do it right.

Granted, some ticket management systems either have a built-in knowledge base or have a way to connect to purpose-built knowledge systems. But, in many cases, it is a high-effort endeavor to get the knowledge base to connect to the individual cases the way we'd like. While not optimal, copy and paste can be a good workaround.

Work with your ITSM or ticket management system provider to make sure you're taking full advantage of any ways you can manage the knowledge your team gathers every day. Organizations are using many creative ways to store knowledge and make it searchable and—more importantly—findable. Wikis, SharePoint, databases, and even searchable text files are superior to having no recorded, shareable knowledge at all.

The analysts don't like having to use the knowledge base.

Yes, your analysts are smart people; but as the environment you support becomes increasingly complex, it's more important than ever to have valid, updated knowledge at hand. No one can remember it all, but—given good guidance—a technician or analyst can work through just about any scenario.

Some support staff will invariably complain that using a knowledge base makes them feel less valuable, creative, or smart. While this is understandable, it's not acceptable. Ask them a simple question: The next time you get on a plane, do you want the pilot to skip the checklist?

That's right. Even the legendary **Sully Sullenberger** ran through a complete checklist before taking off. If using knowledge is good enough for Sully—and every other airline, civilian, and military aviator and astronaut—it's good enough for your support center: Check first, then solve.

So, what's *your* strategy to improve knowledge management in your organization?

ROY ATKINSON *is HDI's senior writer/analyst, acting as in-house subject matter expert and chief writer for SupportWorld articles and white papers. In addition to being a member of the HDI International Certification Standards Committee and the HDI Desktop Support Advisory Board, Roy is a popular speaker at HDI conferences and is well known to HDI local chapter audiences. His background is in both service desk and desktop support as well as small-business consulting. Roy is highly rated on social media, especially on the topics of IT service management and customer service. He is a cohost of the very popular #custserv (customer service) chat on Twitter. He holds a master's certificate in advanced management strategy from Tulane University's Freeman School of Business, and he is a certified HDI Support Center Manager. Follow him on Twitter* ***@HDI_Analyst*** *and* ***@RoyAtkinson****.*

THE ROAD TO AWARD-WINNING KCS:
A CASE STUDY FROM

LOWE'S

Winner, 2016 HDI Knowledge-Centered Support Award

Headquartered in Mooresville, NC, Lowe's is a Fortune 50 company with more than 2,355 retail stores, distribution facilities, and corporate offices located in the US, Canada, and Mexico. The home improvement company employs nearly 285,000 full- and part-time employees, and serves approximately 17 million retail and professional customers each week.

The Lowe's IT Service Desk comprises more than 250 staff across multiple campuses, organized into five unique teams that support twenty-one ACD skillsets and 672 known applications. The teams field more than 1.6 million calls annually from retail stores, distribution centers, and corporate offices, in addition to the more than 900,000 incidents processed through the IT Service Desk self-help site annually.

What was the situation before the launch of the knowledge management initiative?

The Lowe's IT Service Desk had been struggling for years with its knowledge management efforts. With few guidelines and no prescribed best practices, knowledge was difficult to locate, which led to outdated articles and disgruntled users by the thousands. Analysts relied on multiple disjointed knowledge islands, such as personal notes and files, sticky notes on cube walls, walking to other analysts for assistance, or searching the Internet for help. Information consistency and accuracy, average call time, and average handle time suffered. Unnecessary rework was the norm, as knowledge wasn't being captured during the support process. Knowledge wasn't being treated like an asset. Furthermore, ownership of the knowledge management process was undefined—in no way was knowledge management aligned with either department strategy or even standard ITSM processes, like incident and problem management.

What was the knowledge management strategy?

Our overall strategy was to adopt KCS by following the process prescribed by the Consortium for Service Innovation. Seven unique teams, with different cultures and leadership styles, were to adopt KCS, so our goal was to establish a repeatable model of adoption that could accommodate the cultural nuances of each respective team. With this goal in mind, we started small, focusing on one team and cascading to additional teams once the first team was progressing on track.

Additionally, we wanted to be able to scale KCS and implement it outside the IT Service Desk as needed. The 250 members of the IT Service Desk team represents 15–20% of the IT department as a whole (approximately 1,500 staff). To disseminate our program, we knew we would need to establish knowledge collaboration partnerships with key IT and business support teams, and we drafted our program material, permissions, and messaging with those partnerships in mind.

Which processes and tools had to be implemented, modified, or leveraged to support the knowledge management strategy?

PROCESSES

For our analysts to successfully execute UFFA, we had to reverse several ingrained behaviors, including:

1. **Getting off the knowledge island:** We anticipated that analysts would have a hard time letting go of their personal knowledge repositories, so we encouraged them to draft candidate knowledge. We emphasized the importance of citation and accreditation to the individual and the organization as a whole. We also implemented a grace period during launch, to mitigate any fears about knowledge quality that might discourage analysts from drafting knowledge. We also encouraged them to work closely with their KCS coaches.
2. **Capturing knowledge after the fact:** We knew that capturing knowledge after the fact was unproductive. Real-time knowledge creation is essential, as it enables the analyst to capture the customer context.

We also introduced new roles and processes for measuring collaboration and the use, sharing, and improvement of collective knowledge:

- We built knowledge contribution (fix it, flag it, and add it) and quality (article quality index, AQI) into the analysts' individual scorecards to emphasize the importance of contributing to collective knowledge as opposed to simply consuming it.
- We developed participation, citation, and AQI metrics (among others) to drive positive knowledge management behaviors and support the coaching process.

TOOLS

Our legacy knowledge base was already antiquated when we began our KCS journey. We decided to replace our legacy system with InQuira, an enterprise knowledge management system that would better meet our KCS requirements. However, we didn't want to simply dump old, outdated knowledge into the new system; we wanted a blank slate. So, we set a sunset date for our legacy system. Analysts were instructed to use this period to add knowledge to InQuira (following the "Add It" process) if/when they found themselves referencing information in the old knowledge base.

We also knew that an effective integration between our incident management system, BMC Remedy 7, and InQuira was going to be key—when taking 1.6 million calls a year, every second of efficiency counts. Integrating Remedy with InQuira required several months of research, design, and modifications to bring the two applications together in a way that enabled our analysts to search, find, review, and link knowledge to their incidents seamlessly. After the integration, analysts could easily search for knowledge, use the knowledge (and link that article to the incident with a single click), flag the article if a change was required, and add new knowledge to the knowledge base.

Though it may seem counterintuitive, having completed this integration successfully, our long-term goal is actually to move off of InQuira. The Lowe's KCS project helped influence BMC's decision to build the KCS workflow into Remedy 9.1, which will enable us to leverage knowledge across other service management processes, like problem and change management.

The HDI Knowledge-Centered Support Award recognizes an organization that has successfully implemented or improved upon a KCS adoption.

To learn more, visit **ubm.io/2kV7lEw**

What organizational changes (cultural, structural, or political) had to be implemented or modified to support the knowledge management strategy?

Culturally, our organization—especially our leadership—had to become more recognition-focused, to ensure we were making a conscious effort to recognize those individuals who were adding value through knowledge contributions. Prior to this project, we weren't in the habit of calling out individual accomplishments, laboring under the misconception that "IT people don't like that kind of thing."

In addition to recognizing their achievements, we also wanted to address our analysts' potential fears and anxieties up front. We developed our communication plan to address a range of concerns, including:

- "They want to replace me me with a less-seasoned employee..."
- "I'm no tech writer..."
- "If I give up the knowledge, I'll lose my SME status..."
- "You're trying to dumb down my job..."

Tailoring our communications was just one part of the strategy. We also needed our frontline leaders (managers, team leads) to be highly engaged, visible proponents of the KCS program and knowledge management in general. Although all frontline leaders were verbally committed to the project, some needed coaching on actions they could take to reinforce that commitment. Fortunately, we were able to identify many of these needs in the first wave of adoption, which enabled us to enhance and improve our approach with each successive adoption.

How did your organization define success for this initiative?

We have a couple of sayings at Lowe's that speak to our critical success factors:

3. **"Communication is KING!":** Leadership and communication is the last item on the KCS double-loop model, but it's certainly not the least. KCS champions never stop evangelizing. The audience may change, the message may need to adjusted, but consistent, thorough, and diverse messaging is crucial.
4. **"Go to the Guide!":** Do your homework. The Consortium members who authored the KCS Practices and Adoption Guide have shared their lessons learned, and heeding these lessons can help you avoid some of the obstacles and challenges that can threaten your program. Consult with folks who've "been there and done that," and whenever you can, consult with other organizations who've adopted KCS to gain additional insight.
5. **"KCS isn't a Chia Pet!":** You can't just plant a few seeds, change the water a few times, check on it occasionally, and think KCS is going to flourish on its own. KCS requires consistent attention, cultivation, grooming, coaching, and feedback to ensure growth. KCS is a journey not a destination; it's an adoption, not an implementation.

What were some of the lessons learned?

- **Start with a clean slate:** Starting with a clean slate allowed us to mature faster. By clearly defining our "content seeding" approach during the planning and design phase, we ensured that only useful, "correct" legacy knowledge was updated to align with KCS content standards and uploaded to the new knowledge base.
- **Identify cultural norms:** We can't emphasize enough the value of understanding the "cultural baseline" and nuances of departments and teams. Identifying ways for KCS to work within those cultural norms is key. Some behaviors may need to completely change; others may simply need to be modified so that KCS is included. The key is flexibility without compromising on the basic KCS practices that are required for success and avoiding the "ditch" of the cookie cutter approach.
- **Don't overlook problem management:** The maturity of problem management is directly related to knowledge use. When we began our KCS journey, Lowe's had identified more than 3,000 known problems. Capturing the workarounds and ensuring their availability within our knowledge base was key. This drove us to ensure that prepopulated incident templates related to problems also included prepopulated references to articles with known workarounds, which improved efficiency for new and seasoned analysts.

