



CAPITAL H

Creating context for a connected world

Knowledge management: Creating context for a connected world

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Burt Rea: Hi, and welcome to the Capital H podcast—a podcast exploring the latest trends and developments surrounding work, the workforce, and the workplace. I'm your host, Burt Rea, a managing director in Deloitte's Human Capital practice focusing on talent and development, as well as leading our Research and Sensing organization. I'm thrilled to continue our dive into the findings of Deloitte's 2020 Human Capital Trends survey. After so many years of this survey, we keep seeing powerful insights emerge related to today's workforce.

Knowledge has perennially been a key competitive differentiator for driving organizational performance. But with so many advanced technologies, new ways of working, and shifts in the workforce composition, can best practices in knowledge management keep up? In this episode, we'll discuss how organizations can overhaul their knowledge creation approach to help maximize human potential in the workplace. To get us started, I'd like to welcome Hans Visschers, the global head of knowledge management at Philips.

Steve Lancaster: Hans, good morning. Thanks for joining us today on the Capital H podcast.

Hans Visschers: Good morning, Steve.

Steve: Good to have you. Hans, I know that you've been at Philips for some time now. Can you tell our listeners a little bit about your role as the global head of knowledge management at Philips?

Hans: Yeah, sure, Steve. Thanks for introducing me. As the global head of knowledge management, I lead a global initiative to set up a central knowledge management capability. As you might know, Philips is a large health tech company, and we are active in many markets and many businesses. We had a couple of different KM initiatives across our company.

In 2017, we set up an initiative to really make it an enterprise-wide effort to centralize one knowledge management capability that would help a lot of businesses and markets to accelerate with knowledge management. And that team, that initiative, I'm leading, that's my role.

Steve: That's great. So, you've been in this role for a while now. How have you seen the topic of KM evolve over the last few years?

Hans: There's a lot of attention already at Philips for a long time. Knowledge management—I think already since the 80s and the 90s, we were talking about knowledge management. We talked a little about document management and making sure that knowledge is being stored and in the right place. What I see now happening in the last years, especially at Philips and maybe also in other companies, is that there is more focus to consider knowledge really as a strategic asset. And also make sure that the culture of knowledge sharing and embedding it in a daily way of working, that that gets much more attention.

And that's giving us also a boost, because our executive management team really recognized the value of knowledge management. And they consider it a strategic asset for our company. And that boosts actually the attention and the time that people could spend on active knowledge sharing. And it also raised attention to change the culture much better, I think, moving from a more document management-oriented knowledge management system into a system where knowledge sharing and reuse is being motivated. That's great development, I think.

Steve: Yeah, that's great. I mean, it really does sound like the mandate has changed for knowledge management from being just a collection of documents that you can refer to at some point, to really being a strategic asset. Sometimes the term knowledge management can carry some baggage with it. And so, how is knowledge management defined at Philips?

Hans: When I talk to people in our company, you see all different thoughts and ideas, and people have different baggage on the word knowledge management. And actually, our CEO made it very simple. He said, "It's all about having the knowledge at your fingertips." You need to have the knowledge at the place where you need it at the moment in the right format. And that was actually our starting point. So how do we help our account managers, our research engineers, our product engineers with the right knowledge at the right time? And we actually split it up into two things. Like you need something, I need to find some stuff, I need to find some documents, or you need to find an expert, and you need to find somebody that can help you with something. So actually, these two use cases are centrally in the definition of knowledge management at our company.

Yeah, that's actually where we all build our capability around. So how do we help people find something, some content? Or, how do we help them find the right experts or the right professional to help that person with a problem or a solution?

Steve: I know that you and I have talked about this before, and I love the story that you tell about how you got to the point where that vision that you just described became an impetus for you to make a change to the knowledge management program. Can you tell our listeners a little bit about that? What inspired Philips to transform its knowledge management function?

Hans: Yeah, absolutely. Philips, we are already in a big transformation since 2011, so nearly 10 years now. And we were originally a more product-selling company. We had a large global footprint, we had

a large portfolio of products. And we are transforming now really into a health tech solutions provider. And that also requires much more, let's say, knowledge to sell to our customers. And so instead of selling products, we sell solutions to our customers.

And in that transformation, more sharing across markets, across business lines was required. And that was also recognized by our executive management team. So, they really put it high on the map as something that needs to be developed on a central level, on an enterprise level. So not centrally in the sense that we direct everybody on knowledge management, but at least a central capability that could help business leaders standardize the way of doing knowledge management. Then it could help them really achieve their objective much faster. And that's the whole transformation which we are in already for a long time. That is really being accelerated. And it really helps to share the best practices and the solutions across our markets and businesses. As you know, Philips, we have 70 markets. And in each market, people are delivering solutions and proposals to our customers. And when we found out that one day, one of the account managers was delivering a proposal exactly at the same time in another country as someone was working on it. And we didn't know that from each other. That was really a starting point, where we said, "Hey, we are both working on the same thing. We didn't know that from each other. We presented different outcomes. How can we avoid that? How can we make sure that next time we have a certain challenge that we really team up, and share what we know, and share what we have invented, to avoid that we reinvent that wheel every time?"

