Alleem
Knowledge Management Module
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Research & Development
Water and energy for all and forever

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Alleem Corporation

**Willing /
Winning
People**

1. Document

2. Learning

Leadingship

6. Technology

5. Promoters

4. Champions

3. Sharing
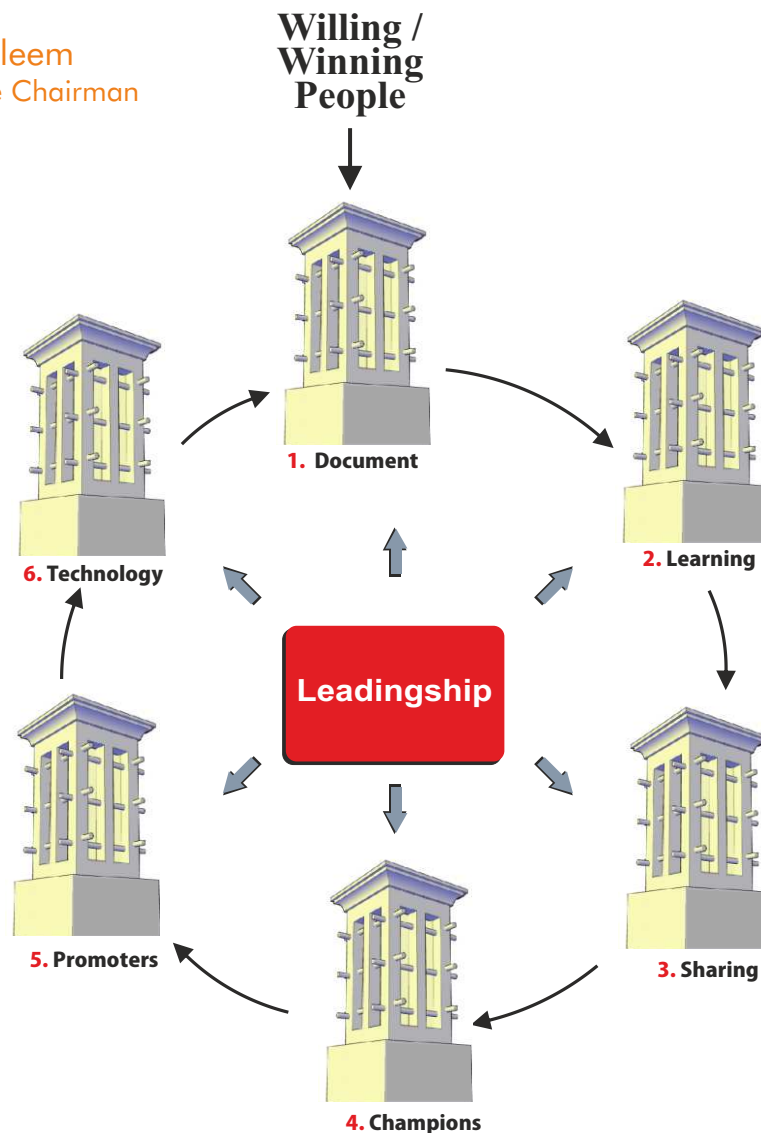
Let's take a brief look at this module and the six pillars

Share It !

Knowledge Management (KM)

"Knowledge is power, If applied"

- Rashid Alleem

People keep asking me; Is this just another fad? A new buzzword for the millennium? My answer is definitely 'no.' The words knowledge and management are two very broad concepts when *separated,* but when the two words come together, it speaks of a concept of creating, acquiring, communicating knowledge and improving the re-utilization of knowledge towards the success of an organization. In my words, it is about making the right knowledge available to the right person at the right time with the right tools. That is knowledge put to action.