6 Steps for Building a Knowledge Management Culture

by Paul Dooley
President | Optimal Connections LLC

Knowledge management (KM) is now one of the key processes in ITIL, and the payoff of an effective KM process is huge. When fully implemented, a common KM system that is available to all stages in the services lifecycle improves decision making; reduces duplication of effort and rediscovery of knowledge; reduces costs; and empowers customers, users, and all of IT.

So why have so few IT service organizations been able to implement KM successfully? They lack a successful strategy to overcome the cultural barriers that stand in their way. A knowledge-driven culture is possible. With the right vision, strategies, and tactics, behavior can change and with it, the culture of a services organization. Let's consider how six steps can help your organization overcome barriers to successful KM implementation.

1 Recognize that Implementing KM Must be a Strategic Initiative

Taking a tactical or operational approach, and not recognizing that implementing effective KM must be a strategic initiative, ignores the need for behavioral change. Implementing KM is one of those big changes that requires a well-thought-out organizational change plan, to change the organization's culture over time as you implement the process.

To realize effective KM throughout an organization, all support groups should feel they have a "piece of the action." All IT support managers and practitioners, from the frontline service desk to executive management, should feel as though they are contributors to, and beneficiaries of, the KM process. Use an organizational change model, such as Kotter's 8-Step Process of organizational change, to guide and facilitate the shift to a knowledge-centered services organization over time. Follow these steps to guide your initiative to success:

- **Establish a sense of urgency to move to KM.** Start with your team! Let them know that a move to a KM culture is strategically important to your organization.
- **Form a powerful guiding coalition to lead the effort.** Getting the right people on your KM planning and implementation project team, with the right skills and talent, is critical. Include members from various IT teams—technical management, applications support, operations, and the service desk—to get participation and buy-in across the organization.
- **Create a compelling vision for transitioning to knowledge management.** Your vision and mission statements for realizing a new, knowledge-driven service and support organization are fundamental cornerstones to your strategic plan.
- **Create a compelling vision for transitioning to knowledge management.** Your vision and mission statements for realizing a new, knowledge-driven service and support organization are fundamental cornerstones to your strategic plan.
- **Communicate the vision—initially and continually.** Having a well-thought-out communications plan is fundamental to the success of this major organizational change effort. It's important that you tailor your message to each of your target audiences—support staff, technical and application teams, customers, and users.
- **Empower others to act on the vision.** Make it easy for contributors, reviewers, and consumers to participate. When your

implementation requires practitioners and managers to take several extra steps to submit a knowledge article, or to retrieve information from the knowledge base, you are creating roadblocks to adoption and usage. Remove the roadblocks.

- **Plan for and create short-term wins!** One of the challenges to overcome when launching a major initiative such as the adoption of KM is the initial resistance and ongoing doubt about the likelihood of success. Plan for early, visible improvements that will create enthusiasm and a sense that the initiative will indeed succeed as it moves forward.
- **Consolidate improvements, and produce still more change!** Once you have been able to demonstrate these quick wins, your KM initiative will begin to pick up momentum. People will realize their jobs are actually easier and they are becoming more productive. Use this increased credibility to change and improve other supporting systems, tools, and processes.
- **Finally, institutionalize the new approach!** The goal is to make knowledge sharing and reuse "just the way you work." For this to happen, you must build it into everything that people do as a part of their daily tasks: include it in your core values; embed knowledge contribution and reuse in core procedures; feature contributing in your job descriptions; make KM part of monthly reporting, and recognize regular contributors.

2 Take a Lifecycle Approach to Implementation

Trying to implement KM as a short-term, tactical project would be a mistake. Instead, consider KM as an organization-wide process, requiring a service lifecycle approach to implementation. View KM as a process, not a tool or system—one that must be strategically initiated and adopted across teams in a cultural sense—so that sharing knowledge becomes an integral part of the work culture. KM becomes a way of working, but one that uses a tool and/or systems to capture, store, and effectively share knowledge. Follow the ITIL Service Lifecycle approach:

- Start with a **Service Strategy**: Establish your compelling vision for transforming your organization to a knowledge-centered service provider, along with a supporting mission, goals, and objectives. Include "knowledge" in your strategy statements. Add "sharing knowledge" to your list of core values, underscoring its importance to the organization.
- Develop a holistic approach to implementation with **Service Design**: Design your KM process, along with supporting systems, tools, metrics, and other elements, and produce a master plan for KM.
- Implement KM using a **Service Transition** approach: Using your master plan as input, begin implementing the various components over time—people, process, and supporting technology (it will take all three, plus your organizational change plan). And don't neglect to communicate the "quick wins" and the success of your KM initiative repeatedly to all stakeholders as it moves forward!
- Your design should be to embed it within your **Service Operation** processes: Make knowledge capture and reuse an integral part of every production support process—for example, during the monitoring of events, while resolving an incident, and when troubleshooting a problem. The idea is to either access and put captured knowledge to work, or capture knowledge while in the workflow.
- Keep it going with **Continual Improvement**: Having designed metrics and reporting for your KM process, make the monitoring and reporting on KM performance and value part of your monthly IT management meeting. Assess performance to goals, and look for ways to improve the KM process, people aspects, and supporting tools and systems.

3 Realize That There Are Silos to Overcome

Traditional IT organizations are organized along technology lines. For example, there will generally be a set of technical management teams that provide planning, transition, and operation support for the technology infrastructure. An applications management group will support the applications that are a key part of services delivered to customers, providing support during design, transition, and operations. As a by-product of this organizational structure, supporting systems—including knowledge bases—are formed, also organized along these same organizational boundaries.

To overcome these KM silos, start with a compelling vision and mission that all groups can "buy into"; plan and deploy an initial and ongoing communications plan that will set the right expectations with all groups and continue to reinforce the value and benefits of the new KM approach; tear down barriers to participating in knowledge capture and submission, making it easy for all service and support groups to participate; make it an integral part of everyone's job, from frontline support, to tier 2 support teams, to management; build it into your performance management and compensation program, so that people realize knowledge sharing is expected; and make it a part of being recognized and rewarded.

As service and support staff begin to see and experience how fundamental this is to their daily job, and when they begin to experience that it is actually working and making their jobs more productive and enjoyable, the barriers between the silos will fade, and they will begin to rally around the new approach. A new knowledge culture will gradually begin to take shape!

4 Focus on the Strategy and Process First, Not the KM Tool

All too often, management mistakes KM as a tool or system, instead of an organization-wide process. This is a common phenomenon, since IT managers and practitioners typically have an implementation/support technology background. Compounding this problem, vendors want nothing more than to sell lots of KM tools, systems, and databases. But a KM tool will not produce a KM process. As discussed, start with a solid strategy. Then define and document the process, along with the appropriate tools and technology.

Once you've defined how KM will play an integral role in your core processes, pick the best systems and tools that fit your requirements. You might choose to use a Wiki to store shared information, or a database, or a collection of repositories. But without well-designed processes that provide a framework for the way people ought to do their work using knowledge, your tools and databases will soon go unused—and rapidly fall out of date. KM needs a process owner and manager, defined inputs and outputs, triggers to initiate the capturing and sharing of knowledge, defined metrics and measurements, supporting policies and procedures, and enabling people and technology.

Integrate your KM systems and tools into your processes so they are simple, fast, and effective. Google sets the bar when it comes to search, and your KM process should follow industry-leading examples. The search engine should allow for natural-language search, as well as search by phrase/keywords. The search engine—along with supporting databases—should be fully indexed to enable quick results sorted in relevance order. Attention should be paid to supporting structured as well as unstructured data in databases and linked repositories.

Don't forget to establish a set of metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure, monitor, and report on the adoption and success of your KM initiative. People pay attention to things that are measured and reported. Set realistic targets for your core KM metrics, and make the reporting on KM part of your monthly management IT scorecard. This will raise the visibility of KM in everyone's eyes, and also enable you to assess the growth, impact, and value of KM. Sample metrics might include:

- Number of articles added—per day, week, month
- Knowledge base contributions by support team member
- Number and percentage of solutions reused
- Number and percentage of incidents resolved where a knowledge article was instrumental
- User-satisfaction level with the KM capability

5 Make It Easy to Capture Knowledge as a Byproduct of Work

Supporting systems and tools should support KM embedded in the workflow, so that a submission is a byproduct of the work effort. For example, during incident management, a search should be automatically invoked after classifying the incident. Extra steps or navigation should not be required. A match report should return the most likely solutions/workarounds at the top of the list. If no solution is applicable, and the analyst ends up devising and documenting a new solution, submitting to the KM process should be just a few keystrokes.

Include an embedded QA sub-process to expedite solution review and processing. Once the submission has been made, direct these electronic records to an appropriate SME for that area of knowledge. SMEs might be technical or application management specialists in back-line support groups. They should have as a daily responsibility the review, editing, and approval of submitted KM articles, so these can be incorporated into the KM system in a timely fashion. This also ensures that knowledge added is accurate, complete, and published only to the proper audiences (for example, internal use only or user-ready).

6 Build It Into the Way People Work

Revise your service operations standard operating procedures (SOPs), such as incident management, request fulfillment, and problem management, to embed searching and contributing to the KM system. In this way, searching and contributing to your KM system does not become added steps, but is an integral part of the in-line mainstream workflow process. No extra steps required; roadblocks removed.

Revise your job descriptions and appraisal process so that contributing to the KM system is required by operations personnel, such as service desk staff and other IT support groups. For example, support staff might be required to contribute three KM articles per quarter. Periodic appraisals would reinforce the importance of participation.

Make the contribution to KM, and its use, an integral part of rewards and recognition. For example, no awards for outstanding performance should be given where the team member failed to meet his or her contribution requirement for the quarter.