And that insight across markets was critical for a further boost of our capability. And that led to the need to really make sure that we share our learnings, and we avoid that we reinvent the wheel every time.

Steve: That's great. You have a pretty clear vision for what KM means at Philips, and you talked a little bit about the transformation program that you have. Can you talk about the broad objectives of your transformation program?

Hans: At Philips, we are transforming the organization, actually. So that means that it's a balancing act. If you change one thing, you also have to change the other thing. So, if you change your systems, you have to change your processes, if you change your processes, you probably have to change the way people are trained and the learnings and everything. So, it's a balancing act of doing it all together.

The same is for knowledge management. What we do now with knowledge management, we enable programs that drive change. So, for example, in our whole solutions transformation, where we have more focus on solution selling, we are an enabler. We help that transformation team to share best practices, share learnings, make experts visible. We also help a transformation program on improvement of service delivery. We help an innovation transformation program.

So, what we do with KM is that we make sure we enable the different large transformation topics, and we are part of these programs, to make sure that they can speed up their transformation. So, we are not only doing knowledge management, we are helping the transformation programs to accelerate by sharing knowledge via these programs. So that's also our position. We are enabling capabilities, I would say.

And by doing that, we connect directly to business objectives. So, our goal is not knowledge management. Our goal is to better improve the business outcomes by applying a structured way of doing knowledge management. And so that's what we do every time, when we start with an initiative for a project, we look at what are we going to change? What are the objectives that we try to reach? How can expert profiling help in doing faster customer proposals? Or how can reuse of materials help do a faster innovation program? And so on, and so on. So, we always tap into the business objectives that are required. And by doing that, we help the transformational progress of Philips.

Steve: I love the fact that your KM program is centered around business objectives. Oftentimes, when we talk to some of our

clients, we hear that technology is the key consideration of their KM programs, but you're really looking at knowledge management as not just a technology solution, but you're really looking at it as a business solution, is that right?

Hans: Yeah, exactly. But it goes hand in hand, so it's not all this or that. I think technology, I mean, if you are looking for something, you always start with technology. You type in something on your browser, or you type in your search engine. So, technology is always relevant. We should not forget that. But what we do in our company many times is if we have a problem, we look for an IT solution to solve it. But that's mostly not working, because also with knowledge management, you have to think of what you want to achieve with it. And there's always a cultural change that's required. And we see that as one of the most important changes that's required, the cultural change, to be effective.

So, if you want people to share their proposals or their projects or their lessons learned, you need to think of what triggers them to do that. How can you help them to do that? How can you stimulate them to do that? So, on one side, we have to make the technology easy, accessible. The technology must enable it. But the methodology to do it, and the methodology to celebrate people, to recognize people, and to help them in doing it in their daily work, that's more important. So, our technology must enable it, and the focus must be on the methodology to apply KM in a daily practice.

Steve: It sounds like you've taken a user-centered design approach to your KM program. How has that enabled you to really create a solution that your users are passionate about using, that helps them in their daily work?

Hans: We, at Philips, of course, we have many design awards in our company, our products, and also services solutions. So, we had a large design organization, and they always look at the user-centric design. So, what we asked them, we said, "Hey, look at our employees. They said they're all users of a knowledge management system. So, if you start

searching for something or for someone, what do you do? How do you do that? And what will be the best way, looking at technology, to help them to find something?"

So, we defined a couple of user stories, finding people, finding certain experts, finding an account manager, and so on, to design a system that would help the professional to find something. And that user-centric approach really works because our system has now a look, a feel, that is really, let's say, more in style, and really helps them in easily navigating through a knowledge area and also helps to increase adoption rates. And so, people like using the system, people go in there and more easily share something, and that's really helping the adoption of KM, in that sense.

Steve: So, we've talked about the business priorities of how KM is a business program. We've talked about the user-centered design piece and how users have a key role in KM at Philips, but typically, the most tangible, visible part of a KM program is the technology that the users use. Can you talk a little bit about the technology ecosystem that you have around your KM program at Philips?

Hans: Yeah, absolutely. Philips, I mean, we have 125 years of history in our company, so we have a large IT landscape, we have a lot of legacy systems, and one of the things in a transformation is making sure that we get rid of all these legacy systems or we merge our systems. And in each core system, there's a lot of knowledge, a lot of content, and a lot of knowledge that people need. So that is one thing, we have to make sure that people can go into these large systems to really find what they need.

