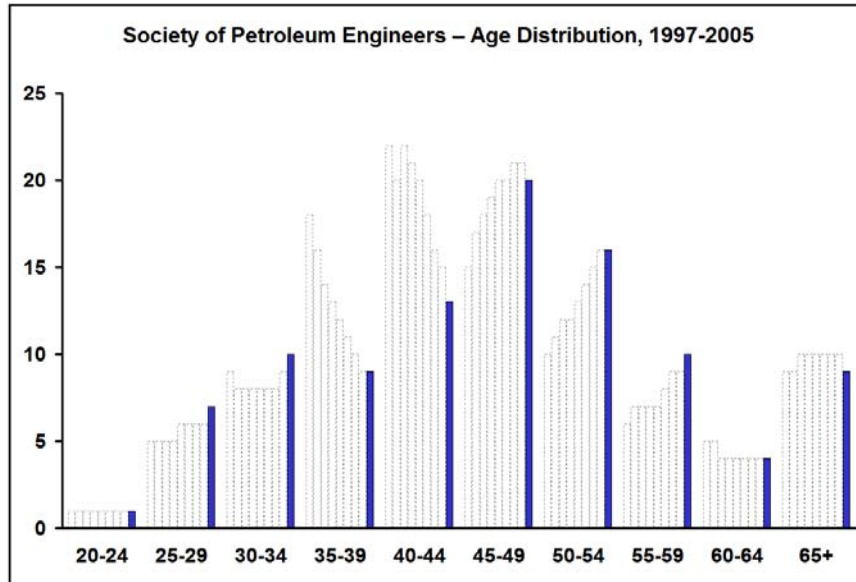


Knowledge continuity: Ensuring that business-critical knowledge remains in the organization



A wider view of business continuity

Business continuity—preventing interruption of mission-critical services in the face of external events—is an important issue for all organizations.

As knowledge has become the key differentiator in today's business environment, proactive organizations are adopting a wider view to address **knowledge continuity**, whether they are planning for a mass retirement some years down the road, are losing mid-career employees to competitors or customers, or are facing an imminent and potentially catastrophic loss of knowledge.

By taking steps to preserve institutional memory, your organization will help ensure its ability to succeed as the business environment becomes more complex and the required level of technical expertise increases.

You will develop a competitive differentiator that can improve customer, partner and employee satisfaction, and enhance your brand.

Benefits

- **Prevent loss of critical knowledge as employees leave or move internally**
- **Minimize risk associated with brain drain**
- **Capture project lessons learned for later re-use**
- **Reduce employee stress, raise morale and commitment**
- **Speed up time to competency for new employees**
- **Maintain service quality and safety standards**
- **Reduce job turnover costs**

Our comprehensive services help you plan for long-term knowledge continuity or deal with an imminent crisis.

A large number of experienced employees will retire in the coming years, as the baby boomers exit the workforce.

Many in senior technical and management positions are retiring early, accelerating the crisis.

For example, in the petroleum industry, the issue is known as “the big crew change” and is evidenced by a progressive increase in the median age of practitioners.

The risk is that a less experienced workforce will not have the necessary knowledge to maintain and increase production levels in a safe and effective manner, especially as the technical and business challenges intensify.

There is already increased competition for experienced workers—not just between competing oil & gas companies but also between service companies and their clients. For example, as the operators lose experienced workers to retirement, they are aggressively recruiting seasoned experts from the service companies.

Thus, even though the age distribution of workers in service companies does not have the late-40’s–early 50’s peak that is characteristic of the industry overall, they too face a knowledge continuity issue due to loss of experts to their clients.

In all sectors, employees who cannot leverage the experience and understanding of departing experts are frustrated and stressed by having to re-invent the wheel and by seeing their companies make the same mistakes over and over.

This encourages the best workers to move to companies—in the industry or beyond—that have put in place processes and systems to take maximum advantage of their employees and their collective knowledge.

Knowledge continuity issues also come up when companies look to outsource non-core processes.

Two aspects must be considered: ensuring that the outsourcer has the necessary knowledge to provide high-quality service at reduced cost, and ensuring that the client retains sufficient knowledge to enable changing service providers over time, or to maintain the option to bring a process back in-house.

A related issue arises after mergers and acquisitions—ensuring that the new organization is able to achieve maximum leverage from the know-how and experience of the individual organizations. This must often be achieved in an environment of workforce reduction.