Workflow Transformation

Realizing that implementing KM is a strategic initiative, and must be planned, designed, and implemented using a lifecycle approach, results in an organization-wide process that literally transforms your culture and the way people work. Instead of having to think about how to search the knowledge base for a solution or an answer, service and support staff will just do that as a matter of carrying out their normal routine. Instead of having to consider how to submit an article to KM for sharing with others, the process will simply capture their knowledge as a by-product of the normal workflow. Benefits to the organization, support staff, customers, and users will be transformational, and you will never look back!

PAUL DOOLEY *is the president and principal consultant of Optimal Connections LLC. With more than thirty years of experience in planning and managing technology services, Paul has held numerous positions in both support and management for companies such as Motorola, FileNet, and QAD. He is also experienced in service desk infrastructure development, support center consolidation, deployment of web portals and knowledge management systems, as well as service marketing strategy and activities. Paul is an* ***HDI Business Associate****; he also delivers training for ITpreneurs, Global Knowledge, Phoenix TS, and other training organizations.*

SPECTRUM HEALTH

Winner, 2016 HDI Knowledge-Centered Support Award

SPECTRUM HEALTH

Spectrum Health is a not-for-profit health system based in West Michigan, offering a full continuum of care through the Spectrum Health Hospital Group, the Spectrum Health Medical Group, and Priority Health, a health plan provider. The system is comprised of twelve hospitals, 180 ambulatory and service sites, 1,300 physicians and advanced practice providers, and more than 600,000 health plan members. Spectrum Health serves the health of our community with 23,000 employees. In support of a large user base that provides direct patient care, the twenty-seven members of the IS Help Desk team processed 149,756 calls, 35,517 emails, and 17,916 self-service tickets in 2015.

What was the situation before the launch of the knowledge management initiative?

As part of our continuous improvement initiative, we took a long, hard look at our help desk. Our help desk team was known for making a lot of mistakes, and the help desk's leadership team was struggling to understand why the team's error rate was so high. In observing the help desk team in action, we found that, in many cases, the errors could be traced to out-of-date, difficult to parse knowledge documentation. It was clear that our approach to knowledge management wasn't working.

- Our knowledge documents (known as triage documents) were incredibly long—some up to twenty pages long! This meant that our team had to not only search for the document but also scan that (potentially long) document quickly it to find an answer. Because the triage documents were hard to use and unreliable, staff would rely on their memories instead.
- The teams that owned documents were ignoring update reminders, which resulted in out-of-date documentation. When we did receive updates, it would take days, sometimes weeks to make adjustments.
- Our second-level help desk team was being used incorrectly—it had become a dumping ground for tickets from the help desk and third-level technical teams.
- We had a self-service portal, but no one used it because it was too difficult to navigate. Also, it offered little in the way of customer-facing documentation (just eight customer-facing triage documents against 640 internal triage documents)

During the discovery process, it became clear that creating an environment that was rich in knowledge documentation was the key. We wanted to not only increase the number of issues that could be resolved by the help desk but also increase the number of issues our customers could resolve themselves.

What was the knowledge management strategy?

Around the same time as our early investigations, our help desk manager was introduced to Knowledge-Centered Support (KCS). After some consideration, we decided to implement KCS as our knowledge management methodology. Per KCS, the most effective way to go about implementing it is to start with a small group; we decided to start with the help desk and then, once the processes and tools were well established, roll it out to other teams. Our strategy had six key steps:

1. **Start with the basics:** First, certify the Knowledge Management and Quality Assurance team (formerly the second-level help desk) in KCS, and then draft processes and procedures that align with KCS.
2. **Find a tool that supports the process:** Search for a KCS-certified knowledge tool that will enable us to stick as close to the KCS methodology as possible.
3. **Implement KCS and the new tool within the help desk:** Start small, with the help desk, and work out all the kinks; then bring other teams into the fold.
4. **Audit and validate existing documentation as part of the migration:** If we simply moved the documentation without reviewing it, all we'd have had was bad documentation in a better tool.
5. **Introduce the IS department to the new knowledge base and KCS**
6. **Introduce our customers to our knowledge base and self-service**

Which processes and tools had to be implemented, modified, or leveraged to support the knowledge management strategy?

PROCESSES

Our knowledge management process had to be completely overhauled. Before implementing KCS, only a select few on the help desk had the power to upload, edit, or retire triage documents, and we relied on other teams to submit updated documentation in response to automated prompts (generated every six to twelve months). However, no one was accountable for making sure the documentation was actually updated. When we implemented KCS, we started by defining the new documentation templates and introducing the concept of multiple roles in knowledge management. We also updated our onboarding and training process to include knowledge management, and built out a governance process through which the Knowledge Management and Quality Assurance team monitors the effectiveness of the training program and the quality of the documentation. This team also sits on the knowledge council, which meets quarterly.

TOOLS

- **CA Service Desk and RightAnswers:** Our original knowledge base was contained within our CA Service Desk tool. We had to remove the documents from that system and create a single document that pointed anyone looking there to the new knowledge base. We redesigned the self-service portal of our ticketing system, changing the way we routed tickets and embedding our new knowledge base, RightAnswers, to improve the self-service offering.
- **Lectora:** Lectora is the learning management system we use to create the training modules in our electronic training portal, SHLI.
- **Spectrum Health Learning Institute (SHLI):** Prior to this project, in-house help desk training was exclusively instructor-led. As part of the larger KCS implementation, we created a self-paced online training program that could be delivered and tracked in our training portal.
- **Intranet:** We leveraged our intranet to answer questions and post information related to the new knowledge management processes.

What organizational changes (cultural, structural, or political) had to be implemented or modified to support the knowledge management strategy?

The biggest organizational change we made was evolving the second-level help desk team into the Knowledge Management and Quality Assurance team. They went from owning no processes or tools to owning the entire knowledge management process and knowledge base. Every team member is now responsible for UFFA, where previously they weren't even able to contribute to the knowledge base directly. Another shift came when we asked each IS team to volunteer a team member to be their team's knowledge management point person, tasked with creating knowledge and moving through the KCS Competency model.

Knowledge is now viewed as a necessary resource instead of an afterthought. Everyone owns the knowledge, and if they have an issue with a triage document, it is up to them to fix it.

How did your organization define success for this initiative?

- **Helping our customers help themselves:** In healthcare, every moment matters. Our strongest driver for delivering KCS to our organization was to make information easy to find and digest. We wanted our customers to be able to help themselves, and we wanted to make it simple, ensuring they weren't wasting time on hold or searching endlessly for a solution they'd never find.
- **Presenting our help desk as a provider of valued information:** Help desks are often seen as a necessary evil. Our help desk wanted to give the organization more: they wanted to add value to the organization beyond just answering calls; they wanted to be the one-stop-shop where all issues could be resolved and all questions answered. This was critical to the morale and engagement of our team members.
- **Reducing tickets for our third-level teams:** Healthcare moves fast, and we have to be able to keep up with the demands of a rapidly changing industry. It was quite hard to do that when our engineers and high-value talent were spending their time resolving incident tickets. Ticket reduction was an important success factor: if our customers and the help desk could resolve more issues, the third-level teams could concentrate their efforts on improving the organization.
- **Positioning IS for success in other key initiatives:** The implementation of KCS in our organization positions our department well for other key initiatives, such as centralized knowledge management and problem management. Our knowledge base is already being used as a communication tool, and we hope to use it for future project go-lives.
- **Foster a culture of knowledge sharing:** Tribal knowledge benefits no one. Rather, it creates a single point of failure within an organization. By fostering a knowledge-sharing culture, we've dedicated our organization to getting the right answers to the right people when they need it, not a moment later.
- **Reducing frustration by having up-to-date information:** An outdated knowledge base frustrates the help desk and customers alike. has outdated information it not only causes frustration for our Help Desk staff, but also for our customers. Delays in issue resolution are tied directly to inaccurate or missing information. Tickets would get punted from team to team until it landed with the correct individual for resolution. In many cases these issues are time sensitive, so it is unacceptable for us to rely on information that is incorrect.

What were some of the lessons learned?

We learned that when designing a new tool for your customers, you must involve your customers. When it came to creating our new self-service page, we went through many Gemba (that is, going to where the work is done) sessions where we presented multiple options and asked users try to navigate the page. Their feedback enabled us to create a page that we knew our customers would like.

We also learned about the value of word of mouth. Looking at other KCS implementations, we knew that users would reject a half-baked tool or process. We took the opposite approach and it worked wonderfully. By implementing KCS in the help desk first, we worked out all the bugs before rolling it out to the organization. Because we took this approach, we didn't have to push KCS on the organization. Through word of mouth, they heard about the great things we were achieving with knowledge management and they wanted to get involved. These teams saw the value and were ultimately more committed and dedicated. Forcing a new initiative on people isn't nearly as effective of engaging them in the rollout.

Finally, we learned the value of patience. We were very aggressive with our timelines initially, but this type of project takes time. We thought our KCS implementation would move much faster, but we missed every single one of our deadlines. When changing culture like this, you must give your organization enough time to change course.

The deadline for the 2017 HDI Knowledge-Centered Support Award is June 30. To nominate your team, visit **bit.ly/2lgxR6v**.

Knowledge Management Is Not Optional

by Pete McGarahan
Senior Director, IT | First American Financial

When I first arrived at First American (FA), we framed our initial knowledge management(KM) discussions in terms of who would use knowledge, when we would use knowledge, and for what purpose. But, the bigger question was how we would use knowledge to better support our customers and how we would know we achieved that goal (success measures).

This necessary (if tiring) discussion led me to realize that there was some resistance and hesitance to implementing KM. I challenged my leadership team to adopt a perspective where knowledge was not an option but a core part of our team's job responsibilities, to reconsider their viewpoint that KM was a choice versus a mandatory requirement for continuous improvement and sustainable success.