On the other hand, we have our instructed systems, where people store, for example, best practices or other things. And what we do is our KM system is built on SharePoint 365, and we want to make sure that people from central KM system can navigate through to a system that they need. And these are mostly authorized systems, like Salesforce. Not everybody can go in there or our research database. It's not accessible for everyone. So, what we want to make sure is that people

know that there's a database with that content, and if you want to view that content, that you can ask the owner of the database to access for information that might be in there. And that's how we are starting to help people navigate through the organization to the right place, to the right community, to the right database or to drive experts that can help them solve their problem.

And our current technology to do that is—we call it Knowledge Hub, and it's sort of an index actually where people can start browsing for knowledge. It contains all our expert profiles linked in there. So, if you want to find someone, you go into the Knowledge Hub, you look in the database of 80,000 people, and you also find some community practice where you can ask questions as well. So that's actually the IT technology foundation that we have for our KM system.

Steve: Are you using any advanced AI to help your users use the system more efficiently, so that they're not having to either manually tag metadata into something that they're submitting to the knowledge base, or that they're using AI to help them prevent that reinvention of the wheel when they're starting a new project?

Hans: We are experimenting, as many companies do at the moment, with AI. So, when we started, we were thinking big and we were starting small and we were scaling fast. And when we were thinking big, we already took into account that an active AI system would help in pushing knowledge to the right people, to the right moment of need.

So, we have that in our design, and in some places we are trying it out. But we definitely are working in that direction, and to really give people the latest insights in their region or in their area of interest. And so that's what we are working on. We are still piloting in there, but yeah, we definitely take that into account, and it definitely will help to find what you need.

Steve: So, I'm going to pivot a little bit away from technology, Hans, and one of the things that we know is that KM at the end of

the day may be physically or tangibly seen by a technology solution, but it's used by users and by people. And so, the culture component is an important part of any KM system. Can you talk a little bit about the knowledge-sharing culture at Phillips? Has it changed in the last few years, or how has your KM transformation changed your knowledge-sharing culture at Phillips?

Hans: Yeah, it's also probably the most difficult topic to change, the culture. But absolutely, we have seen interesting changes over the last years, and this starts primarily also with leadership behaviors, leadership triggering that change. But also, from the outside world, the thinker, people see how easy it is to find something in the outside world and how difficult it sometimes is to find something internally.

And what we see in the whole cultural change is a lot of attention from leadership who share best practices. Every time when we are having a call across markets, you see questions coming up like, "Hey, where can I find that great project?" or, "Where can I find that great solution that you just presented?" And every time, we mention the Knowledge Hub as a place to go, so you slowly see people sharing more and more, and that's also being stimulated, of course. On that side, we also recognized that it doesn't go automatically. And also, many people in our company are engineers, people that like to invent the wheel themselves. And sometimes it's still considered being stupid if you ask a question, right? "What? Don't you know that?"

And so, we have to actually really trigger people to ask a question in a chat board or in a community. And we're slowly trying to do that. And the best way to do it is that leaders start doing that and role model that behavior. That's what we see happening today. We are asking questions, sharing questions, sharing answers, sharing great examples. But also sharing our learnings. And that change is slowly moving on.

Another example is our Philips excellence competition we have every year. We ask all our businesses and markets to submit great

ideas that they have. We have a prize for the best idea and the most excellent solution to a problem or to an issue. And what we did in the past was really we celebrated that great idea. But now, at last year's, there's more and more attention to the reuse of that idea.

And it's good if you have a great idea and win the prize, but if nobody is adopting that idea, nobody is really using that idea, then it might not be that good of an idea, right? So, more and more attention in that competition is also to the reuse and scalability of an idea. And that is also one of the things that resulted from our KM, let's say, efforts, that more attention to reuse of great ideas.

So yeah, I see a trend in there. And another thing we are working on, we have organized our organization in different knowledge areas and each knowledge area has a leader. And what we do with that leader is we identify the experts within those areas, and we also discuss the role of these experts in that KM system. And these experts, they play a crucial role in championing the KM system. And so, we ask them to really role model knowledge sharing, proactively start discussions, that kind of thing. So slowly we see that network growing and expanding and also slowly we see that culture a bit changing. So, all in all, it's not an easy effort, but we see progress there.

Steve: So, Hans, you touched on this a little bit. One of the things in an organization is making the invisible visible, so capturing that tacit knowledge in the organization and exposing it to others. And in a knowledge economy, when knowledge is power, how are you encouraging your users to actively share knowledge through incentives? What types of incentives do you give to others to encourage them to share knowledge through the organization?

