Thinking for a Living

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General Ideas

- Knowledge Worker (KW)
- According to Peter Ducker, managing KW is the primary task of the 21th century
- The key to effective use of knowledge is to embed it into the work of KW
- To specify the flow of work is the best way to improve the process
- Some form of intervention is necessary to improve productivity
- The company needs to coach and help people with their individual performance
- The greatest impact on performance is the ability to juggle and prioritize information
- Management needs to ensure, KW are happy

1. What's a Knowledge Worker?

- KW are all people who create, distribute or apply knowledge
- KW have the following tasks
  - Solve problems
  - Meet customer needs
  - Make decisions
  - Collaborate
  - Communicate

- Definition of a KW according to Peter Ducker:
  Someone who knows more about their job than anyone other in a company

- KW enjoy autonomy. So be careful with improvements
- To specify the flow of work is the best way to improve the process
- The work needs to be observed in detail to be understood
- KW need to be committed

- Shadowing:
  The process of learning the work of a KW by following them around and observing.

- Companies need to give incentives and show it helps KW to share their knowledge
- KW can only be led by vision and trust, not managed

2. How Knowledge Worker Differ

Types of Knowledge Work

- Two dimensions are defined:
  - How dependent the KW is of others
  - How complex the work is

Integration model:	Collaboration model:
• Highly collaborative, low complexity • Systematic & repeatable • formal processes, methodologies & standards • integration across functional boundaries • e.g. production planners	• Highly collaborative, highly complex • Improvisational work • deep expertise • Fluid deployment, flexible teams • Measurement of output • Fostering a sense of urgency • e.g. investment bank, product development
Transaction model:	**Expert model:**
• Low collaboration, low complexity • Routine work • formal rules, procedures, and training • Structured workflow and scripts • low discretion workforce or information • e.g. call centers	• Low collaboration, high complexity • Judgment oriented • Individual expertise • Templates, high-level guides • e.g. surgeons, professors

- Collaboration is the most difficult to improve (complex and dependent on others)

Knowledge can also be classified by:

Type of Idea:	Small and Big ideas. Strategy vs. Small improvements in the system
Cost and Scale:	A few expensive but highly trained workers vs. Many "cheap" and untrained workers.
Process attributes:	Degrees of Recurrence = How often a process repeats Is it processed in parallel or in sequence Degree of input needed to fulfill the process
Business Criticality:	How critical a process or role is to the business
Mobility:	Where it is/ needs to be performed and how dependent it is to the location.
Roles.:	Differentiation by the role of the person (e.g. Manager, Designer, Developer)

3. Interventions, Measures and Experiments

- Some form of intervention is necessary to improve productivity
- The measure of performance needs to be suited to the type of work

Capability Maturity Model (CMM)

= a model to measure processes

Level 1: Initial	Processes are ad hoc and chaotic. Success depends on individual effort. Little to no structure.
Level 2: Repeatable	Basic project management processes. Past successes can be repeated.
Level 3: Defined	Processes are documented, standardized, and integrated across the organization.
Level 4: Managed	Processes are measured and controlled using metrics. Performance is predictable.
Level 5: Optimizing	Focus on continuous process improvement. Feedback is used to refine and innovate processes.

Methods that don't work

Top-down Reengineering:	• Imposed process redesign without involving knowledge workers • usually ignored and wastes resources.
Scripting:	• Predefined actions for low-skill roles • limits creativity and often misused in complex tasks. • Suited for call centers
Computer-Mediated Processes:	• Uses computers to structure work and track actions • Can boost productivity but may reduce creativity.
Treating All Knowledge Workers the Same:	• Ignores the diversity of roles and needs • Leads to poor interventions if differences aren't recognized.