I believed that KM, as a daily operational practice, could fit seamlessly into how the service desk performed incident and request management, and that our RightAnswers solution, integrated into our hosted ServiceNow solution, along with best practice processes and training could be a noticeable customer service differentiator. If we did knowledge *right*, it would be a game-changer in terms of quality, speed, and customer satisfaction and prepare us for future opportunities in supporting our business.

At a high level, we would need to accomplish three very important goals to have a sustainable and successful KM program:

1. Integrate KM into the ITIL incident management process workflow
2. Implement content authoring and quality management practices and discipline
3. Introduce and operationalize the Knowledge-Centered Services (KCS) practice of UFFA—use it, flag it, fix it, add it—to ensure our knowledge articles (KAs) were a "single source of truth"

In Pursuit of Knowledge

KM in operational practice is very different than the KM in theory. We needed guidance to better understanding what was important, foundational, and sequential in our soon-to-be KM journey. With guidance from the **Consortium for Service Innovation** and HDI, we decided to adopt the KCS methodology. KCS is a simple idea that promotes integrating the creation and maintenance of knowledge into the process of interacting with the customer. To be successful in our pursuit of continually improving operational efficiency and always learning, we knew we needed to change the way we thought about our people, processes, and measurements, and we had to have an idea of what sustained success looked like (measures). To get the leadership team serious about creating a culture of knowledge, we sent our senior leadership team to **KCS training** and then, soon after, we sent all our managers, team leads, and star performers. The team leads and star performers eventually became our KCS Coaches, tasked with spreading the culture of knowledge to the team that applied it on a daily basis.

Foundational Knowledge

At First American, we've been practicing KCS for over four years, and we've seen increased adoption, engagement, and results. Making KM operational and a core part of our incident and request process, holding our team accountable for the regular UFFA practice of KM, and integrating KM into our ITSM tool were early critical success factors that positively influenced our journey. UFFA became an integral part of our IT vocabulary, and we reminded our team daily to make it operational:

- Search *all the time and every time* for knowledge; if you find it and it works, then use it
- If you find it and it's incorrect or outdated, flag it to be sent to the content author (CA) for revision and return to the knowledge base (KB)
- If you search and don't find a KA, flag it so that it will be added to the list of relevant KAs that require authoring and review before being added to the KB

Another early decision that proved to be instrumental was excluding policies, processes, and procedures (e.g., Run Books, SOPs, etc.) from our KB. Our intent was not to clutter the KB with documents not specifically created for the purpose of resolving an issue, fulfilling a request, answering a question, or providing a customer with a workaround. Our intent was not to create a KB focused on the quantity of documents, but rather on quality, purposeful, and relevant KAs used for assisting customers with issues, questions, or requests.

We stored procedural documents in a SharePoint repository. If there was information in these procedural documents that enabled the service and support teams (L1, L2, and L3) or the customer (L0) to resolve the issue, fulfill the request, answer a question, or provide a temporary workaround, we would create a KA with a hyperlink to the relevant section within the procedural document stored in the SharePoint repository. It was critical for the L2 and L3 assignment groups that were authoring knowledge to know our intent was to always search the KB and find and use their KA to resolve an issue, fulfill a service request, or correctly answer a question on first contact. We also regularly reported to them on usage of their team-authored KAs in terms of first contact resolution and first-level resolution.

A Knowledge-Enabled Service Strategy

Our shift-left service strategy to move resolution closer to the customer via a multitiered support structure depended on being successful with our KM strategy. The maturity and derived business value of KM lies in our ability to create and utilize the "single source of truth." This single source of truth is solely dependent on our discipline for creating quality, relevant KAs addressing the issues, questions, and requests that prompt customers to contact the FA service desk. To challenge ourselves, we routinely ask staff for their confidence level in searching the KB and finding a KA that accurately resolved the issue, request, or question. (Of course, we're looking for a positive response—we want to hear that they feel confident that searching the KB is saving time and providing them with the *exact* information they need to satisfy customers.)

SPOC Accountability

Our single point of contact (SPOC) service desk is accountable for all the knowledge used to solve technical issues and problems, answer how-to questions, and fulfill standard service requests. The service desk leadership works with the L2 and L3 IT technical staff (gurus, SMEs) and the business groups (champions, business analysts) to document the knowledge (solutions, processes) required by all levels of the tiered support model. The service desk analysts rely on the L2 and L3 SMEs to document and share their expertise on specific issues and resolutions. There are control processes for promoting new knowledge to production and for determining who will have access to that knowledge, but adding knowledge is encouraged at all times and is not interrupted by the quality control process. The service desk and desktop services teams, along with the technical and business SMEs, work together to keep the "single source of truth" populated with knowledge that is both relevant and accurate. This means that when employees have a need for it, they find it, use it, and get the results they were expecting. This result continues to build team member confidence in the KB, encouraging them to search all the time.

Building the KM Team

When implementing the KM program, we engaged the most positive and influential team members first. We selected them to be knowledge coaches and evangelists, promoting all the wonderful aspects of our KM program. We were careful not to select team members with the most knowledge, seniority, or expertise. In the end, this was one of the most impactful decisions we made. These KM coaches took accountability and ownership within their teams to influence (bottom-up), putting knowledge at the high end of the value chain.

Currently, more than 90% of our cases are closed using KAs. Additionally, many of the original knowledge coaches have been promoted or have accepted other positions due to their leadership skills and the exposure those skills received. Our coaches were a critical factor in the successful adoption of our KM program. It's hard to imagine where the program would have ended-up if we hadn't empowered and trained these individuals at the beginning of our journey.

In 2015, we created 1,529 KAs and we used 25,000 KAs throughout the year, utilizing KCS 95.7% of the time with 93.7% accuracy.

Delivering Knowledge "at the Speed of Conversation"

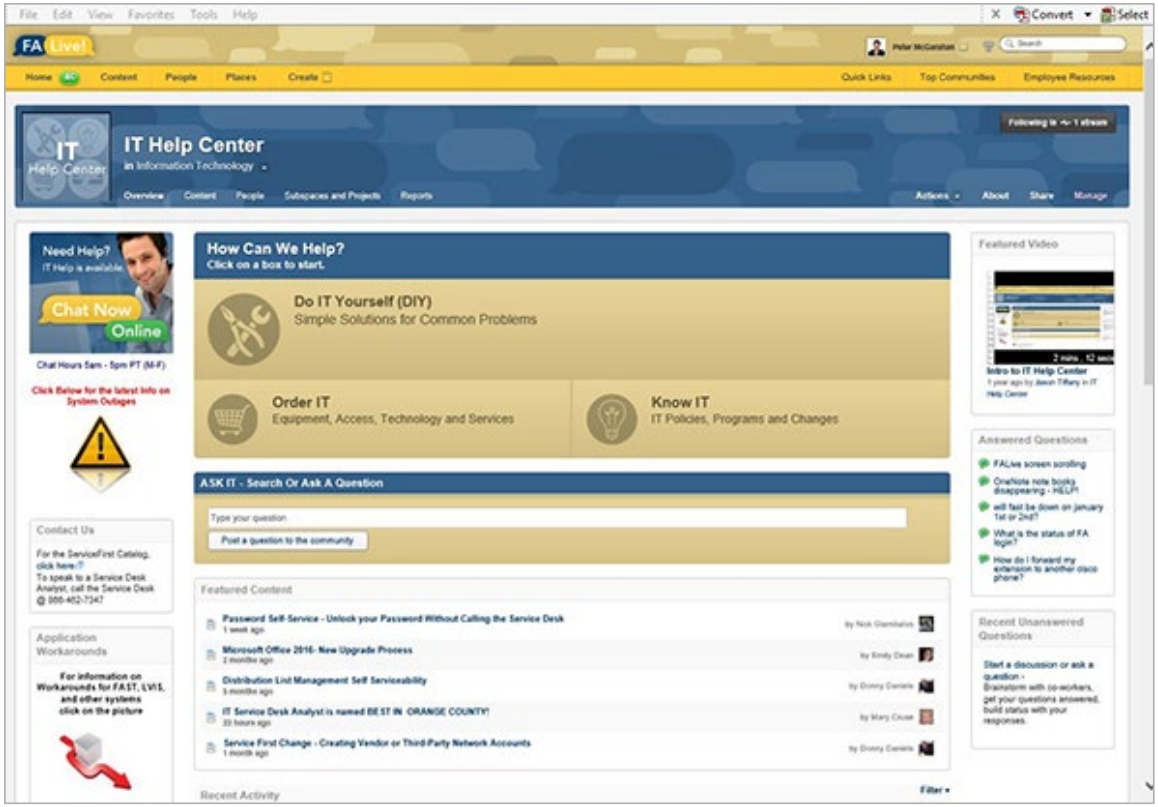
To deliver knowledge "at the speed of conversation," facilitating FCR, our knowledge needed to be easily searched, retrieved, relevant, useful, and accurate. The incident and request management process, integrated into our ServiceNow tool, makes it easier to flag knowledge for fixing. It also makes it easier to add new information when the knowledge is absent and encourages assignment to other technical and business analyst groups.

Knowledge articles that are successful on the front line are prime candidates for inclusion in our customer-facing FALive IT Help Center. These "Knowledge Nuggets" have multiple formats (e.g., documents, video, audio, scripts) and typically involve a standard IT service offering (e.g., hardware, software, systems, applications, mobile devices). The use of these KAs can be tracked to the actual customer contact and the ServiceNow ticket created by the service desk handling the phone calls, emails, chats, and walk-ups. Authored predominately by IT, customers can confident that the KAs are 100% accurate, due to the rigorousness of the knowledge management approval process.

We have worked hard to increase our FCR, reduce the reopening of issues not successfully resolved at first contact, reduce the backlog of assigned issues (SLA violations), and reduce the wait and resolution times (MTTR), while reducing the total cost of support and increasing customer satisfaction (CSI). This is all part of the positive ripple effect from the diligent and consistent efforts of using, flagging, fixing, and adding knowledge.

