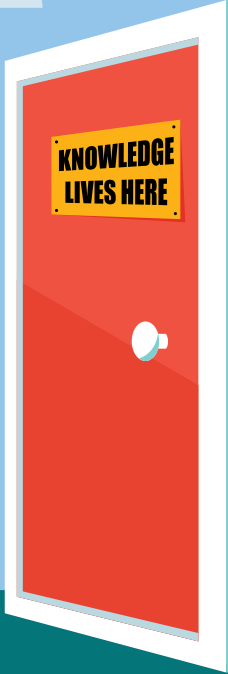


# ITSM111



## Knowledge Management Tips



Tips



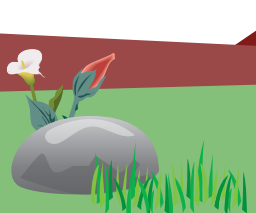
## Introduction

Knowledge management is an organizational capability that can almost singlehandedly transform your IT service management (ITSM) and IT support from good to great. It can drive engagement, empower your people, speed up work and reduce incident resolution times, increase customer satisfaction, and reduce staff attrition. What's not to love about knowledge management?

This whitepaper takes a closer look at one of the most valuable, yet underserved, ITSM processes and how people can best get to grips with what's sometimes viewed too "mechanically," forgetting the employee attitude and behavior changes that are necessary for knowledge management success.

So please read on to better understand:

- What knowledge management is
- The benefits of knowledge management
- What the "Data Information Knowledge Wisdom" model is
- How best to get started with knowledge management
- What to do if you're still struggling to start
- The link between gamification and knowledge management
- How to measure knowledge management success



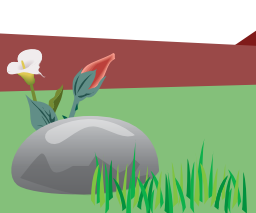
## What is Knowledge Management

In ITIL, the popular ITSM best practice framework, knowledge management is described as the process responsible for sharing perspectives, ideas, experiences, and information, and for ensuring that these are available in the right place and at the right time. The knowledge management process enables informed decisions, and improves efficiency by reducing the need to rediscover what is already known.

In other words, knowledge management is the process that takes what's rattling around in people's heads ("tacit knowledge") and captures it in a database or management system where it can be refined, shared, and used (and reused). This is what is called "explicit knowledge."



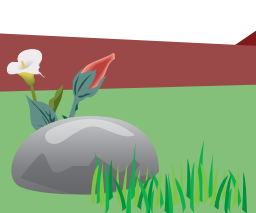
**Key tip:** *while knowledge management is often talked of as just a process, it's really an organizational capability that spans people, process, and technology. So, think of your knowledge management initiative as more than the introduction of a new process.*



## The Benefits of Knowledge Management

One of the hardest parts of starting a knowledge management initiative is “selling” it - either to the people you want to use it or the people that need to fund it financially. So, use the following checklist of potential knowledge management benefits, tailored to your organization, as a starting point for quantifying and communicating the “why” of knowledge management:

- **Increased efficiency and personal productivity, and maybe a reduction in “unit costs.”** For the IT service desk, this could be improved first time fix rates. Because, if service desk agents not only have the right skills, but also access to communal knowledge to solve common issues (while not necessarily being experts in a particular area), then they’ll be able to resolve incidents more quickly. With this reducing wait times, cutting incident resolution times, improving up time, and increasing the ability for IT support to meet agreed service levels and to improve customer satisfaction levels.
- **Increased staff retention.** Staff attrition can be a real challenge in an IT service desk environment. Anything that can be done to make the job easier and more rewarding, and to improve morale and self-esteem, will help with staff retention. Knowledge management is an effective tool here, because it empowers staff with the knowledge they need to get their tasks done more swiftly. Gamification will help too - this is returned to later.
- **Making niche knowledge more widely available.** Something that can really frustrate a service desk analyst are calls where the application involved is considered so specialized that issues need to be “bounced” straight to third-line support. Here knowledge management can be used to bring some of that specialist knowledge into first-line support, with it accessed and used only when needed. It reduces support costs, and the time involved, and increases customer satisfaction (while again helping with staff retention thanks to both upskilling and increased work variety).