"KM is about building organizational intelligence by enabling people to improve the way they work in capturing, sharing, and using knowledge"
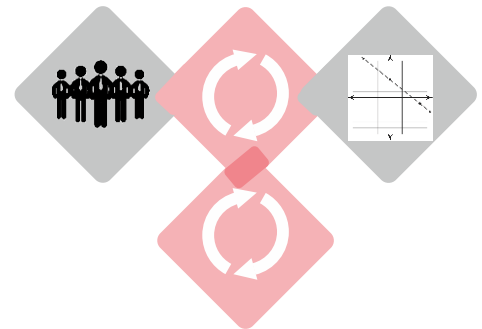
Knowledge Cycle

I have always been passionate about acquiring knowledge and feel it's my duty to pass on that knowledge to my subordinates or people around me. In fact it is every individual's prime responsibility to give back to the society what he gains from it. That's what I call a knowledge cycle. And it really saddens me to see people around least bothered or concerned and not feeling accountable to preserve their knowledge bank neither do they enlighten others with their knowledge.

The Knowledge Ambassador of UAE

One of my leadership qualities is emphasis on *continuous* learning and *lifelong* seeking of knowledge. It is worth mentioning here that I was recently recognized by our beloved Prime Minister, His Highness Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai, as *'The knowledge Ambassador of UAE.'* It's a great honor indeed.

KM can be a tool for continuous and sustainable improvement
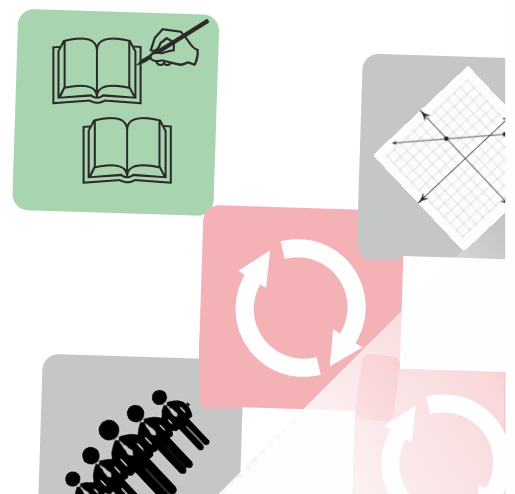
Knowledge Walking Out the Door

To me, knowledge is fluid asset and it saddens me to see it go waste. Here's a typical example of reckless loss of knowledge wealth. I came across one such employee during my early days of appointment here at Sharjah Electricity & Water Authority (SEWA). That employee was heading the Budget Section and had been here for forty years and it was so unfortunate to find out that SEWA didn't have succession plan for him or any knowledge exchange program. Furthermore, he was nearing his retirement and to my shock, there was no one to take over his responsibility! What a waste of knowledge! And to make things worse, the man was not cooperative at all and left the company without transferring the knowledge and important information. It was "knowledge walking out the door".

That very day I decided to make Knowledge Management (KM) as one of the key strategies in SEWA and created a new position called Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO) to look after the strategies.

Knowledge is Wealth

Professor Davenport claims that the most important asset of companies is the knowledge of its employees. I endorse this point of view. In fact I see knowledge as an actual asset rather than an intangible concept, I say, "knowledge is power, if applied." Hence knowing how to manage knowledge is equally imperative.
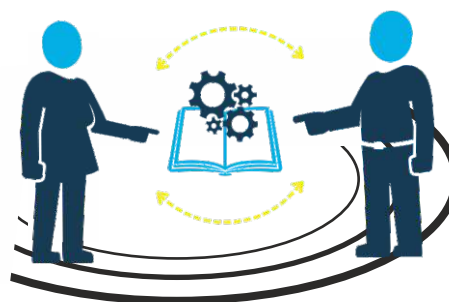
Knowledge Bank

I personally feel that knowledge, just like wealth/money if not managed intelligently, can go waste and deduced as non-recoverable/big loss. It becomes a sunk-cost (the amount of money that has been spent and is gone forever). Therefore I diligently focus on documenting/storing knowledge in what is called 'knowledge bank'; where the data, information, facts and figures or policies are stored/recorded so that it could be re-utilized again and again.