Tips for Achieving **Knowledge Maturity**

- Identify, train, and certify knowledge champions and coaches in KCS; once trained, task them with finding, documenting, and sharing all relevant information in the KA template. Recognize and reward their efforts to populate the KB. (At FA, knowledge was always a topic of discussion at all team and one-on-one meetings.)
- Train all service desk and desktop team members in KCS and in the operational and expected use of knowledge. The entire team should also be trained on the knowledge policy, procedures, style guide and templates, and KCS writing methodology.
- Conduct regular calibration meetings to ensure all coaches are scoring the service desk consistently when it comes to the daily use of knowledge.
- Push the team to proactively and continually seek out opportunities, events, and situations where knowledge can be utilized and adopted to support successful outcomes. Additionally, encourage them to promote the value of the KM program to your customers, peer groups, and stakeholders to gain company awareness, support, and participation.
- Incorporate a gamification-style hierarchy of achievement and contribution levels as a reward and recognition program, to recognize individual contributors for posting high-quality, relevant content.



The Self-Service Imperative

Our self-service portal—the FALive IT Help Center—is divided into three separate sections: Do It Yourself (DIY), Order IT, and Know IT. There are additional areas dedicated to specific functions and interactions: IT, Click to Chat, and a System Outages Alert Page.

We worked with many customer groups, including our marketing department, to ensure the portal was easy to access, navigate, and use. Improving the ease and effectiveness of searching has benefited all self-service users, especially on busy days (e.g., Mondays) or when there's a P1/P2 system outage that generates a call volume spike that might otherwise increase wait times and abandons. In addition to recorded emergency outage greetings (P1/P2) that play for customers who are currently on hold, the System Outages Alerts Page keeps all customers informed as to the status of outages and resolutions. Customers can also easily enter a child ticket themselves under the already created master ticket so we can measure the impact of the P1 or P2 on our customer base. This also allows us to send them status updates and an issue resolution email when the issue is resolved and closed. This approach sets and manages customer expectations appropriately, which builds both trust and confidence.

We're focused on continually improving the quality of our self-service and knowledge management programs, as measured by adoption, the customer experience, and feedback from our staff and customers. As a team and organization, our success is rooted in our focus on customer benefits, not what's in it for us.

PETE MCGARAHAN *is the senior director of IT infrastructure services for First American, as well as an industry expert and thought leader in global ITSM. With thirty years of business, IT, and service leadership experience, Pete enjoys sharing lessons learned and career experiences through published articles and by presenting at industry conferences. He has received various industry awards and honors, including the HDI Team Excellence Award for his work with the Taco Bell support organization, the "Top 25 Professionals in the Service and Support Industry" from IT Support News, and "The Legend of the Year" (twice) at the STI Knowledge Symposium and Help Desk Professionals conference. Pete is well known in the support industry for his endless positive energy, leadership, mentoring, and advice. Follow him on Twitter* ***@PeterJMcGarahan****.*

THE ROAD TO AWARD-WINNING KCS:
A CASE STUDY FROM

PAYCHEX

Winner, 2015 HDI Knowledge-Centered Support Award

Paychex is a leading provider of payroll, HR, retirement and insurance services to America's businesses, serving over 590,000 clients, and more than 11 million client employees, with seventy-two products. The Enterprise Support organization is part of the Product Development and Information Technology division, serving more than 12,500 Paychex employees. There are currently 150 employees in Enterprise Support, performing the functions of service desk (Level 1), support research (Level 2), problem management, service catalog/service request, knowledge management, configuration management, service level management, and service transition. Annually, we average 204,000 incidents, 102,000 requests, and fifty-three events, including command centers and business continuity plan test events.

What was the situation before the launch of the knowledge management initiative?

Our initial knowledge journey began eight years ago. Within our service desk, knowledge was scattered across the organization and several platforms, including a common errors database, the ITSM system, shared drives, and tribal knowledge. Inconsistency of answers provided by the service desk was a common problem. The volume of contacts to the Enterprise Support service desk was growing year-over-year, and new Paychex products and services were about to be made available to the general client population. We needed to find ways to head off the expected volume increase while expanding the breadth of knowledge across all of our support agents.

What was the knowledge management strategy?

In 2007, we made two critical decisions in quick succession: we implemented RightAnswers and made the conscious decision to follow the Knowledge-Centered Support (KCS) methodology. We were committed to making KCS part of our DNA. To that end, we held a formal kick-off introducing KCS and establishing knowledge as our product and UFFA as our focus. We trained the entire support organization and added new process roles, including KM process owners, knowledge managers, and KCS coaches.

Our initial implementation focused on our service desk, followed by the implementation of a problem management process and a self-service portal called Ask IT. As other divisions learned more about our successes, they turned to us for guidance on expanding our KM practice and building Ask IT out into an enterprise solution.

Which processes and tools had to be implemented, modified, or leveraged to support the knowledge management strategy?

As each new division began using the knowledge base, we added their key stakeholders to our KCS Council. Each new team has their own RightAnswers portal, which enables them to limit the scope of knowledge to their clients' needs. Having multiple portals necessitated a standardized taxonomy; with over 30,000 articles, this has been no small task, and it is still a work in progress. We also had to address the risk of duplicate articles. A key factor to avoiding duplicates was to make sure everyone could see all of the knowledge that could pertain to them. Once that was complete, we placed a heavy focus on flagging and fixing articles. Key members of the Enterprise Support teams were assigned to work with the other teams to make sure they knew what already existed, how to maintain the quality of the current articles, and how to ensure duplicates were not created. This effort continues to date and is expected to be ongoing.

What were some of the lessons learned?

DO

- **Gain buy-in from management.** On our initial rollout, we had the buy-in of the support organization management team. As we continued to expand and reap the benefits of KCS, we were able to show concrete benefits of KCS to the executive management team. With their buy-in, we've been able to grow this to a company level rather than just one organization.
- **Create a culture of knowledge.** The implementation of a tool was just a piece of the equation. KCS became the way we solved issues.
- **Implement a tool that is easy to use.** From the beginning, the tool we chose was fully integrated with our ITSM system. We have since integrated with other tools, including our CRM. The integration makes KCS seamless. Rather than an additional task, it can be performed while completely other day-to-day tasks.
- **Make UFFA your mantra.** UFFA has been a catchy way for us to remind our analysts how to participate in knowledge. They should be able to use, fix, flag, or add knowledge on a minimum of 80 percent incidents. This allows for things like transferring calls or the user withdrawing their incident without involvement from the analyst.
- **Report frequently enough to make it meaningful.** Reporting on a monthly basis keeps KCS fresh in the minds of our managers, analysts, and now our end user community.
- **Reward and celebrate success.** Celebrating milestones like reaching a certain number of articles added or used keep people engaged. Make it fun! Add a gamification element. In the first year of our rollout, we held multiple contests to build excitement and promote the behavior we were trying to encourage. We still hold contests to provide excitement around engaging in KCS.

DON'T

- **Reward the wrong behavior.** If you reward adding articles, people will add articles, but they may not be high-quality. Our rewards and contests now focus on the quality of the article based on feedback from users and reuse. Try to run on auto-pilot. KCS will run itself without care and feeding. Someone needs to be responsible for keeping the culture alive and well.
- **Make it bureaucratic.** If it's difficult for people to participate, they won't. One group attempted to rollout with only one person being able to publish. All others were responsible for submitting article suggestions to the one person for review and publication. The analysts quickly lost interest and knowledge failed in this organization. About a year later, they changed their tactics and gave everyone access to create, edit, and publish articles. Since then, they've been highly successful with KCS.
- **Think too small.** We thought of KCS as an IT support tool. After a couple of years, we realized that more could be gained if the same tool was used for the company as a whole.

The winner of the 2017 HDI Knowledge-Centered Support Award will be honored at the FUSION 17 Conference & Expo. Learn more at **SMFUSION.com**!

Knowledge Is Power: KCS and Enterprise Knowledge Management

by Brandon Caudle
Service Desk Manager | First American Financial

Knowledge management is a hot topic in our industry, with more and more organizations making it a priority each year. And as with any enterprise initiative, such as ITIL, outsourcing, or any number of equally dynamic implementations, its success depends on the participation and buy-in of the C-level down to the front line. Research, planning, preparation, flexibility, and executive support: these are all key components of successful knowledge management initiatives.

But, what exactly is knowledge management? What kind of ROI can it provide? And how do we get started?

At the most fundamental level, knowledge management is capturing, developing, sharing, and effectively using organizational knowledge. Knowledge has been shared since humans were living in caves (literal tribal knowledge), but for the purposes of this discussion we're concerned with knowledge in the context of the support organization and the enterprise (non-IT business units, like HR, facilities, finance, etc.), which is a more recent trend.

Knowledge and computing have gone hand in hand since the first mainframes were rolled out. Those early decades were primitive though, IT's caveman period: hard copies, binders, notes taped on monitors. There were few, if any, formal processes for capturing and evolving knowledge.

Fast-forward several decades and you'll see a distinct evolution. Businesses and institutions began creating proprietary knowledge bases, stored on internal networks, with very limited focus and target audiences. In time, software companies began developing software that would allow those same businesses and institutions to capture, develop (or evolve), share, and use organizational knowledge in a much more structured way. These knowledge solutions were hyped as cure-alls for a plethora of issues, from increasing first call resolution and self-service to lowering average handle time. However, a tool is never the only solution, and many, if not most, knowledge tools implemented in this early period were defunct within a year or two, three-letter footnotes in the company's history.

Then, in the early 1990s, the Consortium for Service Innovation, a nonprofit alliance of support organizations, initiated the development of a methodology and formal set of processes for knowledge management, which became known as Knowledge-Centered Support (KCS). With the input and support of industry heavyweights like Oracle, Compaq, 3Com, Novell, Verisign, and BlackBerry, KCS became the industry standard for knowledge management.

