

SPONSORED RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

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ACHIEVING KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT MATURITY AND BUSINESS IMPACT FROM KM

APQC provides many tools to guide the development and improvement of knowledge management (KM) programs. One of the most important is its Levels of Knowledge Management Maturity, a five-stage maturity model designed to help organizations determine the current status of their KM programs. The Levels of KM Maturity form the basis for APQC’s KM Capability Assessment Tool, which shows participants their current maturity level and helps them uncover gaps that may impede the efficacy of KM initiatives.

To date, more than 200 KM programs have evaluated their performance and progress using the KM Capability Assessment Tool. In 2016-2017, APQC is conducting further research to explore the path to KM maturity, the effect of the assessment process, and the factors that influence KM’s ability to demonstrate tangible business impact.

The study team will analyze aggregate data from the Capability Assessment Tool to determine the KM capabilities most likely to predict whether an organization can leverage knowledge for competitive advantage and demonstrate ongoing evidence of business impact from KM efforts. The analysis will also attempt to connect KM maturity to publically available data on financial performance to identify any trends.

In addition to this analysis, the study team will interview KM leaders at organizations that have participated in APQC's Capability Assessment Tool over the past two years. Some interviews will spotlight KM programs that have achieved Maturity Levels 4 and 5; these will focus on the organizations' KM journeys and the critical success factors for building mature KM capabilities. Other case studies will highlight less mature KM programs, highlighting key milestones achieved to date as well as ongoing challenges and plans to overcome them.

All the interviews will address why the organizations opted to complete the assessment; what they learned; and whether they have used the results to communicate with leadership, promote their success, or make meaningful changes within their KM programs.

BENCHMARKING MANAGEMENT LAYERS AND SPANS OF CONTROL

Finding the most efficient and effective organizational structure is a common business challenge. At APQC, we are frequently asked:

- ◆ What is the ideal number of direct reports for a manager?
- ◆ What is the appropriate number of management layers for an organization?
- ◆ Are organizations really flattening: reducing the number of managers and increasing spans of control?

This APQC study will collect benchmarks on direct reports and management layers. It will explore the relationship between these aspects of organizational structure and various business and human capital performance outcomes. Data will be collected for different organizational functions, such as HR, finance, and procurement, as well as for different industries. The results will help professionals make organizational design and redesign decisions that maximize efficiency, productivity, and cost effectiveness.

ELECTRIC UTILITIES PEER GROUP

Leveraging the [APQC Process Classification Framework \(PCF\) - Utilities - Excel Version 7.0.5](#), APQC would like to explore the creation of an interactive peer group for Electric Utilities focused on operational process improvement and benchmarking. As utilities evolve, their focus on operational efficiency is growing. There is a need for unique operational benchmarks and metrics that are not currently available today.

The focus of the group discussion will be operational assets and data, specifically sections *10.0 Acquire, Construct, and Manage Assets* and *14.0 Operate Utility Assets* in the industry process framework.

END-TO-END TALENT MANAGEMENT

Taking an end-to-end approach to talent management involves integrating all of an organization's processes for recruiting, developing, and retaining employees in order to:

- ◆ provide best-in-class human capital services to employees and managers,

- ◆ eliminate non-value-added human capital spending, and
- ◆ ensure the organization has the talent required to realize strategic objectives.

This study aims to answer APQC member requests for examples of organizations that have effectively adopted an end-to-end approach to talent management. This research will collect information on talent management goals, practices, and challenges and identify best practices for handling talent management in end-to-end, integrated way.

MANAGING PROJECT KNOWLEDGE

One frequently overlooked benefit of complex, large-scale projects is the wealth of knowledge they generate. As a project team moves a project toward completion, it constantly discovers new contextual information, better ways of doing things, and less successful methods that other teams should avoid. By insisting that project teams document and share what they learn, organizations can ensure that relevant best practices and lessons are applied in other, similar projects and situations. This both helps sustain project benefits over time and amplifies the impact of projects beyond their envisioned range of influence.