Alleem Knowledge Management Module
for Continuous and Sustainable Improvement

Alleem Knowledge Management Module

Alleem Six Pillars of KM

The benefits of Knowledge management are manifold. Thereby keeping everything in mind, I came up with the six pillars of knowledge management to achieve long-term viability. It is an important instrument with which to assess and improve performance and help identify problems and their solutions. Below is a brief summary of the six pillars:
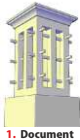
Document: To conduct lessons, learned studies to examine what went well what didn't. Through this type of analysis, the wisdom of experience is transferred back to the project organization, which will help future project teams.

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KM Champions : They are talented employees with a focused vision and the aptitude to align knowledge management with business tactics. They usher strong and dedicated commitment to knowledge marketplace (they identify what people know and what they need to know on a particular subject, then connects them appropriately).

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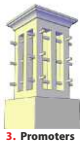
KM Promoters: They develop, promote and facilitate knowledge. They create and collaborate and align the operational processes and organization strategy with the KM framework.

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Technology: Technology is the main tool that leverages the organization KM framework. Technical solution add value to our processes, and the lack of same further adds to failure. So technology is definitely fundamental ; having latest machines and latest programs is a must.

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Learning: The best tools and strategies fall flat if the desire to learn and acquire knowledge is missing. Learning is a never-ending process and I emphasized it by nominating it as an important pillar of organization's KM.

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Sharing: Knowledge should be free-flowing. According to me, hindering knowledge from being shared with each other is detrimental to any organization. I consider knowledge as wealth which multiplies when shared and collaborated. The more you give, the more you get back.

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"Sharing knowledge occurs when people are genuinely interested in helping one another develop new capacities for action; it is about creating learning processes."

- Peter Senge

Knowledge Café

Knowledge café is one of the ideas I encourage KM practitioners to practice outside their workplace in a nearby coffee shop. It brings people together to have open, creative conversation on topics of mutual interest. It encourages people to explore issues that require discussion in order to build a consensus around an issue.

People,
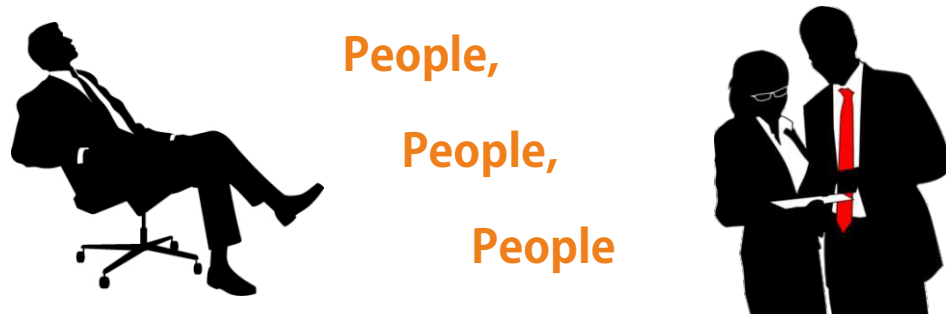
People,

People

But remember, KM is fantastic but nothing without interested people! Those who are willing to make a difference and winning when working together. For any organization, employees are the building blocks. And for any successful organization, the employees have to have the drive to be that important block that would give the organization a firm ground.

Success depends on the willingness of the participants to *both* contribute and benefit in *equal* measure from exchanging knowledge. It is highly dependent on the degree of the trust between the individuals.

Leadingship (Leading with true north, core values, and timeless principles)

Is a must here in this framework; it forms the solid base wherein the six pillars can stand on. I always remind managers that the key success factor is *leadingship* because it is about providing the information, knowledge and methods to realize the common shared vision.

Leadingship is an Affair of the Heart

First, find out the subordinates/followers interests. What is his/her passion or pursuit? Listen, listen, and listen. Then align your interests with his/her and move ahead together. Understand and satisfy the interest of those who you lead. In short, practice interest based leadership.

