

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Q1
What evaluation activities are predictors of Knowledge Flow?

Q2
Under what conditions does Knowledge Flow thrive?

INTRODUCTION

What Is Knowledge Flow?

Knowledge Flow represents the dynamic construction and exchange of group knowledge. It occurs during the discovery, capture, sharing, and application of knowledge. Every step of the evaluation process involves these transactions.

Why is Knowledge Flow important?

Knowledge Flow offers a tangible way to operationalize evaluation capacity. An organization can increase its capacity by improving how systematic and effective its use of knowledge during evaluative tasks. As an added advantage, the organization can concentrate on improving the knowledge parameters that serve its most important evaluation questions.

How is Knowledge Flow measured?

Knowledge Flow is measured by the activities that provide knowledge upfront to evaluatees and that generate and preserve new knowledge for the "next time". It can be counted throughout all of the organization's conditions, contexts, and management areas.

Key Components of Knowledge Flow

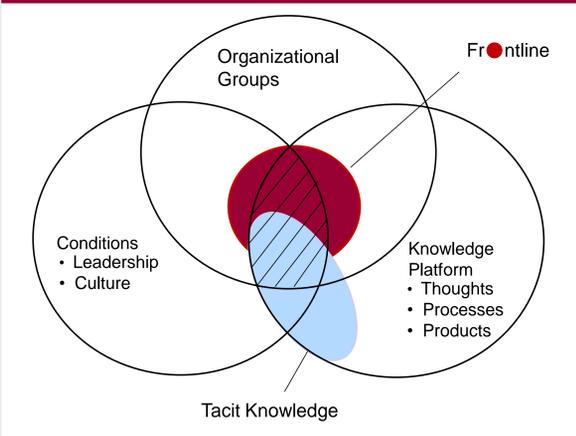


Figure 1. Components of Knowledge Flow measured in this study.

METHODS

Goal

To identify frontline activities in high-performing organizations that represent Knowledge Flow during evaluative efforts.

Coding strategy

1. One Malcolm Baldrige Award (MBA) recipient from each of the six industry sectors¹.
2. Winners are recognized for systematic evaluation processes that demonstrate stellar five-year results.
3. Qualitative analysis of 50-page MBA applications using NVivo9.

¹Education, Health Care, Manufacturing, Nonprofit/Government, Service, and Small Business

THE DATA

| 3 Parameters/15 Codes | % Total Codes |
|--|---------------|
| Leadership/Cultural Conditions | |
| Senior: Works alongside | 3 |
| Reward/Recognition | 6 |
| Culture: Safe | 9 |
| Senior: 2-way communication | 11 |
| Senior: Promotes | 13 |
| | 42% |
| Organizational Groups (frontline) | |
| Facilitated group | 0 |
| Focus group | 1 |
| Peer-to-peer assignments | 6 |
| Teams | 11 |
| | 18% |
| Knowledge Platform | |
| Self-organizing network | 1 |
| Knowledge procedures | 3 |
| External evaluation training | 5 |
| Frontline groom/succession | 6 |
| Knowledge devices | 9 |
| Tacit knowledge | 17 |
| | 41% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 1. Conditions present when frontline members contributed to evaluative Knowledge Flow activities.

| Management Arenas | % Total Codes |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Strategy Development | 13% |
| Workforce Assets | |
| Engagement | 15 |
| Hire/retire | 8 |
| Training/development | 16 |
| | 39% |
| Other^a | 48% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 2. Management areas in which frontline members contributed to evaluative Knowledge Flow activity.

^a Other: compliance/productivity (2%), ethical responsibility (5%), information systems (5%), task and work system analyses (7%), and leadership (19%).

INTERESTING RESULTS

1. **Tacit knowledge** (thoughts not yet formulated) of frontline workers was frequently elicited to help evaluate things that mattered to the organization.
2. **Leadership/Cultural Conditions** created a helpful motivating environment for the frontline to contribute their knowledge to evaluation efforts.
3. **Organizational groups** (including the frontline) relied often on the shared collection of knowledge thoughts, processes, and products to help evaluate issues.
4. Frontline members contributed especially valuable evaluative knowledge in two ways that management easily overlooks:
 - a. By involving the frontline in **Workforce** activities that had built-in opportunities to pass on learning.
 - b. By systematic invitation to the frontline to provide input regarding organizational **Strategic Development**.

IMPLICATIONS for EVALUATION

The challenge:

Is Knowledge Flow a legitimate barometer of internal evaluation capacity?

The importance:

Evaluative activity is patently knowledge-related. Studying the flow of knowledge that pervades evaluation activities offers a new approach to operationalizing evaluation capacity and a learning organization.

The take away:

1. Best-practice organizations continuously demonstrate Knowledge Flow activity during the evaluation process.
2. Frontline tacit knowledge is a strategic asset that can be elicited many ways.
3. In high-performing organizations, evaluative Knowledge Flow is often connected to improving and achieving organizational objectives.
4. This study illuminates what constitutes a genuine learning organization and brings us one step closer to gauging evaluation capacity by the yardstick of organizational outcomes.

REFERENCES

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Comments, please?
Contact me at: karen.widmer@cgu.edu