Despite the inherent value of knowledge transfer within and among project teams, many project management approaches fail to account for the effective handling of project-related knowledge. In a recent survey, APQC asked project management professionals about the hard and soft skills their project management offices (PMOs) currently lack, but need to develop in the near term. Of the 18 skills included on the survey, knowledge management (KM) was cited as the most common area of need, with 49.5 percent of respondents reporting that their PMOs lack KM skills and need to develop them in the next two years.

To help project management teams and offices build the right KM capabilities, APQC is pursuing new research exploring the intersection of knowledge and project management. This research will focus on how organizations leverage KM approaches such as communities of practice, enterprise social networking, lessons learned methods, collaboration platforms, and content repositories to support project management methodologies and processes.

The study team will interview at least three organizations with mature initiatives to handle project-related knowledge in order to understand how KM is incorporated into each stage of project management, what KM approaches are most effective, and what enterprise-level support is required. After conducting the interviews, the research team will look across the collected information to identify themes and applicable best practices.

NEXT-GENERATION COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Abo APQC defines a community of practice as a group of people who come together, either face-to-face or virtually, to share and learn from one another. Although communities vary widely in scope and duration, most are organized around a common interest in a topic,

challenge, opportunity, or body of knowledge and allow members to come together to share problems, experiences, insights, best practices, and tools.

APQC CEO Carla O’Dell describes communities of practice as knowledge management’s “killer app,” or the one indispensable approach that helps KM engage employees and deliver value. This is, at least in part, because communities provide an organizing framework for a wide array of KM activities, from gathering and disseminating content to expertise location and networking. Communities connect members to information and one another, and they also provide a place where knowledgeable people can hammer out best practices and solutions relevant to a specific knowledge domain.

Over the past 15 years, APQC has conducted four large-scale studies on communities of practice and identified dozens of best practices related to building and sustaining effective communities. However, as technology and work norms evolve, we must consider whether classic community structures still deliver the same value they did a decade ago. Do communities retain pride of place in the KM toolkit, or have new tools for enterprise social networking and collaboration shifted the landscape?

This study will reassess established best practices for communities, including:

- ◆ the strategic role of communities and the business objectives they aim to achieve;
- ◆ community roles and responsibilities, including the factors that drive effective leadership;
- ◆ approaches to connect community members with knowledge and expertise;
- ◆ methods to encourage engagement and participation; and
- ◆ methods to define and measure success.

In this context, the research team will focus on how innovative technologies have influenced community platforms, norms, and structures. Key topics include:

- ◆ the infrastructure that supports today’s communities of practice;
- ◆ how enterprise social networking platforms, mobile apps, and tools for collaborative content creation have affected community interactions and knowledge sharing; and
- ◆ whether the ubiquity of social networking in people’s personal lives has affected how community members engage, share, and interact.

OPERATIONS KPIS THAT MATTER

As organizations continue to put greater emphasis on facts-based decision making, ensuring relevant measures and timely access to data becomes increasingly important. Often organizations will pinpoint a handful of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to gauge the organization’s operational performance. However picking and aligning the “right” KPIs to the organization’s goals is often easier said than done. How many measures should organizations use? What’s the right balance of organization-specific measures to reflect goals and competitive strengths versus industry standard measures that enable benchmarking? What measurement and reporting practices do organizations need to engage in to ensure effective decision making?

This project will explore the KPIs organizations use to manage operations, their alignment to organizational goals, and the role that measures and reporting make on the decision-making process.

SETTING UP AN ANALYTICS PROGRAM

As organizations look at establishing analytics capabilities they are faced with many questions. What is the right model for my organization? What are the necessary skills we need to provide insights for our decision makers can use? How can we measure the ROI of our analytics investment? This project is aimed at answering those questions through a combination of surveys and case studies that look at structural characteristics, roles and responsibilities, and performance measures for analytics functions.

ABOUT APQC

APQC helps organizations work smarter, faster, and with greater confidence. It is the world's foremost authority in benchmarking, best practices, process and performance improvement, and knowledge management. APQC's unique structure as a member-based nonprofit makes it a differentiator in the marketplace. APQC partners with more than 500 member organizations worldwide in all industries. With more than 40 years of experience, APQC remains the world's leader in transforming organizations. Visit us at www.apqc.org, and learn how you can make best practices your practices.

**Cathy Hill at chill@apqc.org or
+1 713-685-4652**