The four pillars of KCS are:

- Create content as a by-product of solving problems
- Evolve content based on demand and usage
- Develop a knowledge base to serve as a repository for an organization's collective experience
- Reward learning, collaborating, sharing, and improving

While these may seem simplistic, for some organizations they're revolutionary. And, looking at each item, we can see why they should be intuitive for any organization.

1 Create content as a by-product of solving problems

As a support manager, I've seen countless technicians, and many of my peers, fall victim to the fallacy that documentation is something you do after everything is resolved, usually on Friday afternoons when we had free time, unless we forgot or ran out of time...

The problem is, knowledge is needed right away—not next week or whenever you can get around to it. Embracing the first KCS component addresses the immediate need for documented solutions. It encourages analysts and technicians to document and publish their solutions as they solve issues, making it available when it is needed most, and to the widest possible audience.

But, how do you know a solution is valid? In other words, how can you trust that your analysts and technicians are drafting documentation that's worthy of being published/shared? KCS recommends organizations create several KCS-specific roles, with individuals receiving training on formats, templates, appropriate verbiage, etc., and acquiring more authority and access to the knowledge system as they move from role to role. These roles include:

- **KCS Candidate:** A basic user of the knowledge base, familiar with capture and search techniques and the basic concepts of KCS.
- **KCS Contributor:** Creates, modifies, and reviews KCS articles for a defined audience (usually internal users only).
- **KCS Publisher:** Empowered to publish material to an external audience.
- **KCS Coach:** A change agent and KCS practice expert who supports the development of KCS competencies and the progression of staff through the KCS roles.

Even with the support of all four roles, documentation can be messy. After all, knowledge is messy! The reality of technical service and support is that even thoroughly tested software and systems will have issues (that's why we exist), and the people in the best position to capture and document the issues and the solutions are the analysts and technicians working on the front lines. The reward for all the effort that goes into creating pristine knowledge articles is higher first level resolution, higher self-service usage rates, and lower handle times.

Of course, once the process has been defined and implemented, and staff have been trained, your tools must be configured and customized to facilitate and encourage authoring knowledge "in the flow" of the incident. More and more organizations are investing in "one-click" knowledge, dedicating time and resources to ensure that as few steps as possible are required to document, search, and use knowledge, which pays off in time savings, employee satisfaction, and customer satisfaction.

2 Evolve content based on demand and usage

With KCS, there's no need to vet each and every solution and article. If an issue occurs one time and one time only, there's no need to spend any additional time making the article "perfect."

As the technical teams (and, via self-service, the customers) interact with the knowledge base, repeat issues will draw attention to any articles that need to be addressed. If, in the course of following the steps in the solution, it becomes clear that an article needs to be edited or updated, the right people will do so.

The upside of this second KCS component is that, while perfectionism can be hard to shake (some people will have a hard time resisting fixing grammar and style errors), as the organization moves forward with spot editing, the savings in time and effort will win over the holdouts.

3 Develop a knowledge base to serve as a repository for an organization's collective experience

Two heads really are better than one—imagine how much better fifty heads could be! KCS embraces the idea that pooling the collective knowledge and experience of a group of people can yield greater results than one person, sitting alone in a cubicle, cranking our knowledge articles in a vacuum.

You may have to address the concerns of individuals who worry that sharing their knowledge may mean giving up their job security. One way to handling these concerns is by acknowledging the contributions of seasoned employees, rewarding them for embracing knowledge management and recognizing them as thought leaders and valuable assets to the company.

4 Reward learning, collaborating, sharing, and improving

Knowledge management initiatives require much more than purchasing a tool, or one day of training, or a decree from the top levels of the organization. The organization's culture must change. Individuals must be valued for the knowledge they contribute that enables the organization to be more effective and efficient.

Companies are increasingly turning to **gamification** as a means of recognizing and rewarding employees. When properly planned and executed, gamification draws participants in by rewarding desired behavior. For example, when an individual creates his or her first knowledge article, a badge or button is immediately displayed on their profile within the knowledge base or CRM system (ideally, the two systems should be linked). With each new action or contribution, individuals can earn new badges and accumulate points. Some examples of progressive awards include: first article linked to an incident, ten articles linked to incidents, all articles in one week linked to incidents, first article edited, three articles edited, first article authored, etc.

By using game design and mechanics to engage and incentivize individuals to create, edit, and use knowledge, organizations are finding that recognition stimulates adoption, and, in fact, creates a snowball effect within the organization.

Once the principles of knowledge management are entrenched in one area of the organization (such as IT), organizations have realized that there are substantial benefits to be gained from expanding knowledge management to non-IT business units. By applying the same core concepts, companies are seeing the same payoff in HR, training, finance, etc. These departments are moving away from bloated intranets toward streamlined self-service portals, often by using the same tools and processes that were successfully implemented by IT.

In the near future, companies will have to start dealing with **Grey2K**, or the retirement of seasoned employees with decades of experience. When they leave, they'll take the information stored in their heads with them. A strategic, enterprise-wide knowledge management initiative will enable companies to capture that information before it walks out the door.

BRANDON CAUDLE *is a seasoned veteran of the technical support industry, with more than two decades of experience as practitioner, vendor, and consultant. He's the author of two books on leadership and customer service, and he speaks at industry conferences around the world. From ITSM and KCS initiatives to day-to-day operations, he leads virtual teams scattered across time zones and continents, utilizing technology and innovation to bridge distance and culture. In his current role as IT service desk manager for First American Financial, his team works seamlessly across three countries to provide a single point of contact for 17,000 employees worldwide. Follow him on Twitter* ***@BrandonCaudle****.*

THE ROAD TO AWARD-WINNING KCS:
A CASE STUDY FROM

ALLSTATE

Winner, 2014 HDI Knowledge-Centered Support Award

The Allstate Corporation is the largest publicly held personal lines property and casualty insurer in America. In 2014, Allstate was included on the Fortune 500 list of largest companies in America (#92). Allstate's Technology organization has over 3,500 IT professionals utilizing over 5,000 software applications on over 50,000 PCs enterprise- wide. Its infrastructure utilizes multiple operating systems, technology platforms, and database systems.

Supporting the Allstate Corporation is the Allstate Technology Support Center (ATSC), a division within Allstate Technology and Operations comprising 648 employees and vendor partners across the globe—in the USA, Northern Ireland, and India. In 2013, the ATSC received 1.4 million contacts through phone calls, chats, and electronically submitted requests, and it exceeded the industry standards for global first call resolution and customer satisfaction.

What was the situation before the launch of the knowledge management initiative?

Prior to adopting KCS best practices in 2012, the ATSC's knowledge-sharing process was in serious need of review. The key challenges for the management and staff of the organization were as follows:

- Every issue required the documentation of a single solution, an approach that was both inefficient and labor-intensive.
- The level of proficiency required to make useful contributions to the knowledge base required several years of experience and training, which required a significant investment in training and supervision for the Level 2 Specialists creating the knowledge documents. This strategy placed an extraordinary amount of power in the hands of just a few individuals.
- An additional limitation of our existing knowledge base was the fact that the knowledge documents didn't contain input from either the customer or the call handler. Lacking input from the interdependent groups at different levels of the organization, as well as customers themselves, documents became outdated quickly, and there was no way for those using the articles to update them.
- The ATSC had difficulty capturing and structuring knowledge documents in the customer's own terms, and there was no way to trend usage, so the ATSC had no insight into which documents were the most useful to the organization.
- As the content standards became more elaborate and complex, even the Level 2 Specialists who had created the documentation began to abandon the knowledge base. Between 2002 and 2012, the ATSC created over 20,000 articles, most of which hadn't been updated in over a year.
- Due to the unworkability of the knowledge base system, Level 1 Generalists relied on undocumented workarounds, building a repository of "social knowledge" that was not vetted, recorded, or approved by upper levels of support.
- Complicating the situation further was the fact that the ATSC's support volume was being handled by hundreds of employees and vendors in multiple locations around the world, but there was no centralized repository for their collective knowledge.

The ATSC recognized the need for a more inclusive and collaborative approach to knowledge management, one that would leverage Level 1 Generalists, Level 2 Specialists, and relevant external groups to create a purposeful knowledge base.

What was the knowledge management strategy?

While it was clear the KCS methodology would help to address some of the key problem areas within the ATSC, it was also evident that KCS would have significant benefits for the organization. This knowledge compelled us to completely redefine our strategy, taking a more holistic approach to the initiative. In determining what needed to be improved, we defined the key activities for the program as follows:

- Define the relevant roles and structure for supporting the KCS methodology.
- Establish the baseline for measuring the success of the KCS strategy.
- Establish the relevant metrics and reports for ensuring KCS is impacting the business across all roles and functional areas.
- Ensure that all key resources, KCS roles, and managers are trained, understand, teach, and collectively employ the KCS philosophy.
- Pilot the usage of the roles and KCS measures on a subset of teams within the agency and enterprise contact types.
- Update the performance management system to ensure adequate accountability is maintained.
- Define a recognition strategy to ensure that good practice is rewarded.
- Rollout the KCS methodology across all sites and teams.
- Define the long-term strategy and targets for improvement using KCS.
- Build the relevant tools, structure, and processes that enable self-service with the adoption of the KCS methodology.

The overarching objective was to ultimately change the culture of the organization to be more proactive in solving customer problems, reducing the contact volumes, and improving the quality of the systems we supported.

Which processes and tools had to be implemented, modified, or leveraged to support the knowledge management strategy?

Due to the overall scope of the project, the ATSC adopted a phased approach, focusing first on rolling out KCS to impacted areas, second on maturing the processes to meet the business needs and third on using the knowledge as an enabler for other strategic projects.