## The Data Information Knowledge Wisdom Model

This model is designed to help people understand how knowledge differs from data and information, such that knowledge management activities are more likely to add value. It has four elements, as shown in Diagram 1:

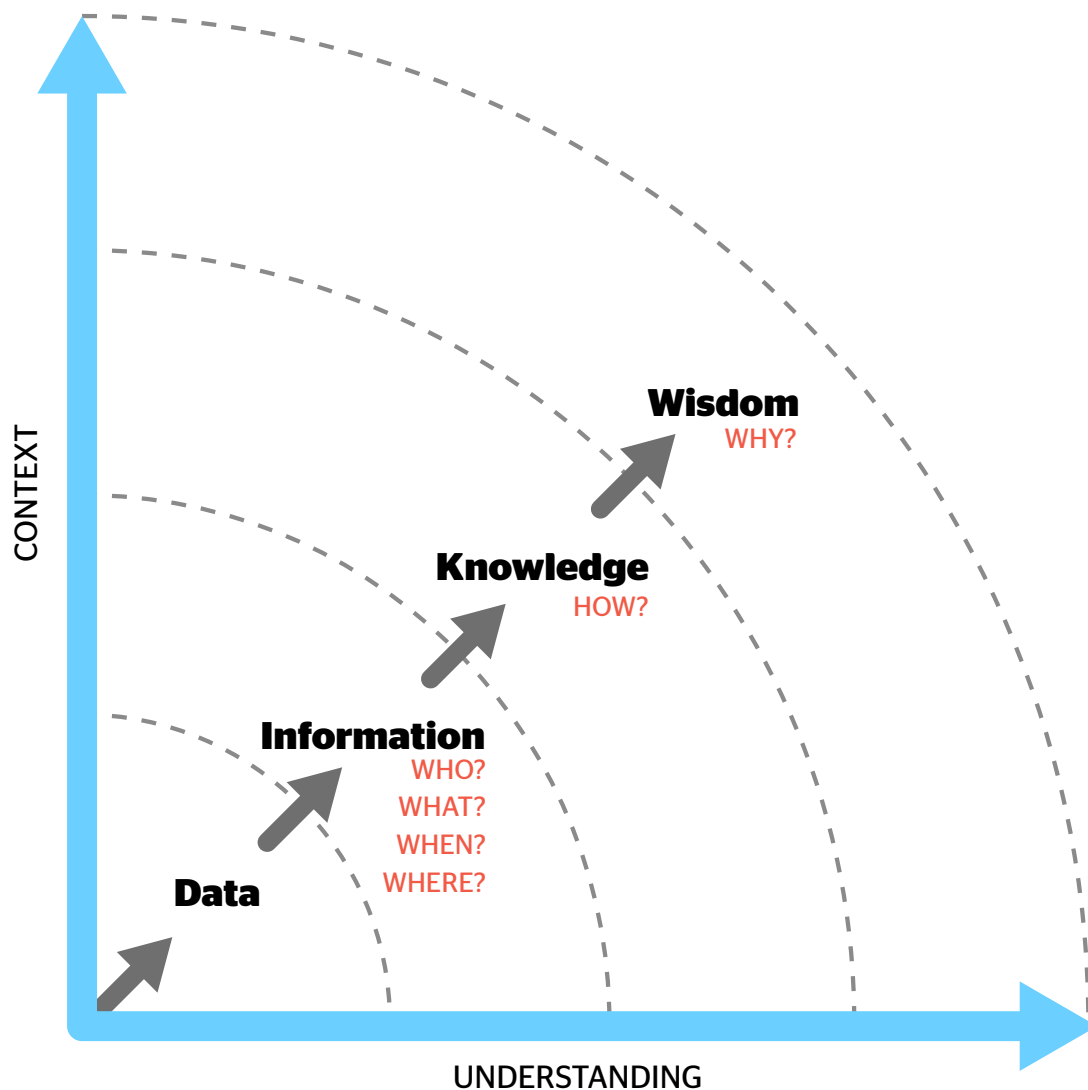
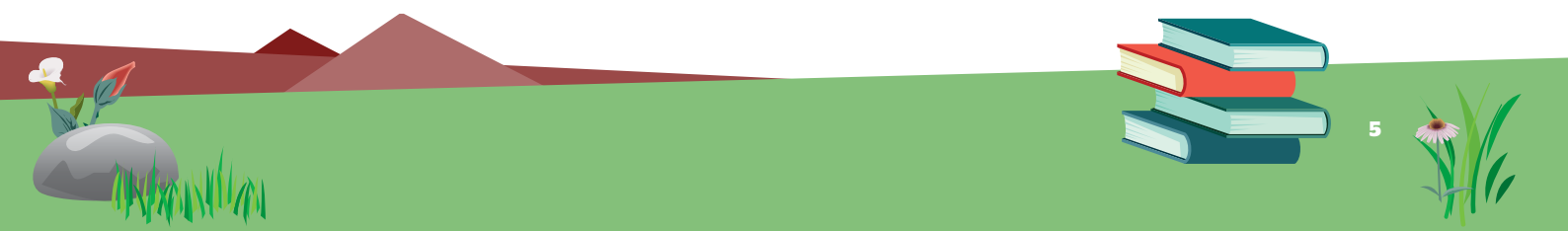