Hans: There are actually the two things here, you come up with the carrot and stick, so to say. So, one way we need to make sure that it's—we have people in our organization that are hired for their expertise. So, we also require from them that they share that expertise.

And they have performance cycles that they need to share the latest, the best practices, validate questions and answers, and so on. And so that's one way. We make it part of our day-to-day work. So, if we close a project, you need to make sure that all the learnings are captured and being shared. I mean, you can take a video or whatever. So, making sure that's in the way of working, and that's more or less how the stick comes in.

Looking at the other side, the carrot, you need to celebrate people that really share what they know. And there also comes a bit of technology and gamification. If you have in a KM system, all people are—all the profiles are in—and if you share knowledge, you can be endorsed, you can be liked. People see it on your profile that you have shared their projects. And it's also a sort of recognition, like what you see on LinkedIn, for example, in the external world.

People have great endorsements for great projects for my name. And it's also sort of a reward. If you have great things and people are recognizing you for that, that is really helping. There's not one way of doing it within a company. If you look at our research engineers, they have different way of working than the account managers and the people that do service delivery. There are differences in all these ways of working. Also, the recognition systems are different. And we try to adhere to what's best in that situation. We tried to, in one way, make it part of the way we work and so it's more what we expect from people. Another way we try to reward people and celebrate them for great effort and great sharings.

Steve: Thank you, Hans. So, starting to wrap up a little bit here, when you think about leaders who may be just starting their knowledge management journey, what advice do you have for those who may be frustrated with the current state of KM in their own organizations or looking for examples of what they should do? What piece of advice do you have?

Hans: I think two things I'd like to share. First of all, at least in our company, it was actually very clear that if you want to win the competition, we needed to share more knowledge. We need to be faster with delivering something to a customer, we need to have the best and highest quality available. If there's something like a learning, that needs to be shared immediately across markets. The connection to business objectives is very critical. And if people, business leaders see that there's a great failure when doing KM, that is the most critical thing, of course. And the belief that it works, that's critical. But okay, that's the hardest one to get. But what we did from the beginning is making that quite feasible. And what is the benefit of KM and how does it help each business in accelerating? If you do not have that sharpness, I think it will be hard to start anyway. The business case for KM, that needs to be sharp. And the second thing, what we were actually doing when we started this was, we had the motto I shared earlier, "Think big, start small, and scale fast." What we did was we developed a capability and we piloted that in three different areas with the commitment of their leaders in three different areas. One was the consulting area, one was more service area, and the other one was more technology area. And we piloted that.

And then after that, when it was successful, we adjusted our capability. And then after that, when we started small, we could scale up rapidly. We started to think big, we started with, let's design something which can be applied enterprisewide. And we started it small and then we scaled up fast.

These two things, first of all, making sure that we really have a good business case and understand how it helps the organization become better. And the second thing was the way we approached it initially, starting small and scaling fast. These were the two tips I would share and think of putting it into the design of your system.

Steve: I love that. So, Hans, last question for you. What one thing do you wish you would've known when you started the journey that would've helped you be more successful on this KM transformation?

Hans: Good question. What we see happening is that technology is changing so rapidly. And when we started in 2017, there were things available today that weren't available three years ago or even known three years ago. So, I think what we learned is that the methodology of doing KM can be similar, but you need to have a methodology that can adapt rapidly to new technologies. A methodology that is quite independent of technology. And if the technology changes as you replicate quickly, again, you can adhere to that. And we are now at that stage, so we have now methodology that's quite independent from the technology, so we can adjust, move technologies easily. But that's something that I think if we would have taken that into account at the beginning, that would've helped us be a lot faster.

Steve: Well, Hans, thank you so much for joining us today. I really appreciate you spending some time sharing your experience with our listeners.

Hans: Welcome. It was a pleasure to do so.

Burt: Thanks so much to Hans Visschers from Philips for sharing his experiences and insight into his company's leading knowledge management practices. And now I'd like to welcome today's round table speakers. We have Mark Holmstrom, a principal in the Workforce Transformation practice of Deloitte's Human Capital practice, focusing on the future of work, and Steve Lancaster-Hall rejoining us from earlier. We'll discuss how knowledge management has changed over the past decade and how we anticipate it will continue to evolve.

Mark, welcome to the podcast. Thanks for joining us today. And, Steve, welcome back. Just by way of introductions, Mark is a principal with our Workforce Transformation practice for Deloitte Consulting. And again, Steve is a managing director for Deloitte Consulting and serves as our national knowledge management services leader. Welcome, Mark and Steve.

Steve: Thanks, Burt.

Mark Holmstrom: Thanks, Burt. How are you today?