Knowledge continuity issues also arise for companies that make extensive use of consultants. When these companies seek to train their own employees instead, they must find ways to learn from the consultants on a “win-win” basis.

Staying ahead of the curve

Knowledge continuity services can help you to ensure that valuable know-how and operational knowledge gained from years of experience are retained when employees retire, leave, or simply change jobs within your organization.

They can also help to reduce the time-to-competency of your new employees so that service quality and safety standards are maintained in spite of losing more experienced workers.

Knowledge continuity further helps to increase employee satisfaction and retention by reducing the frustration and stress that arise when workers are not able to leverage the overall knowledge of the organization.

Once you reduce the “clutter” so often associated with jobs where re-inventing the wheel is standard operating procedure, your employees will be able to focus on continuous improvement, organizational learning, innovation and knowledge creation. The result is enhanced individual, team and organizational capability.

How we can help

Our knowledge continuity services range from proactive planning for expert retirement to reactive “knowledge salvage” activities to contain imminent knowledge loss.

They include development of a sustainable framework for integration of knowledge capture and dissemination into key business processes, as well as induction and other training programs.

Our services address four knowledge continuity needs:

- Assessment and Planning
- Knowledge Capture
- Knowledge Synthesis
- Organizational Learning

Assessment and Planning: We work with your team to establish the time frame (imminent, future), decide on strategy and scope, and select target business processes.

We identify critical at-risk knowledge, the employees who have it, the consequences of losing it, and the feasibility, cost and most effective

means of retaining and disseminating the knowledge.

The key deliverables in this phase are a knowledge continuity road map and an implementation plan.

Knowledge Capture: In this phase, we carry out the activities identified as most effective for your organization during the assessment and planning phase.

For example:

- *Expert interviews:* We capture vital know-how from retirees and other key employees.
- *Knowledge capture events:* We facilitate and ensure that actionable information is obtained from knowledge exchanges, lessons learned sessions and retrospects.
- *Knowledge continuity workshops:* We teach your staff techniques for maintaining knowledge continuity. We develop knowledge capture templates that are customized for your organization.

Knowledge Synthesis: We analyze the information collected through interviews, events, documents and the intranet.

We identify patterns and organize the knowledge into logical clusters of support information, insights and guidance.

We package the knowledge so that it can be transferred and used by others. We further assist you to integrate it into daily work activities using a variety of techniques; for example, induction and other training programs, mentoring, communities of practice, portals and collaboration systems.

Organizational Learning: We recommend a strategy and techniques for sustainable knowledge continuity.

We also work with you to ensure that your program achieves measurable results.

We advise you on best practices to ensure ongoing maintenance and adaptation of knowledge assets, to keep them fresh and relevant to the evolving needs of knowledge users; development of a learning program that is structured to meet the needs of new or replacement employees; implementation of a program to engage retirees; and, development of communities of practice and mentoring programs for effective transfer of tacit knowledge.

Enhance the effectiveness of your new employee training and the retention rate of your experienced employees by working with our consultants.

We advise on best-practice HR processes for knowledge continuity. These include implementing consistent job roles and responsibilities, recognition of core competencies, succession planning and staff development.

They also include identifying the knowledge that is essential for key positions, and putting in place processes and systems to make it available to employees new to those positions.

Our approach

We bring new insights and perspectives based on our work with a variety of commercial, government, and non-profit organizations. We have experience in a number of industry sectors, including oil & gas, pharmaceuticals & biotechnology, finance and information technology.

Our services are offered on an individual basis or as an integrated package. We can deliver projects with an explicit training component so that your team members learn how to deliver future projects independently.

Example

We carried out a recent project with a multinational financial institution that included the following services:

- *Knowledge continuity workshop:* We conducted a ½ day session to introduce staff to techniques for maintaining knowledge continuity and to develop a customized expert knowledge capture template.
- *Expert knowledge capture interview:* We led a ½ day session with a retiring expert to capture know-how and demonstrate to staff how to conduct future interviews.
- *Knowledge asset:* We synthesized results from the interview and packaged the knowledge as a Web-based asset.
- *Knowledge continuity report:* We made recommendations for improving ongoing knowledge capture and transfer.

For more information

For more information on how we can help you with knowledge continuity and other services, go to:

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