Diagram 1: The Data Information Knowledge Wisdom Model



With each element explained in Table 1 on the next page:

## Data

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- ITIL describes data as a discrete series of facts about events. Data is usually raw in format, not organized in any way, and provides no further information regarding patterns, structure, or context.
- Data often represents singular facts or numbers that by themselves have little meaning.
- Knowledge management activities might review data and add context so that it can be transformed into information.

## Information

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- Data becomes information when it can be viewed in a specific context.
- According to ITIL, for data to become information it must be contextualized, categorized, calculated, and condensed.
- The key knowledge management process around information is managing the content in a way that adds value. In other words, ensuring that information is easy to capture, find, and reuse such that we don't keep making the same mistakes and duplication of effort is reduced.

## Knowledge

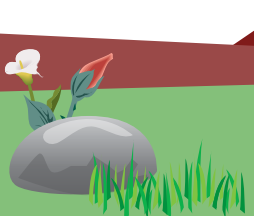
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- For information to become knowledge it must be processed, organized, or structured in some way.
- Knowledge usually combines information with experience and can thus then be used as a basis for decision-making or taking an action.
- Knowledge is ultimately made up of the experiences, ideas, insights, values, and judgements of your people.

## Wisdom

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- Wisdom is the trickiest stage to explain.
- ITIL defines wisdom as being the ultimate discernment of the material and having the application and contextual awareness to provide a strong, common sense judgement.





**Key tip:** when introducing formal knowledge management, creating the right culture is absolutely critical such that people feel comfortable adding to knowledge bases and articles, and trust existing knowledge articles when taking actions or making decisions. Done well, knowledge management will engage and upskill your people but it does require an investment in organizational change management such that people buy in to the associated changes to ways of working.



## Six Tips for Getting Started With Knowledge Management

It's important to start with the organizational change management (OCM) basics:

- 1. Express the individual, team, and business benefits (of knowledge management) in terms that people will understand.** People need to know the “what’s in it for me?” If you don’t do this, expect resistance to change and thus knowledge management adoption.
- 2. Aim to capture your knowledge in one place.** Whether you have a service desk or ITSM tool, a SharePoint site, or even an internal wiki – have your knowledge in one central place so that everyone knows where to both store and find it.
- 3. Look at what you already have available before creating new knowledge articles.** There’s no point “reinventing the wheel” with knowledge management, and individuals and teams might already have important knowledge documented on their PCs for as and when they need help.
- 4. Take a “use it or lose it” approach.** You’ll need to keep updating your knowledge base over time. It doesn’t matter if your knowledge base is part of an ITSM tool or if it lives on the service desk intranet as a wiki doc, it needs to be kept up to date to continue to add value. People will quickly lose faith in a knowledge management capability if what they find is ultimately of no use to them.
- 5. Use knowledge management to improve your self-service offering, helping end users to help themselves.** Having a FAQ capability and knowledge articles available via the corporate IT self-service capability is a key element of getting end users to adopt self-service – this instant help and gratification offers “stickiness” and drives repeat use of self-service. It, of course, also deflects issues and requests from the service desk, easing pressure and allowing IT support staff to focus on more complex tasks.
- 6. Measure and communicate your success.** Measurement is key to the ongoing success of knowledge management but ensure that you measure the right things. This is returned to later in this paper.





