Biographies

Maria Mawson, Academic Liaison Librarian for Law, University of Sheffield, has degrees in history and librarianship from the University of Sheffield. She has been in her current post for six years, and previously worked in FE Colleges and public libraries. Maria joined BIALL in 2000, and was an elected member of BIALL Council 2004-2006.

Drs Natasha Semmens and Mark Taylor are both lecturers in the School of Law at the University of Sheffield. Both have first degrees in law, postgraduate degrees in their specialist areas (Dr Semmens in Socio-Legal Studies/ Criminology and Dr Taylor in Biotechnology, Law and Ethics) and PhDs from the University of Sheffield. They have led the Law School's first phase CILASS project and co-ordinated the introduction of Understanding Law to the curriculum in 2006. As part of the project they have engaged in pedagogical research and have disseminated their work through various in-house seminars and, more widely, through publication.

Collection Development for Knowledge Management

Abstract: This paper was presented by Penny Bailey at the 38th BIALL Annual Study Conference held in Sheffield in June 2007 and covers the challenges involved in introducing a knowledge management strategy to a law firm. It suggests methods to be adopted in trying to implement such a service including identification with the firm's business objectives; persuasive communication; identification of the benefits accruing and strategies for collecting knowledge.
Keywords: knowledge management; law firms

Introduction - the challenges

Collection development for knowledge management (KM) or internal information can be a challenge when users in the organisation don't necessarily appreciate the benefits. A recent survey of global law firms found that:

"Just 61% of firms have a formal knowledge management strategy which suggested that knowledge management may not be adequately aligned with the firm's business objectives. Also, 75% of respondents report they develop a project plan before implementing a knowledge management initiative, though only 62% of respondents develop a business case to go with it, suggesting that many firms may not be adequately engaging management and the

partnership in understanding how the knowledge management initiative will bring value to the firm."[1]

In fact a quick straw poll of the audience in Sheffield revealed that very few in the audience felt that their organisation had a KM strategy in place, that there was generally a feeling that they should "do" KM, but that initiatives rarely got off the ground.

Secondly, organisations either don't have dedicated KM staff and, even where they do, they are not positioned to work effectively across the organisation, with access to top management and decision making committees and the knowledge of what initiatives the firm is undertaking. Astoundingly, more than half of the firms in the survey do not have a knowledge management committee.

The global survey quoted above found that the reward structures for contributing to KM were often absent and

moreover, "in law firms the time-based billing model is the greatest cultural barrier to knowledge management."

Given these challenges, this presentation aims to provide a framework for tapping into organisational culture to enable KM projects more effectively. In other words - to whom should you be speaking and how do you get them on side?

Identify with business objectives

It is surprising how many managers don't present their initiatives and requests for funding in the context of their organisation's business objectives. I wonder how many people can truthfully say that they understand what their senior management objectives are. We tend to feel it is obvious we need a library – it is obvious we need a KM strategy – it is obvious we need more staff. But management is always going to come back with the big questions WHY? How does it help their goals? You have to make the link for them:

> "We need a KM strategy because KM will help us improve quality of client service, leverage expertise or gain competitive advantage."

I would suggest getting your timing right by making an appointment and not doing it via a chance meeting in the lift. In the presentation make the direct link between your KM initiative and their key business objectives; show how KM will contribute with facts and figures in a printed report you can leave with them. Remember to include:

- Facts and figures – costs, time, savings in detail.

- Why – the benefits of KM and how it fits in with your organisation's strategy.

- Point out the barriers to success and discuss how these can be removed.

- Explain how it can be achieved and what needs to change.

- Suggest an additional reward strategy if it would be too radical and over-assertive to suggest changing the current billing or performance processes. Some KM managers I know have used incentive schemes – a luxury weekend away for the person contributing the most; chocolate league tables between departments, etc..

- Use the "fear" factor too–'how much does it cost when a trained lawyer with our knowledge leaves?'

Use persuasive communication

Using the right language in your presentation is also important. If you are too assertive – "you should have a KM strategy" – you may find senior management do not like being told what to do. Empathy may be a better strategy, demonstrating support of existing initiatives. For example, "I know the firm is thinking about how we can improve quality of client service, I think KM can help by providing consistent and timely output …"

Make sure you believe yourself too and use positive language. Don't say: it "might be useful", "I feel" – do say: "I know", "I think". You can also show enthusiasm and pull people along with your energy: "wouldn't it be fantastic if …" The language of persuasion is a huge topic and many books and articles are available on this subject. Finally, remember to use such business language as Return on Investment (ROI) correctly, but avoid using such business-speak as "blue sky thinking".

Identifying knowledge and its benefits

So how do you identify the benefits of KM for your organisation? This goes hand-in-hand with analysing what KM is for your organisation, as KM means different things to different people. (In the United States 'Knowledge' can be used for published information, but I refer in this presentation to *internal unpublished knowledge*). It could be both explicit knowledge, in the form of models and precedents, know how and bibles, and/or implicit knowledge of what we know and who we know.