Burt: Good. So, we've been talking about knowledge management as an enabler, as a driver of our business. I know we've seen a lot of changes in this topic over the years. And in our recent Human Capital Trends survey, we found a couple of statistics of interest. Seventy-five percent of the organizations that we spoke to or heard from said that creating and preserving knowledge across an evolving workforce is important or very important for their success in the next year, year and a half. But only 9 percent say they are very ready to address this. And this is one of the largest gaps that we've seen in terms of the level of importance ascribed to an issue and the readiness to attack it and deal with it. What's been sort of your experience with this, and what do you see as the root cause behind that disparity? And, Steve, let's start with you.

Steve: So, thanks, Burt. I think that that statistic is really indicative of the fact that in many people's minds, knowledge management is what it was 10 years ago. It is a document repository enabled by search that is meant to be kind of a formal, static way of preserving knowledge. And I think what our clients are starting to realize is that knowledge is being created every day throughout the organization. It's being created by their employees. It's being created by their contractors. It's being created across the organization at pockets, of silos of information. And because the generation of knowledge is so prolific right now, the ability to capture it and use it for business benefit is becoming a challenge.

And so, the 75 percent piece I think that they're seeing is, the need to preserve knowledge is being driven by this change. It's being changed at the workforce and a change in the way that we're communicating and engaging with each other. But digital tools are also changing so quickly that I think a lot of companies are struggling to figure out where to start. And so, we spend a lot of time with our clients just helping them figure out where's a good place to start without trying to boil the ocean all at once.

Burt: Right.

Mark: And maybe I'll add to that. When I think of places to start, as a pioneer and one of our leaders in the Future of Work practice, one of the things I think about is that historically organizations have tried to separate knowledge from the people who create that knowledge. And that's a very old way of thinking. A project would end. You would ask people for deliverables. You'd try to harvest knowledge. How do you transform so that you actually collect knowledge in the flow of work? We're now at the point with cloud-based technologies so that when people are working in the open, they're working together in teams, you can actually harvest knowledge in really unique ways without, frankly, a lot of steps from the individual, and really reward people for the great knowledge they create.

Steve: To pile onto that, Mark, when we look at knowledge in the organization, the documented piece, the implicit piece, that only makes up about 25 percent of the knowledge of the organization. The 75 percent of the knowledge is tacit. It sits in people's heads. It's hard to curate. And so, this curating and the flow of work that Mark talked about is an important change in trend that we're seeing in the ability to capture that knowledge and not only curate it, but also present it into the flow of work. We can talk in a bit about some trends we're seeing around personalization and the use of auto-tagging, auto-classification, and some advanced AI tools that allow knowledge not only to be pulled but also pushed at the point of need with personalization.

Burt: Yeah. I see the old model of knowledge management is a library or repository of static material on shelves. You would go and supplicate yourself to the librarian and ask for something. They'd dust it off hand it to you, and you'd have to read it and figure out what it was, never getting to speak to the author. Now, today, I think there's the opportunity to think about knowledge management as more like an investigative reporting team. They go out into the field, they search out good stories, they package them persuasively, and present them to users in their moment of need so that there

isn't that disconnect between creator of knowledge and user of knowledge.

Steve: Yeah. That crowdsourcing of knowledge is really something that's emerged over the last few years, but with it comes risk. And so, with crowdsourcing, you have to have good governance around it so that bad knowledge is not being proliferated through the organization.

Burt: Right.

Mark: And I would just add that historically, a lot of these different topical areas in technology have been treated as independent silos. So, if you think of knowledge management separate from communication collaboration, separate from file storage, separate from data analytics and visualization, separate from workflow. And one of the trends that we're seeing is how organizations are able to bring these things together. So, when I think of knowledge, I think of the best knowledge in an organization is that those ideas and that IP, it has lasting value that they want to curate and keep for longer periods of time, call it three to five years' longer duration. It's the core IP of an organization. There's a lot of communication collaboration that happens that's kind of chatter. And so how do you balance the need to allow people to communicate and collaborate, but also capture those core assets of an organization?

Steve: And those core assets over time will continue to evolve. So, you have to have mechanisms in place to take this chatter and the evolution and continue to update them over time so that they don't become stale. Static can sometimes mean stale, and so you want to make sure that you do have processes in place to make sure that you're updating this with the latest and greatest knowledge in the organization.

Burt: Right. Because your repository could quickly become a boneyard if you don't do that curation role. Absolutely.

Steve: That's right.

Burt: So, one of the trends that has come up, and the theme of this year's Trends report has been paradox in terms of humans and technology, in terms of the desire for individuality, and also the desire for belonging. One of the interesting paradoxes, I think, that could apply to this situation as we think about it is with the capabilities that are emerging and coming into the forefront with technology, we start to ask the question, "Just because we can doesn't mean we should." How would you apply that question to a knowledge management context?

