



KM Workshop # 1:
Organizational Knowledge Assessment

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Erik Johnson of the World Bank Institute presented the Organizational Knowledge Assessment (OKA) strategy. After mentioning the rationale behind the development of the strategy, the OKA methodology was detailed. He identified 14 Knowledge Dimensions across the three basic elements of People, Process, and Systems. Pilot results were also explained, culling out the benefits of OKA, its challenges and future activities. A handout on the OKA Dimensions, including descriptions of each, was given out to participants.

Discussion Points

1. *Since this is a perception survey, what can be done about people who are optimistic/pessimistic? Are responses weighed?*
This is something that hasn't been done yet. The issue of subjectivity is a huge concern. Use the triangulation method, asking questions in a different way to get the "correct" answer.
2. *The triangulation method is used to check if concepts are understood and to check if people are answering randomly. This is a different issue from whether or not people are answering positively.*
Yes, that is why it is not very useful to use in benchmarking.
3. *A study similar to this was conducted in the Middle East across 1,200 organizations and the results were very heterogeneous.*
The greatest use of this tool is in organizational learning especially in looking at functions across an organization. One might get different responses, depending on who answers.
4. *Does the OKA look at different levels: management, staff, etc.? For example management might say we're very open; staff might say they do not feel it.*
You cannot do an assessment if you don't have a target; the benefit of conducting the assessment is that awareness was created.
5. *Have you done a cross-section yet?*
Not yet, the bias is toward those who know the answers to the questions. If someone doesn't know the answer, the questionnaire is passed along to someone who does.

6. *Doing so gives a false impression of the organization*
The greatest benefits of using this methodology can be seen over time. That is when one can see whether strategies have or have not been effective.
7. *What are the criteria for sample selection?*
Need to know the organization well; powerful if you get a cross section; identify criteria/guidelines on selecting sample. Sampling procedure has not been very final yet; more of opportunistic.
8. *How does one check if answers reflect how things are actually happening and not how they wish/want something to happen?*
In a perception survey, a problem is how to bridge the gap in terms of what's happening and what we want to happen.
9. *Are there social networking types of questions?*
None, because the tool is meant to be an organizational assessment; have to conduct a TNA if needed.
10. *Do you validate answers first before dissemination, if answers reflect reality?*
No, check results first then see where are we weak, then go back.
11. *Did you attempt cross-cultural validation of the questionnaire?*
Not yet. If you won't be comparing/benchmarking across organizations/sectors, there is no need to make sure the tool is consistent (as long as concepts are well-understood) because this is just a planning tool. The issue here is what will you use it for. If you use it as a benchmark for a time series study, what is important is having the same questions and the same participants.
12. *The issue of "best practices" is not that useful given that may not apply what worked in another organization*
Instead of looking at best practices, one can look for trends, such as leadership or having an IT-based approach.
13. *Does the methodology address issues of trust?*
No, the closest dimension to that is risk and innovation. However, it is agreed that trust is very important.
14. *Won't it be difficult to measure trust? Maybe you can find the construct that you can measure in your questionnaire?*
We can only measure behaviors related to trust. There must be more attempts to measure trust as this is a big issue especially in public sector organizations.
15. *Where is the customer in all of this?*
There is a big difference between public and private organizations. We don't go too much into that because it's not a development-oriented tool.

16. *But we have a public goods mandate; we have to share what we know with clients. It will be like schizophrenia, in terms of strategy if internal needs and clients' needs are two separate strategies.*
We could add a dimension on how well one operationalizes what they're doing, on responsiveness to clients. How well am I using knowledge to help clients? It is an issue of disclosure and transparency. It can also be looked at and compared across organizations.
17. *Do you have enough resources to have a technology component that will cut across different departments?*
The numbers have not been decided yet.
18. *How modular is the tool? Can it be divided into modules? Or is an all or nothing?*
No, it can't be broken up because the items are all mixed up
19. *Our organization conducted a knowledge mapping assessment in one day and it was totally useless. There were 180 questions in one day, different levels. It was very confusing and people became distrustful of knowledge management*
Yes, it can be very risky to run a knowledge mapping assessment.
20. *Can you include Manila in videoconference?*
Yes, have some organizations fill it out and World Bank Institute can help in the interpretation. We will have some basic criteria for those who want to use the assessment. It can be given out to everyone just yet. Institutions wanting to avail of it have to make an initial commitment to following through on the process.
21. *How is the OKA different from the KIM?*
There are many criticisms on the KIM, especially on the use of statistics. Unfortunately we haven't found out what learnings can be derived from this experience. OKA does not have statistics; the spider diagram gives a good visual result. The focus is on developing organizational capacity for KM.