I would suggest working backwards and first identify your organisation's key business objective:

- **Leverage expertise -** This is often the first one that springs to mind and concentrates on *avoiding knowledge bottlenecks in firms and sharing expertise* through the use of precedents, best practice guidelines, templates, etc.

- **Gain competitive advantage -** Emphasis is on *higher productivity* – systemising work, offering fixed prices for routine work, delegating work, speedier delivery, etc through effective re-use of previous work and knowledge of how much it cost to produce.

- **Improve quality of client service -** According to the recent survey quoted earlier, this is the top objective for 71% of law firms, and it is the key objective for many organisations. Knowledge management can help deliver *consistent, high quality output efficiently* and provide *direct client access* to "know how".

Having done the reflective bit, you should now be clear about what you are collecting and why:

- Leverage expertise - *precedents, bibles, templates or clause libraries, best practice guidelines*

- Gain competitive advantage – *all of the above + data about production costs*

- Improve quality of client service – all of the above+ *expertise registers, external contacts, client relationship management, published know how*

Strategies for sharing knowledge

Having identified your knowledge and benefits of KM – increased productivity, removal of knowledge bottlenecks, improved customer experiences – managers need to communicate these benefits to promote KM sharing and transfer.

First of all demonstrate top management approval by asking senior management to make announcements, sit with you in departmental meetings and ensure they are clear about how you need them to support you. Communication is again very important and you need to explain the benefits of sharing and contributing knowledge with information and facts. Use the same persuasive communication techniques as you did with top management.

It is always good change management practice to consult the practitioners and get their consent and involvement first. If you impose a new process or system on people they will naturally be resistant. For example:

- We are thinking about whether we can improve our client service through knowledge management - how do you think this could be done?

- How do you think we get everyone to share their knowledge?

- How would you like to contribute?

Speak personally to everyone involved. That way you find out their worries, so that you can then re–assure them. Find out what the objections are so you can overcome them.

Start with a group who are already on your side. Perhaps they have seen a successful KM initiative at another organisation, or they have already started developing their own departmental KM. If they already have KM material, talk to them about using it as a model for the rest of the firm. Flattery gets you every where! Using the success of your pilot group should enable you to win the trust of other groups.

The old adage "rubbish in, rubbish out" is never truer than for KM. There is nothing worse than launching with out of date or poor content. You will lose the battle before you even start.

How do you collect knowledge?

I think it's very important to acknowledge the status quo because making radical changes to the way people work is going to be very unsettling and may be unnecessary. Work with the current culture, not against it. Try to build on existing working practices and systems, except where they are very counter-productive to your firm's

objectives. Accept that change may be slow and try making subtle changes at intervals.

Make it easy to contribute knowledge where it is created, so make it convenient to do at source. Don't expect busy lawyers to stop billing work to fill in a form to contribute to KM. Collect knowledge at source by linking in with case management, document management, central user database, CRM systems etc. It should be as simple as ticking a box.

Store knowledge content once to avoid duplication of effort and retain version control, otherwise, if a lawyer changes the content, the KM copy could become out of date.

Monitor contributions from work groups so you can identify areas of weak input and take action. If a time-based billing model is the greatest cultural barrier to KM in your firm and you can't change it, then you will need to think of an additional reward structure or incentives as mentioned earlier.

Build mechanisms to review content and remove or suppress out-of-date content until it has been updated. This could be semi-automated with alerts when the review date is due.

What makes for effective retrieval of knowledge?

You will notice that I haven't mentioned technology very much yet, and that's because I believe KM is largely about managing people and processes, and the success of your KM initiative will depend largely on internal politics. But technology plays a part too.

You need to store and retrieve your KM content. Which solutions you use will depend on your content and your existing technologies. All too often I see firms seeking a magic bullet for KM, that technology will somehow take out the hard work. I don't feel they are really embracing KM and the changes and investment of human time that goes into making a successful initiative. KM needs to be all pervasive in an organisation and not something that is added on or done by someone else.

Librarians spend time cataloguing because they know it creates a valuable structured index to the collection. Knowledge managers and contributors equally need to profile documents to provide a structured and consistent database for effective retrieval of documents. Searching this metadata should provide the advantage of returning a few highly relevant documents, so the lawyer finds the right document quickly, i.e. effective knowledge management provides the benefit of higher productivity and consistent results, in turn improving the client experience.

Full-text retrieval, on the other hand, searches the full content of the documents. It has the advantage that there are no pre-conceived ideas about how a document might be used and it requires very little investment of time. However, the disadvantages are that because many documents may contain the searched words, a higher volume

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of documents will be returned and the inverse ratio of higher volume to lower relevance will apply. The lawyer would have to look through a higher number of returns to find the required items. Also, novice searchers will need training to search full-text effectively and performance may be impaired if a search engine has to search across a networked bank of document content, even with content indexing applied. I would suggest that full text retrieval should not be used in isolation, but as an alternative or complimentary search when a structured search is not finding the appropriate results.