Mark: Yeah. Maybe I'll go ahead and start. Steven Johnson, one of the innovative pioneers in kind of future of work and innovation has a quote, and I'm not going to repeat it directly. But he talks about the path of innovation technology follows its own course and the morals for how you use it is up to us. I think one of the key things when you think about knowledge, the norms, behaviors, and the cultural aspects is really critical. How do you reward people? How do you think about creating the right mental pathways for people? And frankly giving people the desire to really share their best ideas. The patent office is a perfect example. We've created an engine that encourages people to get their best ideas into a public domain and share those ideas broadly. Frankly, it benefits all of us. And so, a lot of it is around really using the human-centered approach to understanding values, norms, and behaviors as you think about the use of technology.

Burt: Yeah. Steve, your thoughts?

Steve: I would say that ethically, there's a lot that we can do with technology today that we talked about the curation of knowledge. We can go through, we can scrape people's hard drives. We can duplicate and clone things that are on their machines. We can capture all of their conversations. And that kind of big brother approach, we're able to do that. We can do it. But just because we can doesn't mean that we should do it. You want to enable people to have a voice in the conversation, not feel like you're spying on them. To Mark's point, you want to

encourage them, incentivize them to share knowledge so that knowledge becomes power. You can now empower your knowledge through the organization.

But if you start to curate it, you actually discourage people from even using the systems that you have to collaborate with both through synchronous and asynchronous communication. They question the validity of it. They question the big brother nature of it. And so, we really have to make sure that we're bringing people in, we're thinking about how they're going to use it. We call that the knowledge flow process, where knowledge is created and consumed in the organization. And put mechanisms in place that are natural for people to use and not feel like they're being spied on.

Burt: Right. Although are there situations where an individual might say, "Turn on recording. I've got something important to say that I want to put in the knowledge repository," and then, "Turn off recording. I'm done"?

Mark: There are. A hundred percent. So, when I think of some great uses of technology, like in meetings, for instance, there's great technology now where you can have an AI tool that you can monitor the conversation. And you can just talk and say, "Hey, capture this task and give it to Steve." And it'll put it in the to-do list and into the repository. There's some great technologies that allow new ways of working.

Burt: Yeah. Also, stats from our survey, half of the survey respondents do not provide members of their alternative workforce with access to knowledge-sharing tools and platforms, and only 16 percent see integrating knowledge management across on-balance sheet and off-balance sheet workers as a key factor to consider in developing their knowledge management strategy. It's kind of mixed in terms of how organizations see that alternative workforce role.

Mark: Yeah, totally. A lot of organizations think of solving knowledge management

primarily for their employees, and the biggest job is they don't think about more broadly all the partners that are part of that solution. A lot of the old way of thinking is this notion that trusted employees are part of what we would call, "the castle of the organization." They're in a circle of trust, they get access to all the knowledge. They get access to the systems and technologies that they need to be successful. The contingent staff that are critical to the success of the organization don't necessarily have the same access to the things they need to do to create the most value for the organization. One of the mental models we talk with clients about is a 21st century way to think of your organization, is less of a castle metaphor where it's locked in, you're either inside the organization or outside, and more of a train station.

It's fluid, it's dynamic, there's technology, there's people coming from different organizations, there's contingent staff and noncontingent. Technology's guiding people. But it's organized and it's structured and it's architected, and it's frankly elegant, right? When we think of helping clients, we think about broadly thinking about all the different constituents that are part of the success of their organization. How do we get the right information to the right people, at the right time, for them to provide the most value they can? How do we harvest the right information for our organization and protect those assets over time, so we can continue to grow and improve?

Burt: Yeah. Well, I want to challenge your right information to the right people at the right time, which is valuable, but what about serendipity? What about running into someone in the cafeteria and say, "Hey, what are you working on?" And they share something with you that's groundbreaking for something completely unrelated that you're working on. How do we recreate that?

Steve: Yeah. That virtualization of work that we're all now facing, one of the things that we're really struggling with is how to create these accidental collisions that happen in the workplace. You actually have to be more

intentional about doing that. You have to—it becomes more of an effort to check in with people to touch base and to bump in, a lot of use of tools like Microsoft Teams where they're having conversations and space and people can weigh in to that conversation. They can be part of it or they can just observe it. That space where people can actually have the ability to have these conversations, which lead frankly to new ideas in a more collaborative environment, it's a challenge that we're trying to overcome in the new virtual workplace and something that we know that our clients are struggling with.

Burt: Yeah.