- **Phase 1 — Adoption:** Phase 1 covered activities such as the provision of training and the creation of the metrics, reports, processes, and roles and responsibilities.
- **Phase 2 — Proficiency:** This phase was primarily concerned with establishing a culture of continuous delivery improvement using KCS.
- **Phase 3 — Leverage the Knowledge Base:** The key priorities for this phase are to utilize the benefits from the knowledge as an enabler for other strategic initiatives, including problem management, emerging trends and self-service.

The ATSC implemented ServiceNow as its enterprise ITSM tool in January 2013. In the year after implementation, we seamlessly integrated the tool's incident and knowledge management capabilities, which created several efficiency gains: robust reporting for trend analysis, populating known information into incidents from knowledge articles, and creating articles with information from the incident.

What organizational changes (cultural, structural, or political) had to be implemented or modified to support the knowledge management strategy?

In order to make sure that the adoption of KCS was successful, it was necessary to significantly change the organizational structure within the ATSC to ensure that the support infrastructure was built into the organization. This required the creation of a number of new roles and responsibilities at all levels to support the KCS framework.

In defining the changes to the organization, it was necessary to determine a structure that ensured all parts of the business were successfully supported. We wanted to build a structure that provided strong support across the various call types and geographic locations. The main challenge in determining the structure was getting the relevant people in place to support the adoption while adhering to the principles of role progression. In order to mitigate any risk associated with this, we identified candidates who were best suited to fill the roles at the time, while acknowledging that changes were likely to be necessary as we matured.

How did your organization define success for this initiative?

Success for the adoption of KCS was determined by the ability to provide a high-quality and efficient service while ensuring that the teams were fully engaged with the vision. The critical success factors for the adoption of KCS were as follows:

- **Commitment:** Commitment from all levels was critical to success. Due to the breadth of the organization, it was essential to rally the support of multiple groups both internal and external to the ATSC and across the geographically dispersed teams. Commitment from the ATSC senior management was never in question, as the senior leaders fully understood the urgent need for change. The challenge was to ensure the commitment of the frontline teams by enabling them to see the benefits that KCS could bring.
- **Measurement and Reporting:** One of the keys to the success of the initiative was the implementation of an effective metrics strategy, focusing on good analysis, better decision making, and improved visibility.
- **Building the Support Organization:** It was essential to put the relevant roles in place to support the deployment and maturity of KCS across the organization. In developing these roles, we considered such factors as attrition levels, channels of support, and sourcing strategies. The overall objective was to ensure the correct ratio of KCS roles across the business units and geographic locations.
- **Performance and Recognition Systems:** Another key success factor was the ability to create greater levels of accountability and appropriately recognize and empower the people. KCS helped to empower the teams by showing them the value they brought to the business and helping them identify opportunities for improvement.
- **Enabler for Self-Service:** As we adapt to an ever-changing environment, we are constantly looking at opportunities to provide more effective and efficient service. Therefore, a key success measurement of our KCS initiative was the degree to which it enabled areas like self-service, emerging trends, and problem management.

What were some of the lessons learned?

A number of stakeholders were involved throughout the initial onboarding of KCS. We reached out to the original program team to seek their feedback on the lessons learned throughout our KCS journey.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS OF KCS?

- **Teresa A.:** "The success of KCS relies on adhering to the KCS framework and not trying to twist the processes as you think they should be. The success also depends on engagement of all levels in the ATSC."
- **Mary C.:** "Communication and recognition—and lots of it!"
- **David W.:** "Changing the culture from tiered support and analysts roles to a community of service mentality."
- **Gwen S.:** "That analysts can see value in their roles through progression, which puts the ultimate responsibility for their career with the analyst. Analyze the available data we have to drive further improvements."

WHAT ADVICE AND/OR BEST PRACTICES WOULD YOU SHARE WITH OTHER COMPANIES THAT ARE LEVERAGING KCS?

- **David W.:** "All of it...don't recreate the wheel. Remember the 'book' is the collection of best practices... don't deviate or recreate—just follow it!"
- **Zel P.:** "Work toward a measurement system that measures the creation of value and not just activity."
- **Teresa A.:** "Document a timeline, stay consistent with your communications and messages, and avoid having too many chiefs and not enough Indians."
- **Gwen S.:** "What you think you know isn't always how it is, so keep an open mind. The KCS handbook contains best practices - do not hesitate to refer to it time after time, even months into the project. It helps to maintain balance, perspective and focus on the correct way to live out the KCS methodology."

HDI's award program recognizes individuals at all levels and teams of all sizes. To learn more about the program, visit **ThinkHDI.com/Awards**.

Follow the Recipe: The Basic Ingredients of a Successful KCS Implementation

by Joshua Barker
Senior Business Analyst | Aspect Software

Eggs. Sugar. Vanilla. Flour. Chocolate Chips. Salt. Butter. Baking Soda. Brown Sugar.

All of those are essential ingredients to make a pretty awesome chocolate chip cookie. But do I need all of them? Why is every ingredient important? Why do I need salt? Why do I need brown sugar? Do I really need liquid chicken in my cookies?

Well, the answer is simple: Yes. If you want the recipe to look and taste right, each ingredient is important (even the "liquid chickens").

This is basically how I started my conversation about KCS with management at Aspect Software.

Aspect had tried KCS before. According to those involved at the time, KCS failed, so they were reluctant to try it again because. But, since we didn't have anyone active with KCS in the company anymore, they allowed me to go to a **KCS Principles** course to learn out more about it. A glimmer of hope—maybe we could make it work if we tried again!

When I came back from the course armed with the knowledge I'd gained, I knew why KCS failed the first time: we'd left out some of the ingredients.

KCS is a methodology that incorporates knowledge as a key component for service delivery and prescribes specific elements to follow for success. We didn't have some of those key components and specific elements of KCS, such as an active coaching program to maintain quality, report on progress of the individual agents, and groom coaches to be the change agents that we needed. We also didn't have a KCS Council to help us evolve the KCS program over time.

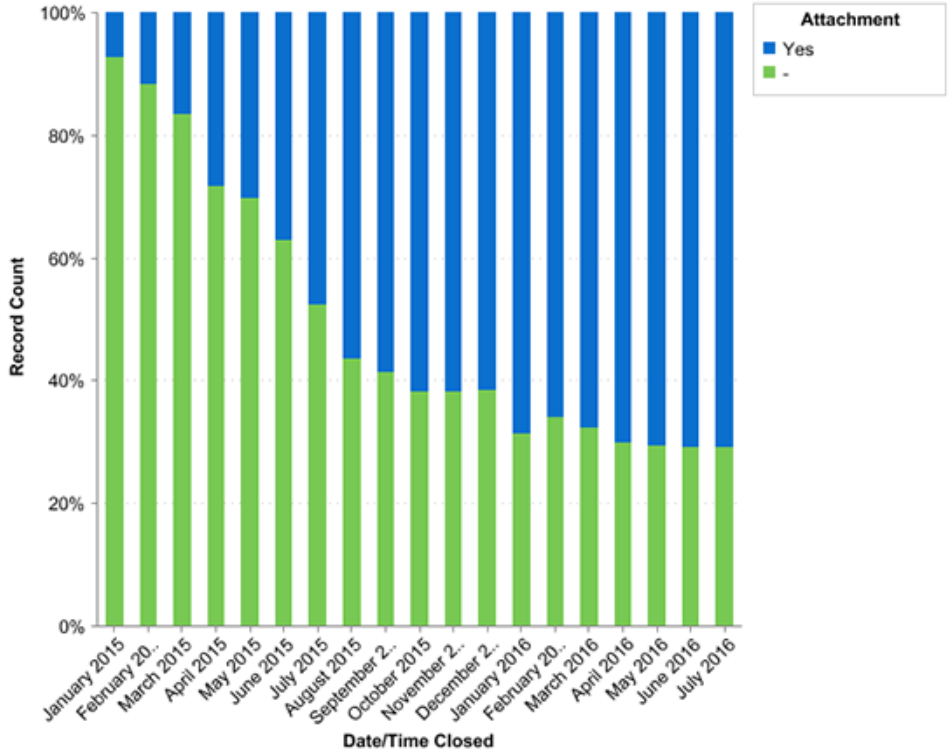
Heck, we even did some of the things that KCS specifically says you should avoid doing, such as requiring people to write a particular number of articles a month. We had also required agents to attach an article before they could close a case—regardless of whether the article even applied to the issue. The system wouldn't allow the case to be closed if an article wasn't attached (believe it or not, we actually had articles titled "Use this article to close your case"—and even one called "How to get to my desk").

Our first KCS implementation failed because we drove the wrong behaviors. As time went on, as more and more people were creating articles just to meet an arbitrary goal and attaching articles just to close the case, the KB became more and more useless. No one trusted the it because it wasn't searchable or usable anymore. When you away searchable and usable, you just have garbage.

In short, we didn't follow the recipe. We called it KCS, but it really wasn't. Nothing we'd established resembled the KCS I'd learned about.

When I started putting the problem in terms that everyone could understand, management and other staff who were skeptical began to understand where we had failed. They understood that to have something that was useful, we had to follow the recipe. Sure, you can modify the recipe, but you have to start with the basic ingredients.

If KCS were a cookie recipe, we could replace



Growth in number of knowledge articles used

the chocolate chips with butterscotch chips or white chocolate. We could add walnuts or pecans. Before we could do any of that, though, we needed the basics: butter, flour, sugar, eggs, etc. We needed to understand the building blocks of KCS before we could go about changing it. Understanding this was the first step toward changing minds.

When we received approval to move forward with KCS again, we faced an uphill battle i. The easiest part of KCS was deciding on the business processes, implementing **Salesforce Knowledge**, and creating the documentation.