Second, find a right tone for your message. People would listen to a voice that shows concern and not control. You cannot be too pushy as well as too casual too. You need to master the *art* of effective communication while keeping in mind the concern, interest and style of your people.

Third, keep motivating them, in motivating people, you have to engage their minds and their hearts. That is how to sustain KM.

Suggestions for Enhancing Knowledge Management Strategies

Some key strategies are outlined in the bullet points below.

- Sharpening the knowledge focus in all operations.
- Promoting and empowering staff to practice knowledge generation and sharing.
- Strengthening external knowledge partnerships to develop and disseminate knowledge.
- Enhancing staff development programs to improve technical skills and manage knowledge.

KM

TOOLS   **TECHNIQUES**

KM Tools and Techniques

I am certain that the above benefits of knowledge management must have ignited the desire to go for it. Right? Now to make things easier here, I would also share some of the techniques I personally use in this process. These are 'tried & tested' tools since centuries and still the most impactful ones.

The following series of tools and techniques describe how knowledge management can enable people to find information and knowledge more effectively.

① Case Study

What is a case study?

A case study is a published report about a person, group, or situation that has been studied over time.

It has clear structure that brings out key *qualitative* and *quantitative* information from the project/case.

Why use a case study?

It is a vital that project and program teams capture and record their learning and best practice so that others can

benefit. The structured case study format makes information accessible to all round the clock. What is at the heart of story - telling is gaining know-how, know-what and know-when from knowledgeable/thought leaders.

Five questions at the end of the case study the team should try to focus on :

1. What did we learn from this?
2. What worked well, and why ?
3. What didn't work well, why?
4. What should we change?
5. What do we intend to do next?
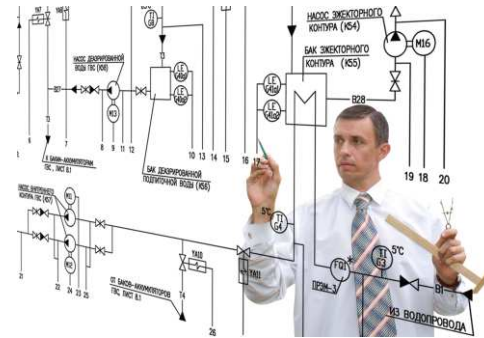
Stories
Connect
People

② Story - Telling

*"So relate the story;
Perchance they may reflect"*

- The Holy Quran

Amongst other, I frequently use the technique of story-telling. It helps me to shape up the vision, identity and organizational culture and to pass on my earned knowledge and wisdom over the years to others. And of course to 'emotionally connect' with my employees. Once you are connected with them they get inspired to do more.

Here's a quote by Arthur Aufderheide, "All knowledge is connected to all people, and the fun is in making the connection." Well said. Isn't it?

I always direct my team to refer to my book

'Inspirational Stories'

**where more than thirty five real life stories
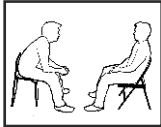of great people and thought leaders are listed.**
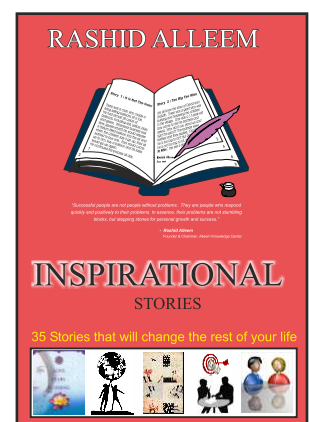
NASA

In NASA people helping others learn what they know through postings in the Kennedy Space Center (KSC) Forum and employees taking time to interact outside of their workgroup during the "Innovation Expo", and many KSC mentoring success stories through NASA Connect.

❸ Counseling, Coaching & Mentoring

Knowledge Management is definitely a key enabler for any organization to achieve its goals and vision. But what fascinates me most is the process of encouraging my employees to practice the above mentioned tactics/techniques and also provide them some hands-on experience.

