

Frameworks Holly Lyke-Ho-Gland

BETTER IMPROVEMENTS: COMBINING FRAMEWORKS WITH KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The gap between process and knowledge management became apparent to me at a BBC's 2016 conference, where I was discussing effective ways to use process frameworks.

During the presentation, we were running through the most often overlooked implementation steps for adopting a process framework. When we got to number four, develop knowledge maps, things started to go awry.

I rambled on about knowledge maps and how organizations often lacked the standardized documentation necessary to create them and how they help move process documentation from something that sits on the shelf to a structure for connecting information to people in the context of their work.

I looked up and saw a room full of blank faces. I had lost them. Was it something I said? Was I talking too fast?

It wasn't any of these, it was something I had overlooked, context around knowledge management that I just took for granted.

So, I asked everyone who knew what knowledge management meant or what a knowledge map was to raise their hands. Out of a room of around 100 people, four tentatively raised their hands—a colleague, two clients, and one knowledge management professional.

So, we paused the presentation and spent some time discussing what knowledge management is, why it's important, and how process professionals can use it. What came out of the conversation was that knowledge management isn't anything new; the audience was already very familiar with documentation and information. But they hadn't really thought about it in terms of connections to process, accessibility, or how that information is captured, maintained, and shared—all of which can be detailed in a knowledge map.

What Exactly Are Knowledge Maps?

In its simplest form, a [knowledge map](#) is a visual representation of an organization’s knowledge resources and helps the organization understand:

- What knowledge is critical to a business process?
- Is there governance for the knowledge (who owns it and who can validate it)?
- Where does the knowledge resides?
- Is the information documented (explicit) or resides in someone’s head (tacit)?
- How does knowledge flow between people and systems while doing work?

Process-Based Knowledge Mapping Template

Process	Activity	What knowledge is needed?	Who owns this knowledge?	Tacit or Explicit?	Where is this knowledge?	Who can validate this knowledge?	How big is the knowledge gap?	Additional Details
<i>List the process for which knowledge is being mapped</i>	<i>List the specific activities within that process</i>	<i>List the types of knowledge required to perform this activity</i>	<i>List the sources of record or experts who own this knowledge</i>	<i>Mark as T, E, or T/E</i>	<i>List repositories or people who have the knowledge</i>	<i>List individuals or systems who can verify</i>	<i>Rate as 1, 3, or 5 (1 = small, 3 = medium, 5 = large)</i>	<i>Provide any notes or further context</i>

There are many ways people structure knowledge maps (e.g., processes, expertise, and roles.) While it’s not strictly necessary to map a process when creating a knowledge map, doing so ensures that the organization is focusing on the right areas and provides a classification system for the knowledge being mapped.

Process-based knowledge maps often use an organization’s process framework to structure the mapping—each of the rows in the first column of the map are the elements from an organization’s framework.

So How Do Process and Knowledge Work Together?

Organizations will often have their own chicken or the egg conversations—process or knowledge first. Regardless of who starts the effort there are clear benefits to combining frameworks and knowledge maps.

Improve Accessibility and Quality of Process Materials

In 2017 [Amgen’s](#) leadership identified the need to further drive performance by improving the connection between process and how employees interact with and consistently follow their processes.

While methods existed to define and characterize processes through process mapping, modeling, documentation, and training, but performance still wasn’t what it needed to be. There was a gap between the use the information utilized to follow the process and what was provided to them for training. For this reason, Amgen used knowledge maps to take an inventory of its process knowledge against all activities within a process area and associated roles. The team then worked with its process owners to evaluate the content, identify optimal delivery methods, and create governance over the information.

Use Knowledge Mapping to Identify Improvement Opportunities

University of North Texas (UNT) System Administration began its process journey by way of content and knowledge management. The process team’s first objective was to create standardization through the collection, categorization, and development of a repository for SOPs and other related content (e.g., forms, templates, process maps, and guides). The process team started by using the hierarchy ID numbers

found within the APQC's Process Classification Framework (PCF) for SOP numbers. The information was then mapped into a content repository and using SharePoint with the PCF as its taxonomy.

Though the initial intention was to create a single source of truth for process documentation, the use of the PCF structure also helped the process management team and its stakeholders identify improvement opportunities through process and documentation gaps or redundancies.

Conclusion

At the end of presentation, the knowledge management professional, who was attending the conference to learn about how process management could aid her work, came by to discuss how much the conversation helped her. What started off as a derailment helped her understand how the process side of the house thinks about knowledge management and how the two disciplines can work together for the benefit of the organization.

About the Author.

Holly Lyke-Ho-Gland is a principal research lead at APQC, with over ten years of business research and consulting experience. Her focus has predominantly been on best practices in business processes, change management, corporate strategy, and R&D. She can be reached via email at hlykehogland@apqc.org and on Twitter at @hlykehogland.