



Legal Week

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What is the road map to successful knowledge management? *Legal IT* asks a number of KM practitioners...



Legal IT reports

On the record

"Items 1,2, 3 and 6 of the faulty KM perceptions on Matthew Parsons' list do imply that all knowledge within a firm is useful knowledge, when in fact knowledge to one individual is simply information to another. Some knowledge may have no impact on efficiencies or productivity within a firm and may not provide enough return on investment to warrant 'management'.

"It also holds a faulty supposition that all knowledge is relevant, that it has the same weight for every individual in the firm, that it is not fluid and that it is not reliant on individual or group relevancies based on group or firm culture.

"Item 4 — Effective knowledge management can alter the way a legal team works or an administrative department functions, for each of these areas KM is as unique as the subculture they have within the overall firm culture. As a result, it requires continual involvement and collaborative partnerships to ensure they are getting what they want and need out of KM.

"Item 5 — This implies that technology is required for successful knowledge management. In reality, when technology is used to enable KM one must give thought to the correlating change in process and culture. At times, one will find that technology then is not required to implement a particular area of knowledge management.

"While I do not necessarily disagree with any of Matthew Parsons' points, I do not believe that these concepts will further the understanding of KM within a firm. While it does not rely heavily on technology for its success it may rely too heavily on the knowledge of a 'knowledge culture'.

"While one must take the culture into consideration, one must also realise that there are many sub-cultures within a firm. A heavy reliance on changing a [firm's] culture to successfully implement KM, without consideration to the changed business processes, may fare no better than the over-reliance on technology we have seen to date."

Wendy King, head of knowledge systems, Alston & Bird

"There is no technology available that can deal with human complexity and force individuals to share all their intellectual capital.

"Only if we accept and understand this can we truly set and manage our expectations and benefit from the knowledge we capture. KM initiatives will continue to be a disappointment until every single member of a firm actively participates in its development and deployment — from the managing partner to the receptionist."

Mahshid Rafizadeh, managing director, Imus

"The best articles deliberately touch raw nerves and Matthew Parsons succinctly exposes the issues surrounding KM. A legal professor at Life University once said that KM stands for 'knowledge matters' and that the most profitable lawyers practice 'KS=KS' — knowledge shared equals knowledge sold."

Tim Travers, KM consultant, Neil Cameron Consulting Group

Off the record

"I fully support the knowledge concepts put forward by Matthew Parsons. We are grappling with many of these concepts at this time."

Head of technology and business administration, UK national law firm

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