Knowledge management involves innovation, individual learning, collective learning and collaborative decision-making. The immediate outcomes of KM are improved organizational behavior, decisions, products, services, processes and relationships thereby catapulting the organization's overall performance. This can be achieved by using counseling, coaching, and mentoring.

Counseling is basically about solving problems. It is the activity of the counselor, or a professional who counsels people (gives them assistance, advice and guidance), especially on personal problems and difficulties.

Coaching is an act of unlocking a person's potential to maximize their performance; helping them to learn rather than teaching them. For me coaching is *not* just an act, it's a phenomenon, it's a process. I look at it as an event and a journey. This is how I view Coaching:

Coaching Event is when a team member comes looking for help or support.

Coaching Journey is about helping that same individual grow and progress over time.

Mentoring is employee training system under which a senior or more experienced individual (the mentor) is assigned to act as an advisor, counselor, or guide to a junior or trainee. The mentor is responsible for providing support to, and feedback on, the individual in his or her charge.

Mentor-mentee Relationship

Mentoring is quite challenging, mainly because people are very *selective,* they won't just allow someone to come deeper and deeper into their lives—you have to earn that privilege. In the back of their minds, people are usually asking six questions:

1. Who are you?
2. What is your background?
3. Can I trust you?
4. Do you really care about me and my performance?
5. Can you really help me?
6. Do you want to see me at the top always?

Coach, Mentor: Is there a difference?

Yes, there is a difference. Here are four differentiators that I think are important.

Differentiator #1:

Mentoring is an open-ended, non-specific contract, while coaching contract is for specified period of time, to work on specific issues with measurable outcomes.

Differentiator #2:

Coaching is task oriented. The focus is on concrete issues, such as managing more effectively, and learning how to think strategically. This requires a content expert (coach) who is capable of teaching the coachee how to develop these skills.

Mentoring is relationship oriented. It seeks to provide a safe environment where the mentoree shares whatever issues affect his or her professional and personal success such as work/life balance, self-confidence, self-perception, and how the personal influences the professional.

Differentiator #3:

Coaching is short term. A coach can successfully be involved with a coachee for a short period of time, maybe even just a few sessions.
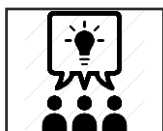
Mentoring is always long term. Mentoring, to be successful, requires time in which both partners can learn about one another and build a climate of trust that creates an environment in which the mentoree can feel secure in sharing the real issues that impact his or her success.

Differentiator #4:

Coaching is performance driven. The purpose of coaching is to improve the individual's performance on the job.

Mentoring is development driven. Its purpose is to develop the individual not only for the current job, but also for the future.

④ # Continuous Learning

When?
Learning Opportunity

Check
If anyone has done similar before

Reflect
What you have done so far

Decide
How to continue forward

Review
If you or someone else to do similar work again

Learning Before, During and After

Knowledge management (KM) encourages learning at every opportunity. This concept is about learning before, during and after, and can be applied to any activity including projects, tasks and events.
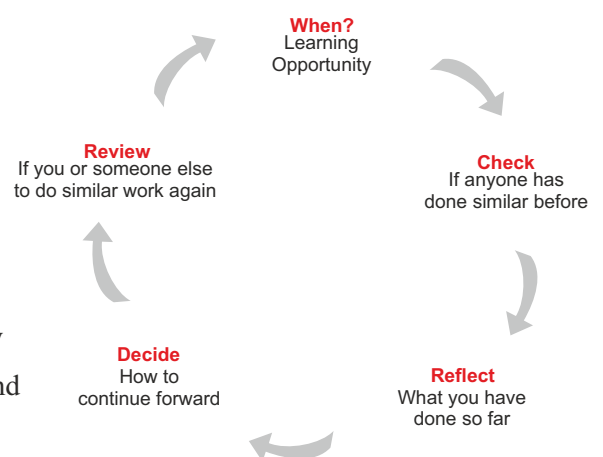
KM is an ongoing process of learning, adjustment, and improvement

This means that when you start a new piece of work, you should check if anyone somewhere has done something similar before and if there is anything you can learn from them. Then while you are working on that piece of work there should be a stage (or several) where you reflect on what you have done so far to help you decide how to continue forward. This brings you to the final stage of learning, when you have completed the piece of work. Here it is recommended that you review the work so that if you or someone else were to do a similar project again, the approach can be improved following your review.