4. Knowledge Work Process

- Describing knowledge work in processes is effective but should be used with other methods
- Process orientation frees up capacity to focus on creative work

- Work-Harder-Fallacy:
  The misconception that to get better results, one needs to "work harder" instead of smarter

- Process description needs to involve the experts

- Agile is better than engineering approaches

Types of Knowledge Activities

- Finding
- Creating
- Packaging
- Distributing
- Applying

Creation:	Creation process should be divided into different stages. Creation is tracked by a Process Evaluation Sheet, where the expert documents their findings and story of the progress
Distribution:	Distribution needs to be encouraged

5. Technology

Types of technology for types of KW

Knowledge reuse	Applying existing knowledge to new situations to avoid reinventing the wheel. Used in Integration and Collaboration Model.
Process applications and workflow	Systems that structure and guide routine tasks through defined steps and rules. Used in Integration and Transaction Model.
Transactional technologies	Tools that support high-volume, low-discretion tasks such as data entry or processing. Used in Transaction Model
Decision automation	Systems that make or support decisions using predefined rules or algorithms. Decision Support Systems (DSS) help automate decisions. Used in Integration, Collaboration, Transaction & Expert Model
Knowledge repositories / collaboration tools	Platforms for storing and sharing knowledge among teams to support collaboration.
Expert profiling and consultation	Identifying experts and facilitating access to their knowledge through directories or matching systems. Used in Collaboration Model.
Data mining / analytics	Analyzing large datasets to extract patterns and insights that inform decisions. Used in Expert Model.
Embedded knowledge	Knowledge built directly into systems, tools, or

6. Developing individual Capabilities

- The company needs to coach and help people with their individual performance
- There need to be standards for personal knowledge management

KW need to have good skill in

- Handling Meetings
- Process Information and knowledge
- Organizing in Lists
- Documenting and sharing knowledge
- Prioritizing information and tasks

High performers do

- Use only a few key tools but well
- Invest time in organizing
- Seek for help regularly
- Use assistants and delegate
- Don't stick with one approach
- Use lists

	through changing up of teams and measurement of contribution
Application:	For Application, knowledge needs to be reusable and put into documentation and libraries

	processes to guide or automate work. Used in Expert Model.

Engineering Methods vs. Agile Methods

- Agile methods are typically better for knowledge work

Agile methods	Adaptive, change-friendly, people-oriented support skilled teams with flexible, iterative processes Example: extreme programming.
Engineering methods	= breaking down the work into processes and designing it from there Predictive, process-oriented, plan-heavy resist change and rely on detailed upfront planning for consistency.

- IT is divided into organizational and personal

- Instead of creating knowledge repositories, integrate knowledge into the work process

- Decision processes can and should be automated
- Social networking software is used to increase collaboration
- KW need to be motivated and rewarded for using these technologies

7. Networks and Learning

- Active management of knowledge networks creates high performing KW
- There is little correlation between traditional measures of expertise like education and high performance in knowledge work
- The main factor of high performance is a combination of connection to experts in an organization an personal expertise
- The boarder the knowledge of a person the better the performance
- Commitment to follow through with tasks fosters performance and trust

- The greatest impact on performance is the ability to juggle and prioritize information
- Management needs to increase awareness on who has which knowledge (not only by job role)
- Collaboration and shared knowledge needs to be rewarded
- Internal tensions between employees need to be resolved by management
- After Action Reviews need to be institutionalized

- **Critical Incident Technique:**
  asking someone to explain the solution of a tough problem they solved

8. Physical Work Environment

- The physical environment plays a key role in KW
- There needs to be a sweet spot between solo work and collaboration
- KW need to have a say in how they want to work
- If desks are around 20m apart, the communication tends towards zero

9. Managing Knowledge Workers

Management needs to:
- Ensure, KW are happy
- Shift from overseeing work to doing it too
- Move from organizing hierarchies to organizing communities
- Focus on recruiting and retaining rather than just hiring and firing
- Develop knowledge skills instead of manual skills
- Assess invisible knowledge achievements, not just visible performance
- Build a knowledge-friendly culture
- Defend against bureaucracy
- Choose the best possible people
- Consider a variety of sources, not just internal personnel

The 5Fs for knowledge-oriented culture (by Rosabeth Kanter and Warren Bennis)
- Fast
- Flexible
- Focused
- Friendly
- fun.