## What to Do If You are Struggling to Start with Knowledge Management

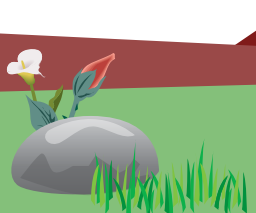
Knowledge management is very much a case of “Rome not being built in a day.” To borrow the Nike’s legendary motto - “Just do it”. Seriously, just do something, even if you start small - because anything you do will be better than doing nothing.

It’s absolutely fine to start small. Look for quick wins. Some examples could be making helpful knowledge available about:

- **Your most business-critical system.** The one that makes up the majority of calls to the service desk and the one that everyone worries about when there’s even the tiniest risk of downtime.
- **The system that predates almost everyone else in the department.** You know the one - that legacy application that depends on the skills and expertise of just one or two people who aren’t always on hand to help.
- **A new IT service that’s about to be launched.** It’s time to start as you mean to go on, get important things documented as early as possible.



**Key tip:** go to the support team that looks after the trickiest service to support - you know the one - the application or piece of software that everyone dreads falling over because it’s such a nightmare to fix. Ask them what their top ten support tips are and add them to your knowledge base. Even if all you have is a spreadsheet or Word document, you’ve made a start. And that’s the thing - once you’ve made a start with knowledge management you can build on it over time until you’ve got a capability that supports and empowers your people.



## Gamification and Knowledge Management

This paper has already talked about making your knowledge base as easy as possible to use and update but why not take it to the next level by making it fun too?

Modern ITSM tools, including InvGate Service Desk, have embedded gamification capabilities into everyday work activities. This is the use of game mechanics - usually points, badges, and tangible rewards - to engage employees in their work, to motivate them, to engender team comradery, and to reinforce behaviors. It relies on the very human need for personal recognition, status, and achievement, plus the thrill of competition. Plus, gamification makes work fun.



**Key tip:** *as with knowledge management itself, gamification requires organizational change management to help gain buy in, to sell the benefits and banish fears (both personal and of change), and to help drive adoption.*



## Measuring Knowledge Management Success

As already mentioned, knowledge management can be a hard “sell” to senior management. It’s might not be viewed as being as critical as incident, problem, or change management; and there’s always possibly something else ITSM-wise to look at and invest in. So, it’s really important to demonstrate knowledge management success - both initially and on an ongoing basis.

Some knowledge management measurements to consider are:

- The number of first-time fixes with associated knowledge articles
- The increase in first-time fixes attributed to knowledge availability
- The number of articles used (viewed) by end users by type versus incidents logged
- The number of popular, i.e. recurring, incidents with an associated knowledge article
- Knowledge article ratings.

By starting with a pre-knowledge-management baseline, it’s also possible to quantify how knowledge management has improved IT service desk efficiency and the associated reduction in costs and increase in customer satisfaction.



**Key tip:** *be careful not to drive the wrong behaviors with the metrics employed. Get the balance right rather than focusing on one particular element such as knowledge capture. Knowledge ultimately has value when it is used, and reused, versus when it is codified. Don’t let your knowledge base become the knowledge equivalent of an “elephants’ graveyard” - where “what people know” goes to die.*



## Summary

Knowledge management is a capability that can support both technical teams and end users. It can reduce incident times, increase the number of already resolved known problems and known errors, and can even be used as a platform from which to start your IT self-service offering.

But remember, it's not just a process and enabling technology. Knowledge management is a new way of working and, as such, people need to buy-in to the change to make it successful. So start your knowledge management with a suitable investment in OCM - not to do so could be fatal to your knowledge management and service improvement aspirations.

## About InvGate

InvGate is a provider of IT service management (ITSM) and IT Asset Management (ITAM) solutions, designed to simplify and improve the lives of IT professionals.

InvGate Service Desk helps customers to provide better IT support, offering a single point of contact for end users to report IT issues and make requests for new services. With capabilities aligned with the ITIL best practice framework, InvGate Service Desk enables your company to improve IT support efficiency, to reduce costs, and to improve the quality of service and the customer experience for end users.

If you'd like to try InvGate for yourself, then you can [start your free 30-day trial](#) today.