Getting Knowledge Management Right:
Ten Best Practices
for Continuous and Sustainable Improvement

These ten best practices have been practiced, tested, refined and validated. Their skillful practice is the secret to your management effectiveness and success.

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Best Practice # 1 : Establish vision & mission

You must create a vision and a mission statements for your KM department such as the following :

Our vision

Is for everyone across the organization to easily find, use, create, manage and share knowledge.

Our mission

Is to facilitate and drive the flow of knowledge across the organization - sharing answers, insights, expertise, ideas and information by:

- o Linking people and useful information
- o Supporting collaborative working
- o Promoting techniques to capture and share knowledge
- o Building evaluation and learning into practice

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Best Practice # 2 : Start with a clear goals & objectives

Set realistic, precisely defined goals and objectives for the initiative. Don't start in a big way avoid "big bang" strategy. Go step by step approach that enables knowledge management to be fine-tuned before wider application.

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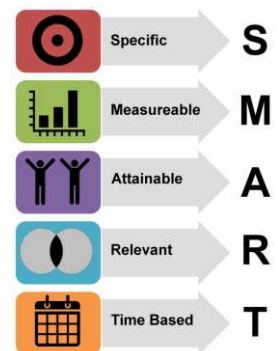
Best Practice # 3 : Focus on people

Focus on people is a key principle as well as fostering a culture of trust and cooperation. You have to look for effective ways to motivate knowledge-sharing in your organization.

Intrinsic vs extrinsic rewards

Extrinsic

One kind of strategy involves giving *tangible* rewards for sharing knowledge: for instance, cash in exchange for lessons learned, gift certificates. Some of these efforts are versions of what is sometimes called "gamification" - creating a contest or game that potentially rewards desired behaviors or competition in order to engage participants in a process.

Intrinsic

Yet, experience has shown that the right intrinsic motivations are often more effective than prizes. Erika Blaney's article, "Five Intrinsic Motivators and How They Impact Employee Engagement," describes those motivations this way:

1. Autonomy ("I control")
2. Mastery ("I improve")
3. Progress ("I achieve")
4. Purpose ("I make a difference")
5. Social interaction ("I connect with others")

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Best Practice # 4 : Take a "less is more" and " more for less" approach

People don't have much time now a days so keep in mind giving and providing a relevant, focused and structured response for your customers' inquiries.

Less is more

Less complicated is often better understood and more appreciated than what is more complicated; simplicity is preferable to complicity.

More for less

Delivering more for less is without question going to be the mantra for most of the industries in the coming five years - and perhaps beyond. The more savings we make through innovative ideas, creative solutions, and collaborative procurement, the greater resources we will have available.

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Best Practice # 5 : Foster collaborative knowledge creation

Open collaboration is essential ingredient of success. It is worth mentioning here two possible impediments with knowledge sharing. First, lack of time and resources for knowledge sharing, difficulty recognizing what knowledge can be useful to others, and distrust, fear, or other cultural conditions that discourage collaboration. Second, would be persuading the retirees to share with others the exclusive knowledge that gave them status and made them valuable to the organization.

What makes a healthy knowledge culture, which includes sharing stated goals, recognition of contribution, mutual trust, and tolerance for and recognition of the value of mistakes.

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Best Practice # 6 : Pause and learn session

A pause and learn (sometimes referred to as action learning) session a method for reflecting and transferring individual lessons from a specific project event among fellow team members.

