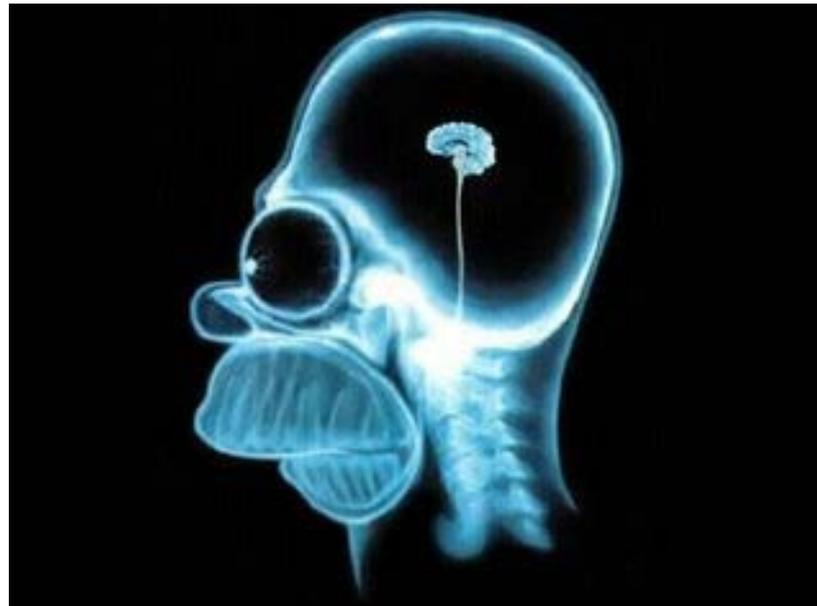


Session 2: Implementing Knowledge Transfer and Management



Today's Topics

- Part I: What is knowledge transfer and some obstacles associated with it?
- Part II: What are some methods for implementing knowledge transfer?
- Part III: What are your peers doing?
- Part IV: How can you approach knowledge transfer going forward?

Knowledge Transfer Defined

- Essentially, knowledge transfer seeks to organize, create, capture, or distribute knowledge and ensure its availability for future users
- Knowledge resides in an organization's staff, tools, tasks, and its sub-networks (i.e. knowledge held within other divisions or agencies impacts the knowledge you have/need to perform your job)



Knowledge Transfer Defined

- Knowledge transfer within an organization can be inhibited by various factors. How well knowledge transfer works depends upon:
 - The nature of that knowledge
 - From where (or whom) it comes
 - Who gets it
 - The culture of the organization



Two Kinds of General Knowledge

- **Tacit Knowledge** = knowledge which is internalized and therefore more challenging to verbalize and transfer to others
- **Explicit Knowledge** = knowledge which can be easily verbalized, captured, and stored in written or oral form
- Tacit knowledge = “know how”
- Explicit knowledge = “know what”



Typical Issues Associated with Knowledge Transfer

- People are often not aware of the tacit knowledge they possess since it becomes so internalized over time
- Some skills are not possible to simply document or research
- There can be language barriers present which can make articulating or receiving knowledge challenging



Typical Issues Associated with Knowledge Transfer

- Generational differences can impact how well knowledge transfer is received
- There can be no real incentive for someone to comply; there may even be resistance present (“What’s in it for me? I’m retiring!”)
- The organizational culture itself can fight against the idea of knowledge sharing (the “knowledge is power” culture)

Typical Issues Associated with Knowledge Transfer

- Staff can be prone to intentional or unintentional “hoarding” as well as professional territorialism
- Many supervisors are overworked and understaffed; pressure from executive management takes precedence over preparing for the future
- Limited ability/resources can be available to make knowledge transfer possible

Typical Issues Associated with Knowledge Transfer

- As more staff retire, more knowledge goes out the door if they do not return as Retired Annuitants who are *expected* to provide knowledge transfer to staff (knowledge attrition)
- If the organization has experienced what can be perceived as instability, uncertainty, or a “merging” of ideas through a consolidation, there is the greater likelihood of disparate and often conflicting ideas as to how things should be done (this has been particularly true within some areas in OTech)

What Needs to Happen at OTech

- Due to our current fiscal climate, managers and supervisors will need to be more creative in addressing their specific issues
- A good knowledge transfer and management program aims to capture both explicit *and* tacit knowledge
- To truly change the culture in their units, supervisors will need to instill the *expectation* that knowledge transfer take place on a regular basis
- There will never be a convenient time to do knowledge transfer, but it doesn't need to be the dreaded time suck that many supervisors and managers think it is

So What Can STND Managers Do?

