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# SharePoint - A choice for Knowledge Management?



Knowledge Management Software

## What is SharePoint?

Microsoft's SharePoint collaboration and content management platform has generated a new IT market segment in the last decade, with hundreds of millions of end users and a large "ecosystem" of vendor partners marketing plug-in components to enhance and extend it.

Natively, SharePoint simply provides a medium for intranet sites. SharePoint acquires its real value through the ways innovative users adapt and build useful things with it - from simple content repositories for teams, to large-scale systems that track sophisticated business processes.

Because SharePoint's core capabilities are in content management and collaboration, organizations committed to SharePoint have been considering the platform for their Knowledge Management requirements as well. Knowledge Management, after all, frequently involves the capture and retrieval of explicit content, and is intended to support and enhance collaborative work.



“The costs associated with problem resolution are very well understood”

## What is Knowledge Management?

Typically Knowledge Management has begun with a single business process with clear and measurable success criteria, such as enhancing problem management in a Contact Centre, IT / HR Service Desk, Shared Service Centre etc. The costs associated with problem resolution are very well understood, and the case for a Knowledge Base to help service desk agents diagnose and solve problems faster and with fewer occasions for escalating problems to higher level subject matter experts has been documented and measured reliably since the 1990s.

## How is Knowledge Management Used?

Many business processes are similarly transactional in nature - individuals draw on institutional knowledge to execute recurring tasks with defined outcomes. Customer service agents, human resource specialists, engineers and even lawyers perform tasks that have this transactional character.



“Transactional business processes are at the core of the Knowledge Management adoption”

At a service desk or call centre, the knowledge content used to facilitate problem-solving is typically stored as “Solutions” - questions/problems paired with their associated answers/resolutions. Solutions have value to the extent that they are relevant - i.e, to the degree that an agent can quickly retrieve the right solution in a given situation to solve the problem.

Software tools developed specifically for Knowledge Management are effective not only at enabling an agent to find relevant solutions, but also allowing the agent to link the solution easily to the incident or question for which it was effective. That linking statistically reinforces the relevancy of that solution when a similar incident occurs, making it easier to find in the next search. SharePoint can store solutions, but in capturing and capitalizing on their relevancy, SharePoint fails.



“That linking statistically reinforces the relevancy of that solution when a similar incident occurs”



## SharePoint as a Knowledge Repository

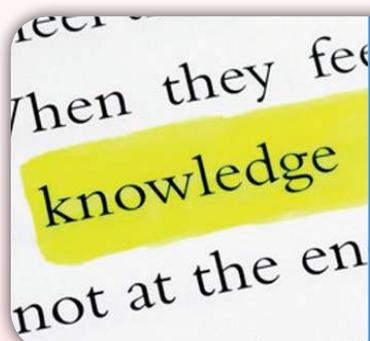
As we have seen, the more rigorous the definition of Knowledge Management, the more gaps there are in SharePoint's capacity to fulfil the mission - however SharePoint offers an effective repository for information.

An organization can obtain truly effective Knowledge Management functionality while continuing to leverage its investment in SharePoint, by adopting a purpose-built Knowledge Management tool - and maintaining a shared knowledge repository in SharePoint.

## The Role and Function of Knowledge Management Software

Knowledge Management software often combines natural language search, knowledge capture, knowledge sharing, taxonomy structure to access information easily, administration and reporting technologies and these tools are particularly effective in the transactional Knowledge Management. Therefore SharePoint has inherent Knowledge Management limitations such as:

- **More effective search.** A Knowledge Management solution goes beyond the limitations of keyword searching, providing natural language search that allows users to express their search criteria in terms that make sense to them - in their own language. Once the organization's content is indexed, search will improve continuously over time, as the search engine enhances the indexing as the content evolves and documents become associated with actual questions.



“The more rigorous the definition of Knowledge Management, the more gaps there are in SharePoint's capacity to fulfil the mission”

A tool with “self-learning” characteristics actually eliminates the need to Meta tag documents, generating tags automatically as the system is used.

- **Extending the range of search across all platforms and information sources.** Users can search content across and beyond the enterprise – not just within a given site collection on a specific server farm, as would be the case with SharePoint.
- **More granular search results.** Unlike Microsoft’s own enterprise search engine, search using a true Knowledge Management tool can isolate a relevant passage within a large document; the solution then is not the entire document, but the specific, relevant passage.
- **Providing “push” features for knowledge content.** “Hot Topics” and “Frequently Offered Solutions” are standard features of a Knowledge Management system, enabling knowledge managers to push critical, “required reading” or frequently useful knowledge to users. This type of knowledge sharing can be handcrafted in SharePoint through “web parts,” but is inherent in the user experience with a Knowledge Management tool.
- **A full suite of Knowledge Management metrics and reports.** Knowledge Management reporting goes far beyond page views and audit logs. Reports designed specifically for Knowledge Management allow tracking of the content most widely used to resolve queries, allowing team leadership to reward contributors of the most valued content and incentivize regular contribution. Other reports track individuals’ search histories and rates of content usage, allowing reinforcement of effective search and knowledge consumption. Reporting enables the manager to analyse unresolved cases, or incidents closed without the use of knowledge content, allowing the team to discover knowledge gaps or flag content that is losing relevancy.



“This is a huge cost saving not only in training time but also support for new users”





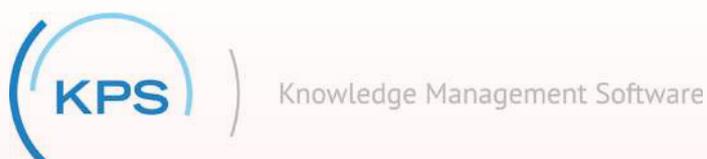
## Summary

SharePoint is emerging as a dominant platform for content management and collaboration, in organizations committed to Microsoft's network architecture. A solution embracing both SharePoint and Knowledge Management platforms can provide a complete range of Knowledge Management functionality, from traditional, top-down knowledge base construction to bottom-up, social knowledge creation, including transactional forms of Knowledge Management that are impractical with a SharePoint-only solution.

Also Knowledge Management software can index content across SharePoint collections as well as any other sources of information across the whole organisation. In other words Knowledge Management software offers controlled and prioritized access to ALL information across the organization regardless of where and in which format it is stored.

*For a detailed analysis of SharePoint and Knowledge Management Software study also see:*

*Microsoft SharePoint and Knowledge Management Systems.*



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