Team members meet behind closed doors, take off their official - hats for a brief period, and look back on a recent event to gain a more thorough understanding of what has happened, and why. Many organizations have successfully adopted this type of organization learning including : Shell Oil, IBM, Fidelity Investments, US Army, and Harley Davidson.

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Pause and learn is a team conversation facilitated by a knowledgeable outsider who helps the team identify and capture knowledge gained at key project stages.

Before a pause and learn session begins, the designated facilitator makes the ground rules clear:

- **Be discreet**: What gets said in the room stays in the room.
- **Be honest**: Call it as you see it.
- **Be tolerant**: Other's opinions and perspectives are equally important.
- **Be a team**: See it from the perspective of team responsibility.

The fundamental elements that make a Pause and Learn effective are:

- A sufficiently knowledgeable facilitator
- A well facilitated conversation
- Key questions
- Team ownership of the process
- Clear and immediate benefits

Knowledge Maps

Elements of the conversation documented in the form of Knowledge Maps. A knowledge map is a visual representation of a conversation, highlighting valuable insights and comments within the context of that conversation.

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Best Practice # 7 : Benchmarking

Benchmarking is the process of identifying, understanding, and adapting outstanding practices anywhere in the world to help an organization improve its performance. The objective of Benchmarking is to find examples of superior performance and to understand the processes and practices driving that performance. Your organization can improve its performance by tailoring and incorporating these best practices into their own operations - not by imitating, but by innovating. If you want to create or improve your KM practice then visit the top 500 fortune companies as almost all of them have KM modules, articles, journals etc.

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Best Practice # 8 : Knowledge banks

Knowledge banks are online services and resources which hold information, learning and support: giving you the power to improve your KM. They are typically used to showcase the work of an organization and provide signposts to documents, articles and toolkits. Knowledge has to be in a *usable* form. Unfortunately I have seen a lot of companies (ours is one of them!) have an extensive library of videotapes and transcripts that capture some of the expertise of retirees,

but the material has not been edited and organized in ways that would make it easily findable, so it has generally not been used.

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Best Practice # 9 : Think globally

People tend to limit their search to their small networks of trusted colleagues. Emphasize on sharing knowledge with others and seek the best knowledge from others. Never limit your thinking about the uses and the value of knowledge management in your organization or geography. Go global .. sky is the limit!

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Best Practice # 10 : Create actionable feedback

Actionable feedback is performance information that is accurate, reliable and timely; it is information that allows management to quantitatively and qualitatively assess performance and take the appropriate action to make the right things happen.

This feedback is gathered in the immediacy of the moment when the work is being performed. When problems are not allowed to persist, worsen and spread but are decisively addressed in the immediacy of the moment.

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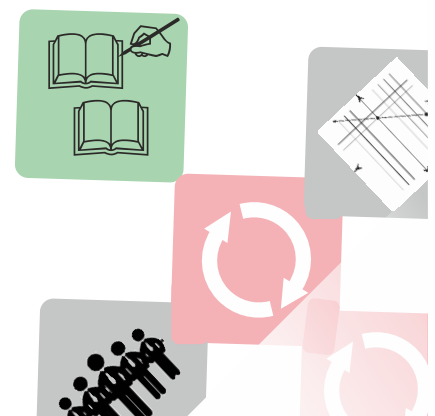
About the author : Dr. Alleem earned a Ph.D. from the University of Salford, Manchester, UK, and received honorary doctorates from various International Universities in recognition of his achievements in the socio-economic fields.

Dr. Alleem is the chairman of Sharjah Electricity & Water Authority - UAE. He served for over a decade as Director General, Department of Seaports and Customs and Sharjah Free Zones Authority. He was the driving force in transforming the zones into a strategic commerce hub empowering thousands of businesses in the region, thereby contributing to the development of the UAE economy. He has been instrumental in bringing on board over 12,000 companies from across 157 nations attracting a whopping $ 40 billion FDI.

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