- We'll begin by going over some of the more traditional techniques used to address knowledge transfer
- We'll then go over some ideas tailored to address the issues STND vocalized during manager interviews

Mentoring

- This is an excellent way to ensure that tacit knowledge transfer takes place—allows a senior staff to pass on valuable lessons learned, advice, etc.
- Keep in mind that mentoring will be extremely important as you acquire more Gen Y staff—most of them will expect it
- It's critical that the *right* pairing take place
- While many mentoring relationships occur organically, if you assign a pairing, using a formal agreement is strongly recommended to help ensure that the mentor knows what his/her function is and to ensure accountability

Job Rotation

- Works best in units where the work is more vertical than flat, but there are certainly tasks in most units that can be rotated
- Can be very effective in reducing boredom and overall burn out
- Can create exposure to new (and sometimes more effective) ways of doing things
- Helps address knowledge gaps created by staff attrition
- Can help foster career growth

Best Practice Meetings

- Another valuable technique which helps capture tacit knowledge
- Staff can share practices they use to complete tasks more effectively in regular staff meetings where time is specifically allotted for this purpose (supervisors may be surprised to learn what and how much their staff do *not* share)
- Staff meetings can be used to discuss how a particularly challenging incident or situation was or can be handled

Job Shadowing

- Job shadowing can take place within your own division or across divisional lines
- “Assignments” are usually short term for a few hours a week—this is *not* a form of cross training, though
- Goals can vary—staff can choose to job shadow entirely different classifications to gain a wider breadth of knowledge or to classifications that are directly part of their own promotional path

Job Shadowing

- It's important to remember that someone who is job shadowing is *not* gaining formal training experience
- Job shadowing involves observation and does not allow someone to acquire experience that can be applied towards another classification
- Like mentoring, it is definitely in your best interest to use a formal agreement to clarify the intent and goals of the assignment to avoid any claims of a staff working out of class, etc.

What Are Some of STND's Concerns Related to Workforce Planning?

- "I have no real gaps in knowledge right now, but there are not enough staff to get the work done (my vacancies have been redirected, etc.)"
- "I have one go-to person who knows more than anyone else—if they leave, I'm dead"
- "We are taking on new tasks and functions that are completely different from what we did in the past—my staff need to catch up"

What Are Some of STND's Concerns Relevant to Workforce Planning?

- "I have some personality-driven issues within my unit" (i.e. some staff feel that certain tasks are beneath them)
- "My staff are relied upon heavily yet they are often unappreciated for what they do—they are burned out"
- "I have good staff, but many of them lack confidence"

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- So how can some of these specific concerns be addressed within STND?

“I have no gaps in knowledge, but there are not enough staff to get the work done”

- Envision your student assistants as your future workforce
 - Many student assistants are used to perform mostly menial tasks—honestly ask yourself if this has been the case in your unit
 - Select carefully—have a rigorous interview process based on competencies; use questions that are *specifically* geared towards Gen Y
 - Don't just view them as temporary help—groom them to be your next generation of hires; give them meaningful tasks that will give you a good preview of their true abilities



“I have no gaps in knowledge, but there are not enough staff to get the work done”

- Get to know them—find out what their career goals are after college and see if you can both give them some exposure and help your unit at the same time
- Allow them to job shadow and work with other staff to learn the “business” of your unit—help them see that the work you do is meaningful and has *value* (this is especially important to Generation Y)

“I have one go-to person who knows more than anyone else...”

- Expand your resident expert pool before it's too late
 - Most interviews with managers indicated that s/he had at least one person who was their resident expert in a crisis
 - While you'll always have your senior staff person, it's ideal to have multiple staff who can perform critical functions so you are never left scrambling if any one person leaves (and to avoid burn-out)
 - This can largely be addressed through different cross training techniques

“I have one go-to person who knows more than anyone else...”

- Have staff complete a Knowledge/Skills and Training Inventory:
 - This tool asks them to rate and self-identify their own perceived strengths and weaknesses (you can also use this tool to assess your staff yourself)
 - Use their input to determine who can function as a primary resource, who needs/wants training, and who can potentially provide cross training
 - Using a tool like this also sends the message to your staff that you are interested and vested in their success, which can also help address morale issues

“I have one go-to person who knows more than anyone else...”