Subject taxonomies, (sometimes referred to as 'bloody taxonomies' probably because lawyers spend far too long wrangling over which terms to use), are very effective in the consistent retrieval of all items for a given concept. This is because an indexer has already determined that the document refers to a legal, business or corporate concept and this will ensure that the item is relevant to the lawyer searching for that concept. Again this requires a pre-investment of human time, but should ensure better results for searchers.

Folksonomies, or user-generated taxonomies, may have a part to play in KM retrieval, but I would suggest using them to complement an official taxonomy as additional terms, because by their very nature a chaotic and inconsistent description of concepts can ensue.

Corporate taxonomies are another tool and refer to the terms used to describe such entities in your organisation as work groups or departments, industry types, work types, document types, etc., again for consistent retrieval. It may be possible to automate the collection of these properties or descriptors from the document source, e.g. collect document properties from the document management system database, to save time.

You will also need to think about the most appropriate way of presenting your results. How are you going to rank or group them?

Other considerations

"Usability" is a term used to denote the ease and efficiency with which people can employ software in order to carry out tasks. It is a bit of a hobby-horse of mine, because so often I think it is overlooked. In assessing KM applications, you need to consider how easy it is to navigate from screen to screen and the flexibility of workflows within the software to achieve tasks elegantly.

Lawyers these days are bombarded with a plethora of different applications and resources but the danger is they have too many different search interfaces and taxonomies to learn and, because they are not always sure which one is the most relevant, will spend fruitless time searching one resource after another, or give up and use Google. So an important question to ask is, "Does our organisation need a single search over different elements?"

Do you want a federated search over:

*   Library and information centre content
*   Knowledge documents
*   Expertise register
*   Contacts database
*   External online resources?

And, of course, do you want to apply the same subject and corporate taxonomies across the different elements to reduce the number of vocabularies the lawyer has to negotiate?

This in turn begs the question, does your KM solution needs to be compatible or integrated with other applications? For example:

*   Library and information centre catalogue
*   Document Management System
*   Portals
*   Office software

Evaluating the success of your KM project

Finally, we consider with the classic management step of evaluation of your success, as it is equally as valid to KM as to any other initiative. There are various ways you can measure the success of your KM project and here are some suggestions:

*   Assess contribution to key objective
*   Measure improved productivity
*   Measure Return on Investment (ROI)
*   User satisfaction survey
*   Client satisfaction survey
*   Report success to top management and the rest of your organisation

Conclusion

What you use will of course depend on the objectives and the benefits you set out to achieve. Ask yourself – does it facilitate sharing? Does it make us more productive? Does it improve quality of client service? Engage in internal PR to continue to sell the benefits of KM to the users and continue to find novel incentives to reward contributions. If you don't measure and publicise the success of your KM project, then no-one else will and the gap between the intention and recognition of the actual contribution of KM to your organisation's success will remain unbreached. Good luck!

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Further reading

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Biography

Penny Bailey has worked in the legal library sector since 1986, both as an employed librarian and as a self-employed consultant, where she was involved in a significant number of projects to set up, trouble shoot or run library and information units in law firms, barristers chambers and business enterprises. Her work experience also included training and project management roles. Penny is now Managing Director of Bailey Solutions which incorporated in 2002. Penny is the 2006 winner with Brian Thomas of the *BIALL / Lexis Nexis Butterworths Awards for Excellence for Best use of Technology in a Library Project for the BIALL website.*

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From Spark to Flame: Implementing LawPort

Abstract: In this article, which is a summary of his presentation at the 38th BIALL Annual Study Conference held in Sheffield in June 2007, James Mullan provides an account of how the Content Team at CMS Cameron McKenna implemented LawPort and the issues they faced from the initial pilot to completion of the project.
Keywords: portals; enterprise information management; law firms

Introduction

CMS Cameron McKenna is an international law firm, the result of a merger between McKenna & Co and Cameron Markby Hewitt in 1997. The firm currently has offices in Bulgaria; Czech Republic; Hungary; Poland; Romania; Russia, Sofia, Ukraine and Slovakia. From March 2003 to November 2004 I was part of a small content team that implemented LawPort at CMS Cameron McKenna. This was a major project that involved team members from all the support departments including Knowledge & Information Services. Renamed Spark (Sharing Practice and Relationship Knowledge) Knowledge Centre, LawPort was one of two products, the other being Spark Client Centre, which aimed to streamline fee-earners' workflow and make their use of our internal systems more intuitive and fulfilling.

Knowledge systems at CMS Cameron McKenna

Cameron McKenna has always had a good collection of know-how in its London office and has had a central