Mark: I would just add a little different flavor of what Steve said, I agree with what he said 100 percent, is the idea of using robotics and cognitive in new and novel ways. The reality is that when you start to work in a more digital online space, you can actually use machines to organize and force some of those casual collisions. I'm going to give you an example of one of our Deloitte apps we have called Magnet. When I show up at a certain geography, let's say I show up in New York and, Burt, you're in New York that day. It tells me that one of my colleagues, who I love to work with, is in New York today, and gives us an opportunity to have a casual collision. Using technology in new and novel ways, I think, is one of the ways that I think the future of work will be enabled.

Burt: Yeah. Talk a little bit more about the nature of knowledge, the nature of information. How knowledge is created, and maybe the difference between data, information, knowledge, and insight.

Steve: The way we think about knowledge in content is a little bit different. Oftentimes, you hear people talk about content management systems. Content, we equate to a book. Content management systems are bookshelves that the books sit in. Knowledge is the insight about that book. It's being able to navigate to a specific page with a specific paragraph that answers a question that you have at that given time and learning something about what's in front of you and

sharing that wisdom with someone else. That curation of that insight is what's important in a knowledge management system. It's not just about documenting a conversation. It's about documenting what you've learned from that conversation and how that insight can be used for something else.

Burt: Another topic for you. Let's jump to making this practical, back to that original statistic I shared from our Human Capital Trends survey that 75 percent of our respondents feel this is a critical issue, yet only 9 percent are ready to deal with it. For our audience in that 91 percent majority, how do you get started? How do you sort through the mix of stuff that you've already got on the shelf, the different proliferations of this/those platform. How do you start to move towards a modern knowledge management strategy?

Steve: Well, the first thing is knowledge management is not just a technology solution, it's a business solution. And so, you have to start by understanding how knowledge plays into the role of you executing the strategy of the organization. How are you going to govern updates to the knowledge in the organization so that curation, that creation, that knowledge owner and knowledge editor piece, how are we going to promote the right thing and make sure that we're not promoting the wrong answer within an organization? We start to crowdsource knowledge. How are we going to make sure that we're putting controls around that? So that governance piece becomes really important.

We talked about the knowledge flow processes, where knowledge is created, where it's consumed and where it can be presented at a point of need to help somebody perform their job. And that means understanding what people are doing. Not generic person, but people within the organization.

The next piece is understanding the content that you have and creating the right taxonomy and the right ontology to allow you to index that knowledge and to use tools like auto-tagging and auto-classification, AI tools that make it easier for people to submit knowledge to the knowledge base rather than make it

very manual and cumbersome for them to try to do so, and even make that hard to be found later.

So how do you structure content? We talked a little bit about serving up knowledge. Well, a lot of that serving up is based around your ability to structure a piece of content. I may not need a 55-page document. I may just need one paragraph to answer my question, but I may want to have the option to read that 55 pages if I need to. So, you have to be able to have that structure to answer the question that people have.

And once you understand this, once you understand how people will use the information, what type of content you have, how it's going to be structured, what the knowledge architecture of that is, then you can create the technology solution. And once you've done that, you can apply the latest tools like AI, knowing that AI is not going to be something that's going to come right out of the box answering the question. You're going to have to train it. You're going to have to let it run, and it gets smarter over time as it gets more data. But it will help you provide that experience that you're looking for.

And then finally realizing that humans are the ones that are ultimately going to use this, and you have to have the right incentives, the right motivations. You have to develop the right skills within the organization to use it so that they can incorporate it into their ways of working. That together is what allows you to create that knowledge management system. Start by understanding the business problem that you're trying to solve. Don't try to start boiling the ocean and creating an enterprise solution all at once. Pick an NBP. Start small, get success, show that it can scale, scale it beyond that point, and then go broader within the organization. That's the recipe for success in a knowledge management program that we see with our clients.

Burt: Yeah. Mark, thoughts on that?

Mark: Yeah, I love that, Steve. And I would just add to it a little bit more around, knowledge is a journey, it's not a destination.

And what we're seeing in the technology space is there's new technologies always coming to bear. Cloud technologies, cyber, you take collaboration technologies, AI, the ability to collect sensor data at levels that we've never been able to do so in the past. So, the volume of data is exponentially increasing. Everything's changing. So, the ability to be able to understand the different technologies, figure out how to apply those in your business, and get the most value out of them is critical.

Burt: So, in thinking about the history and the state of the art today, let's turn to the future. What do you see as the emerging opportunities? What's coming over the horizon in the next five to ten years for knowledge management?

Steve: So, I think that the advent of the digital assistant is going to change the way we think about knowledge management in an organization. One of the trends this year was about putting AI as a member of the team. The digital assistant is going to have a role beyond just being a fetcher of information. It's going to be able to help people connect the dots across the organization. It's going to be able to help curate that knowledge that's so hard to do for that task, that knowledge component. It's going to be able to serve up insights in a way that humans miss sometimes, because we are really focused on our piece of the pie rather than the whole pie. And so for me, I think the advent of that digital assistant, as it starts to mature and becomes more incorporated in organizations, it's really going to be game changing for our clients in the way that they think about knowledge. Knowledge becomes now literally connective tissue for organizational success.