- Use Paired or Group Work Using Leads:
 - Assign some lower level staff to work collaboratively on a project (or part of it) that you would normally just assign to your senior staff
 - Have the senior staff (or an RA) function as the lead
 - Require the lead to ensure that deadlines and milestones are developed and met
 - The lower level staff will strengthen their overall skill set
 - This is more time consuming initially, but the senior staff will be less burdened over time, and you will be better prepared for the future



“I have one go-to person who knows more than anyone else...”

- Assign Primaries and Back-ups
 - Helps create a culture and environment where you have multiple go-to people
 - Generate a list of primary tasks each staff performs and who will best serve as the back-up based on skill set, personality, interest, etc. (the Knowledge/Skills and Training Inventory can assist you with this)
 - Require staff to develop and consistently update documentation that can be easily accessed by the back-up if needed (logs, binders, files stored in a repository, etc.)
 - Allow your staff to have a say in their assignments if possible

“I have one go-to person who knows more than anyone else...”

- Re-think how you use Retired Annuitants
 - Often times, RAs still end up being your go-to person due to existing workload issues and convenience; this only puts a band aid on your long term situation
 - The next time you bring back an RA, have them agree to and sign an RA Agreement which identifies specific tasks related to knowledge transfer that must be addressed
 - If business needs do not afford you the luxury of using an RA to perform knowledge transfer exclusively, build it in to the Agreement to be at least 50% of the time



“I have one go-to person who knows more than anyone else...”

- Using a formal Agreement helps to accomplish the following:
 - It outlines your specific expectations and tasks related to knowledge transfer
 - The formality inherently associated with a written document holds them more accountable and therefore will require you to “police” the situation less
 - It will help to change the culture of how RAs are used in your Division over time

“I have one go-to person who knows more than anyone else...”

- Specific tasks related to knowledge transfer you can ask RAs to assist with include:
 - Mentoring staff
 - Compiling data/documenting processes and procedures
 - Training unit staff
 - Participating in expert interviews (have them speak about lessons learned, advice, etc.)—be sure to videotape
 - Cross training/providing oversight and guidance on projects



“I have one go-to person who knows more than anyone else...”

- Whatever cross training method you decide, it is highly recommended that you formally document the length, goals, and intentions of the training to ensure accountability and to help monitor cooperation and progress.

“We are taking on new tasks and functions that are completely different”

- Instill a culture of documentation *now*
 - Several managers indicated they had one person who was their key “documenter” so that other staff don’t have much (or any) responsibility for this—consider having this person train the others how to do this more effectively
 - Have your staff work with you to determine the most efficient and effective ways to capture data so it is readily accessible
 - While most of you are currently using SharePoint to store processes and procedures, it is also useful to do a knowledge audit with your staff periodically

“We are taking on new tasks and functions that are completely different”

- Types of documentation for staff to compile:
 - Checklists, flowcharts, reference tables and diagrams which put information in concrete form and can serve as a quick reference guide, especially for newer staff
 - Updated processes and procedures for carrying out tasks
 - Can also include cataloging relevant information and where it is located for easy reference. Examples include where to find commonly (or even less commonly) requested or needed data, links, who experts or resources are for a particular situation, historical info about customers, etc.

“We are taking on new tasks and functions that are completely different”

- Methods for compiling documentation:
 - Use templates that can be easily filled out; these create consistency and can be helpful for staff for whom English is their second language (ESL) or for staff who do not possess strong written communication skills
 - Start compiling models for how you want documentation to be done; these are especially helpful to new, ESL, and Gen Y staff
 - Have a staff create a binder which can serve as an easy reference guide for your unit (also assists with onboarding new staff)

“We are taking on new tasks and functions that are completely different”

- Reach out to your peers within OTech (or even other departments)
 - Are there other units which have experience with some of the new functions and tasks you have inherited?
 - Would they be willing to share some of their best practices/documentation to assist your unit or even train them?
 - Could your staff benefit from job shadowing other units within OTech?

