Important Lessons Learned

The concepts behind KCS are really quite simple.

The Solve Loop:

- Integrate the creation and maintenance of knowledge into the problem solving process
- Make the knowledge “sufficient to solve”
- Let demand drive our focus for what knowledge to create and what knowledge to improve

The Evolve Loop:

- Leverage knowledge for self-service
  - Identify high value content based on article reuse
- Identify high impact opportunities for business improvements (processes, policies, products, or services) based on the customer experience (patterns and trends in the knowledge base)

These concepts are well established in academic work and research. Many of the concepts in KCS align with the quality concepts of Dr. Deming (see Deming’s 14 Principles). Nonaka and Takeuchi’s book The Knowledge-Creating Company was a constant reference during the formative years of KCS.

Why then do organizations struggle with KCS adoption?

Because a successful adoption of KCS requires that we rethink traditional processes, structures, measures, and management practices. That’s a hard thing to do!

Familiar “Ditches”

Following are the most common points of failure in KCS adoptions:

- Lack of management ownership
  - It is important to have a strong staff or KCS Council to support the KCS adoption. Ultimately, the ownership for KCS success must lie with the managers. As a domain moves from Phase 2 to Phase 3, there is a need to overtly shift the accountability for KCS success from the KCS Council to the managers. KCS is a bigger change for management than it is for the knowledge workers. Having a plan to coach the managers can be helpful in making this transition.
- Ineffective coaching program
  - An effective way to pick the right coaches is to survey the organization about who they trust. Coaches need to have a belief in KCS and strong influence and interpersonal skills. They don’t necessarily need to be subject matter expert.
  - Give the coaches time to coach! It is an investment that will pay off.
• Not having the knowledge workers design the workflow and content standard
  ◦ Let the people doing the work (the knowledge workers) own the workflow and content standard, and keep both simple! While there should be management representation on the KCS Council, management should not be the owners of the workflow and content standards. When management owns those they often over-engineer them.

• Not changing the metrics as we move from Phase 3 - Adopting to Phase 4 - Leveraging
  ◦ Traditional support measures will show dramatic improvement in the early phases of adoption. As we start to deliver a high percentage of what we know through self-service, the traditional event-based measures will all go in the "wrong" direction. We must re-set executive expectations and understanding of the traditional measures and introduce measures that include customer use and success with self-service.

Once KCS has been implemented in an organization, that organization must transform its measurements from transaction-based to value-based. The health and contribution of the value being created can no longer be measured by the time and number of transactions processed. The value must be measured in terms of the effectiveness of the knowledge flow and collaboration that goes beyond the traditional boundaries of the organization, in all directions.

KCS continues to evolve. If you would like to be part of creating the next version of KCS, become a member of the Consortium for Service Innovation at www.serviceinnovation.org.

This guide comes from lessons learned through the collective experiences of members of the Consortium for Service Innovation. Below are some quotes from member Program Managers who have adopted KCS.

**What worked well with your KCS Adoption?**

• "The biggest skeptics turned out to be our biggest evangelists...once they experienced the benefits."
• "Reuse counts helped us get the right information on the self-service website."
• "Piloting the process and content standard with the tools we already had before purchasing a new tool."
• "The KCS v6 Practices Workshop was high impact and an important element in our success."
• "Customers using the same search tool and knowledge base as used internally."
• "Gathering a lot of feedback on how to make the tools better."

**What did you learn from your KCS adoption?**

• "The way it is sold to the knowledge workers is important. They need to understand the big picture as well as what’s in it for them."
• "Clear accountability – the managers have to own KCS success. It cannot be viewed as a staff function, or viewed as something extra or additional to handling incidents. KCS has to become a core competency, integral to the business."
• "Wish we had a better understanding of what we needed for success before we went shopping for a tool."
• "Understand engineer workflow before switching a new tool."
• "Can’t sustain KCS without continuing change and improvement."
• "Have resources aligned. You can not over-communicate what KCS is about and why you are doing it."
About the Authors

Consortium for Service Innovation Staff

Greg Oxton has been facilitating, organizing, and evangelizing the work of the Consortium for Service Innovation since he joined the Consortium staff in July of 1996. Since then, he has facilitated the evolution of the KCS methodology as well the other Consortium initiatives. He has helped over 70 companies, of various sizes and in a variety of industries, adopt KCS.

Melissa George was one of the very early adopters of KCS and one of the founding members of the Consortium for Service Innovation. She has been associated with the Consortium’s work since 1992 and joined the staff in 2001. Melissa has provided guidance to numerous companies on KCS adoption. In addition to facilitating the Consortium’s initiatives, Melissa is also the President and CEO of the KCS Academy, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Consortium for Service Innovation and the only authorized certification body for KCS.

Kelly Murray is the chief communications officer for the Consortium for Service Innovation. She joined the Consortium staff in 2011, where she captures, structures, reuses, and improves the content that the Consortium members create. She has served as chief editor for the KCS Principles and Core Concepts document, the KCS v6 Practices Guide, and the KCS v6 Adoption Guide.

Special Thanks

To Jennifer Crippen and David Kay of DBKay and Associates for their contribution to the KCS v6 Adoption Guide. Long-time KCS Certified Trainers, they have been exceptionally generous in sharing their extensive experience in helping companies adopt KCS.

Thanks also to the additional 38 KCS v6 Certified Trainers (internal and external, at the time of this writing) around the world for their ongoing support and feedback.