Mark: And I would just add a couple other trends I see, as well. The move to cloud. The move to anywhere access to knowledge is a profound, fundamental shift happening as people go from the castle to the train station.

Going cloud first, we truly see that this is a major trend. And that gets to the second trend, which is around the input/output

between the human and the cloud and the network. Right now there's a significant gap, I'm staring at a screen talking to a mic, I've got a keyboard in front of me. There's a lot of research being done around how do you tap into neural networks and connect the knowledge of the world to a brain, and vice versa. I think that that critical barrier that exists today between the human and the global network of knowledge over time will continue to break down. There's even announcements I think this week from some of the leading folks at Tesla around some breakthroughs that they're working on.

Then the last thing is just around use of AI to empower that digital assistant, getting the right information to the right people at the right time. You can see the use of technology that finds patterns in knowledge and serves that up to the right people contextualized so that you can keep pushing the barrier of what is possible. I'm incredibly bullish on the future, I think we can't even imagine the future. I play this game a lot with my kids. I call it "When I was a kid." I play around with this idea, like when I was a kid, we used to drive to work on the ground and sit in traffic. There are kids who are going to say, "Well, why did you do that? That seems really stupid." And we'd say, "That's all we had." And when I think of knowledge, I think of like when I was Mark Holmstrom in 2020, I used to have to try to find knowledge. I used to have to go search it out, and I often didn't find it. And I think in the future, knowledge will find me.

Burt: But that I think also creates an imperative to address and make progress on the safeguards of knowledge and the protections that we need to provide so that we don't confuse collaboration with plagiarism, that we protect what's mine, you protect what's yours, but yet at the same time we can share what we want to share. I think that's a really important parallel path that we have to manage.

Steve: Yeah, that attribution model is really, really important. We've said it before—knowledge is power. People hoard knowledge because they don't want to give

up their power. So, if you can ensure that you've got mechanisms to attribute that knowledge to the right owner, then you will encourage people to be contributors to the knowledge base.

Burt: Yep.

Mark: One hundred percent. The whole idea of keeping knowledge connected to the people who create the knowledge is absolutely critical. You see that in industry and in content area after content and knowledge area after area, where if you can keep that attribution connected, then you see the—like songs is a perfect example. Back when Napster and some of the original technologies came out, that separation between knowledge or that music and the artists was broken, and now it's mostly fixed. I think that over time what you're going to see is it'll be a give and take. Sometimes we'll get it right and sometimes we'll get it wrong, but I think overall it'll play out well in the long term.

Burt: Yeah. That's fascinating. It makes me think of the blockchain capabilities in our finance industries and how we're able to document the progress of a transaction. We could document the progress of knowledge in the same way. Interesting. Well, we're at our time. Mark, any closing thoughts that you'd like to share with our audience?

Mark: I just think this whole space is amazing and exciting. And if I think of the future of work, the opportunities for people to play and to innovate are off the charts. I think we will be blown away when we look back five, ten years from now of what people have come up with. People are incredibly creative, and I think we're just at the forefront of a truly digital world. It's an exciting place to be.

Burt: Yeah.

Steve: Yeah, I couldn't agree more. I think that as knowledge becomes part of the everyday way of us working and engaging with each other, as it becomes part of the organizational assets that we use every single day, we're really at the beginning of the journey rather than towards the end. We're just beginning to

touch between technology and capability and even culturally the things that we're seeing around collaboration and communication. We're really at a point where it's going to be a game-changing component as we look forward to the future, and like Mark said, I'm incredibly bullish around what the future looks like for this space.

Burt: Wonderful. Thank you both for sharing these insights. And thanks again to Hans Visschers from Philips for sharing his experience and insight into how his company's leading knowledge management practices have been put to practical use in application. And again, Steve, thank you for spending time with Hans to share his story, and Mark and Steve, thank you for this really insightful conversation today. We really look forward to continuing the conversation and continuing to see the progress and impact of knowledge management.

Knowledge management was one of the largest reported readiness gaps for respondents in our 2020 Human Capital Trends survey—a sign that many organizations' knowledge management strategies haven't kept pace with the latest developments in technology and data availability. Moving forward, organizations should be focusing on how to derive knowledge management insights and, by extension, tap into the immense amount of data available in today's hyperconnected environment. Thank you to Hans Visschers for sharing his insight, and thank you again to our Deloitte contributors for sharing their experience. In addition to tuning in to our podcast series, you can also read the report online at www.deloitte.com/HCTrends. Thanks for listening.



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