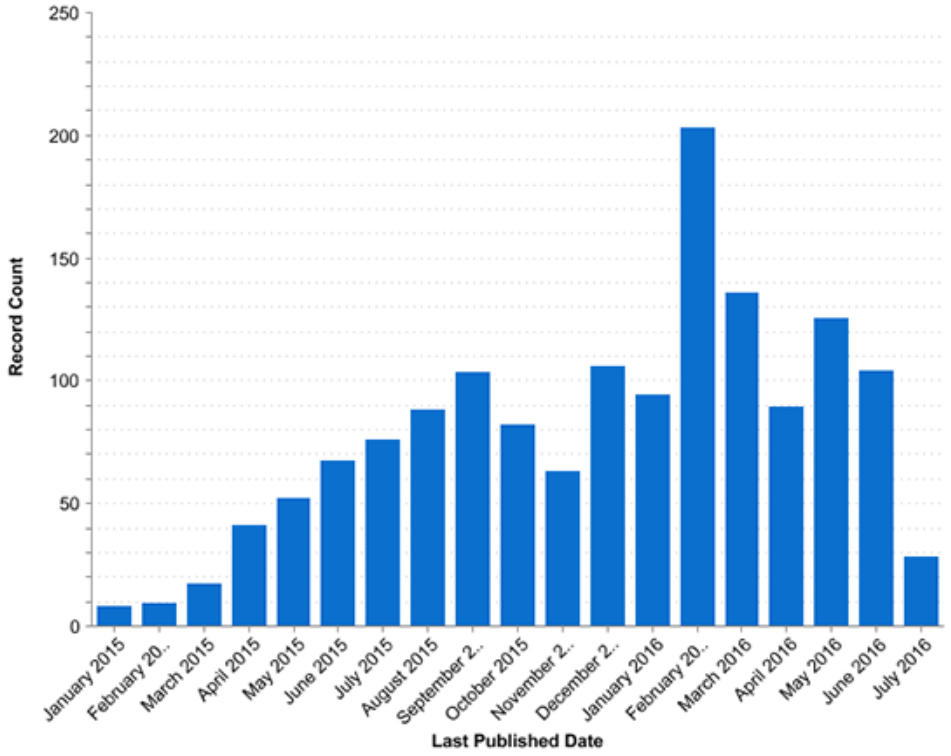
But KCS had a bad reputation and we had to get people to trust the KB again. They needed to start using it as a resource (and we had to get people to believe that we weren't trying to get their knowledge just so we could fire them). Still, when we launched the knowledge application, adoption was light for the first six months. Management kept asking me, "Why?"

The problem was multipronged. We had people with very long tenure, which is both good and bad. Many of my coworkers had been on the help desk for more than five years, some more than ten, fifteen, even twenty years! They'd seen it all and they felt this initiative was just another flash-in-the-pan, something that, if they ignored it, would just go away. Others had already adapted to not having a reliable KB by hoarding knowledge on their computers, either in Outlook or in Word documents. Getting people to change was not easy.

But the biggest reason adoption was light was because we hadn't put all the ingredients in the bowl yet. We didn't have the KCS Coaches program going yet, and we didn't have a KCS Council. We were leaving out some very important ingredients. I still didn't have approval to get more than thirty agents off the phone to train them on KCS and make them effective KCS Coaches. This would require an investment of time and money, and we just hadn't received approval to do that yet.

Finally, after months of explaining that we hadn't seen much success yet because we hadn't followed the recipe, we got approval to move forward with the plan to start selecting agents, getting them certified in KCS Foundations, and developing our own KCS Coaches training workshop.

I envisioned our KCS Coaches as our change agents. They were the people who were going to put and keep this KCS program on the right track. Try as I might, it was impossible for me, alone, to do what was needed for a help desk of more than 400



Growth in number of articles published to customers

people. We needed to evaluate what the agents had already written. We had to give them feedback. We had to meet with them regularly. We had to keep on top of their progress. That was way too much for one person and almost too much for the thirty-two people we eventually brought on board.

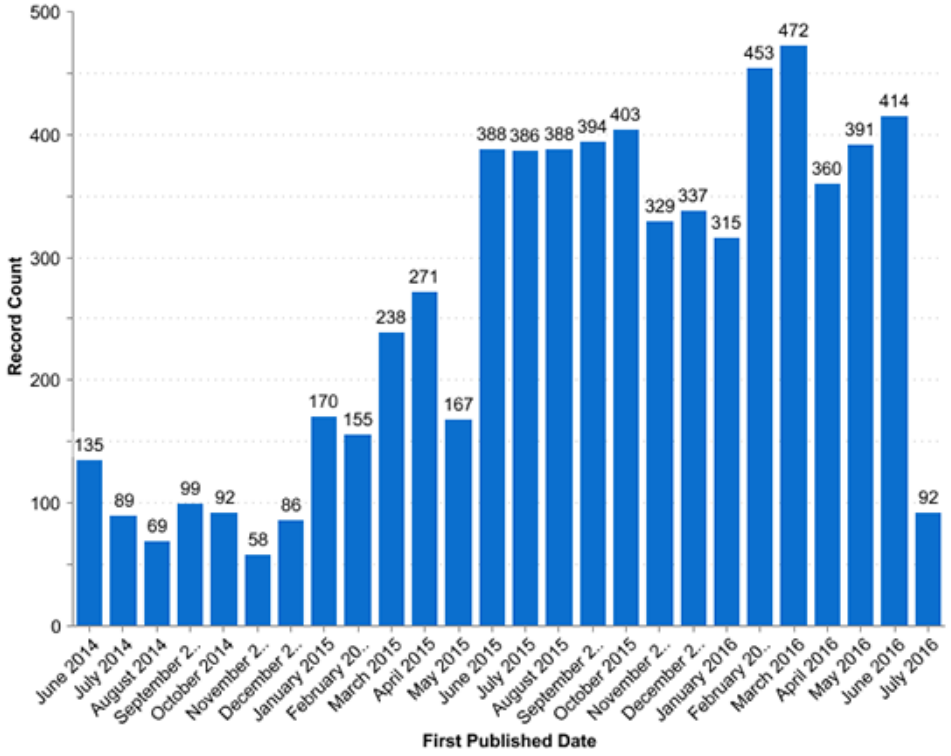
When selecting the agents, we asked the team managers to select people on their teams who were trusted change agents and role models and had strong communication skills and influence. From that list, we put together a workshop, scheduled time, bought plane tickets, and reserved hotel rooms so we could deliver this workshop in our offices around the world.

Our workshop would cover a variety of topics. We would start off by talking about the "golden circle," a concept borrowed from writer/speaker **Simon Sinek**, who talks about how many businesses focus on the what and how but never the *why* of a project. So, we would start with the *why* to try to get people to understand why we were doing what we were doing, and then we would move on to the *what* and *how*. After discussing the why, we would focus on what we were trying to achieve and what the role of a coach would be in our organization. We would talk about the steps we felt we needed to take to achieve success. We would then complete the **BEST communication styles** evaluation so others could understand how they communicate and what to be mindful of when scoring articles and meeting with the people they would be coaching.

Once we had our workshop hammered out, my coworker and I delivered our workshop in Nashville, Atlanta, San Francisco, London, and Bangalore. We were both nervous about how it would be received, as neither one of us had done this before. We had put all our trust in KCS and the program, hoping it would deliver. After all, if this didn't work after all the time and money invested, we would have liquid chicken on our faces!

After our first KCS Coaches training session in Brentwood, we noticed an immediate uptick in people attaching knowledge against their cases—use it in UFFA terms. In practical terms, it wasn't much, but we went from 1% of our cases having knowledge attached to 5% in the matter of a week—a 400% increase. So, to us, we had something to celebrate.

Within a month or so, we'd gone all around the US and halfway around the world and were back in the US, basking the glow of a job well done. The numbers started climbing week after week, month after month. Finally, by the end of the year, we had grown from 1% of our cases closed with a knowledge



Growth in number of articles added (note change between launch of new KB in June 2014 and launch of KCS Coaches program in January 2015)

article to 66% closed with a knowledge article—a 6,500% increase! Everyone who was paying attention was floored by the success of the KCS program in such a short amount of time.

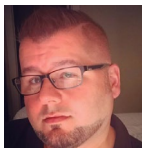
Once we started seeing our usage numbers grow, we started checking our other statistics. The number of articles making it to customers and partners started to increase, too. We would only publish articles to those channels once an article had been used three times or more (and was appropriate/safe to do so).

Once the KCS Coaches really started to focus on getting people to do the right thing and share their knowledge if they found out about an undocumented issue, the number of articles added really took off as well.

We also started to notice that our average days to close started to improve as well. The days to close with an article versus without was always much shorter. In all, we couldn't have asked for a better response. And it was all due to finally following the recipe.

Although our implementation of KCS was a success, there were lots of challenges along the way. We had to change minds, attitudes, and the way people worked. We had to overcome the negative connotations of KCS to get buy-in. So, if I can leave you with one piece of advice, it would be *communicate*. Communicate with directors. Communicate with managers. Communicate with agents. The easy part is writing the articles; the hard part is changing minds and attitudes. It took time and lots of effort and lots of repeating myself before it took hold. It wasn't done in six weeks or even six months. But it was worth it—trust me.

Implementing KCS isn't as easy as making chocolate chip cookies. But, then again, nothing worth doing has ever been easy. You just have to start by following the recipe.



JOSHUA BARKER *is a senior business analyst in the global operations department at Aspect Software. He has been with Aspect for eight years and the head of the knowledge program for more than three years. He started pursuing ways to make knowledge better for Aspect shortly after starting with the company. He noticed that the Knowledge Center was not as good as it could be and started working with others to improve it. Finally, after four years of work, he was asked to lead the new knowledge initiative. Josh has been in the IT industry since 2002, occupying various roles in sales, support, and operations. His background in radio, television, public speaking, and debate have proven helpful as he made his transition into his latest role as the knowledge manager for Aspect Software. Connect with Josh on* ***LinkedIn****.*

121 South Tejon Street | Suite 1100
Colorado Springs, CO | 80903

www.ThinkHDI.com

@ThinkHDI