



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Online Knowledge Management

As business operations shift increasingly to the Web, organizations are being forced to move their customer support and service operations online. The benefits and the risks of such a move can be substantial, since the virtual world operates nonstop and provides unlimited opportunities for customer interaction. However, satisfying unlimited demands for information and service can be expensive and can create an “instant response” mentality within the customer base.

The solution to this problem lies in deploying a knowledge management initiative. Using knowledge management technologies, organizations make it possible for their customers to obtain information on their own, enabling them to answer their own queries at any time. Customer service and support agents can devote more time and resources to handling complex issues if many customers can answer their own questions through this self-service.

In an enterprise environment, online knowledge management solutions make it possible to deliver expert knowledge to everyone within an organization. Knowledge management solutions also help mitigate the effects of personnel turnover and job changes since prior captured knowledge remains accessible at all times. Online knowledge management solutions deliver the latest and most up-to-date answers and information across the enterprise because all captured knowledge is current and available.

Implementing an online knowledge management solution requires an organization to recognize that knowledge is unequally distributed within the minds of its employees and often buried in documents, e-mails, FAQs, manuals, and other information sources. The main hurdle to implementing a knowledge management solution lies in the cultural changes needed to make knowledge management really work - namely, the notion that knowledge must be explicitly captured, shared, and leveraged to provide the best possible benefits. Effective knowledge management is much more of an organizational culture than it is a set of tools. Without management support, proper training, and a committed effort, online knowledge management technology by itself will be ineffective. Companies can successfully avoid these pitfalls by choosing the right people, processes and technology, and by implementing knowledge management as a culture change initiative.