“I have some personality-driven issues within my unit”

- Though they may seem similar, recognize that personality and/or performance-based issues differ significantly from workforce planning issues
- If you have a problem of this nature, this is most likely hindering your ability to do good (or any) workforce planning
- These issues need to be addressed from a progressive discipline perspective rather than a workforce planning perspective

“I have some personality-driven issues within my unit”

- Identify and deal with your problem before the others drink the Kool Aid
 - Do you have any slackers who end up creating more work for others and therefore impede your unit's ability to document processes, mentor staff, etc? Are your performance expectations clear?
 - Do you have anyone who is “poisoning the well” with a negative or entitled attitude? Who is the ring leader? Have you been looking the other way or excusing poor behavior lately?
 - Contact your Division's HR shop to discuss the most appropriate way to resolve

“My staff are relied upon heavily yet they are often unappreciated for what they do”

- Ask yourself if there's anything more you can do to make your unit's environment better
 - A little employee engagement can go a long way—you play a larger role in your staffs' satisfaction than you probably realize
 - Find out their concerns and what you can do to help (simply asking is *huge*)
 - Are there ways you can make sure that there is still camaraderie within the unit despite feeling unloved (i.e. pot lucks, BBQs, etc.)?
 - Whatever you do, make sure that it suits your personality as a manager *and* the personality of your unit

“My staff are relied upon heavily yet they are often unappreciated for what they do”

- Allow (and even encourage) teleworking or a flexible schedule
 - Many managers within OTech have been reluctant to incorporate telework (“I can’t police them in their cube, so how do I know they are working?” “If I allow one person to do it, then I have to allow *everyone* to do it”)
 - Telework can be a great way to allow staff some flexibility, reward them, and show appreciation; it also may give them more time to focus on tasks that are often interrupted in the office
 - If you have staff who feel they could benefit from teleworking, this could also free up their time to assist you with other knowledge transfer tasks, such as documentation

“My staff are relied upon heavily yet they are often unappreciated for what they do”

- Like teleworking, flexible work schedules can also send the message that you appreciate and trust your staff as it allows them to have some “say” in how they like to work
- As long as it meets business needs, you may consider offering certain staff a schedule which best suits their personal life, childcare needs, etc. (i.e. 10/4/40)

“I have good staff, but many of them lack confidence”

- Ask for their input and help them grow
 - Do regular IDPs to remain informed of your staffs' career goals and update duty statements periodically as staff roles change—again, this shows you are vested in their success
 - A less formal way of finding out your staffs' needs is to have them complete a Professional Development Questionnaire or simply use the questions as a discussion piece (this eliminates the “stigma” of discipline associated with the IDP); use the responses to develop individual Action Plans
 - The Knowledge/Skills/Training Inventory would also be a helpful tool
 - Have regular one-on-ones with your staff; positive feedback (if deserved, of course) is critical

And Now....Some Best Practices From Your STND Peers

- “I used to have someone who was a bit of a hoarder in my unit; I use templates now to help keep processes ‘flattened’ and streamlined. Now he can’t say, ‘This is the way I have always done it.’”
- “Since I oversee a PM group, staff work is sent out to the entire unit for peer review.”
- “I actively pass on what I know to my staff; no one is pigeon-holed—everyone can work on any device. I designed the unit to operate this way.”

STND Best Practices Con't

- "I routinely give my staff tasks they do *not* know how to do so they have to ask others—this has really created a culture of cooperation and cohesion, and I do not have to do my staff's work."
- "I have weekly meetings with my staff; I also take every opportunity to send my staff to free trainings that vendors offer."
- "I inherited a unit where confidence and morale was an issue. I have recently given all the duty statements in my unit a complete overhaul so they accurately reflect my staff's functions."

STND Best Practices Con't

- "I am trying to build up my staff's confidence by inviting them to certain meetings. I want to give them some exposure and allow them to observe and learn."
- "I am trying to leverage my Student Assistant into someone who will potentially want to stay. I am pairing this person up with another staff."
- "I have built my own internal training program and have my staff cross-train one another."
- "As soon as I knew a key person was retiring, I made sure that person did *a lot* of documentation and trained staff to ensure a smooth turnover prior to leaving."



Advice for Implementation

- Some of your staff (or you) may complain about having to incorporate knowledge transfer practices since they require some extra time and effort
- It's extremely important to recognize that your ultimate goal is to make knowledge transfer and management a **habit** within your unit in order to change the culture
- It's all in how you "sell" any of these knowledge transfer and management techniques— for most staff, you will need to address the "what's in it for me" factor

So What /s In It For Them?

- Increases their potential for growth and even promotion (i.e. job shadowing, cross training, attending or leading expert interviews)
- Strengthens their oral and written communication skill set (formal documentation, collaboration with other staff, mentoring)
- It's in *their* best interest if knowledge is formally stored for easy reference (i.e. helps new staff acclimate which takes less of *their* time to train, gives them more freedom to go on vacation, etc.)

Going Forward

- Regarding your current staff and their workload, ask yourself:
 - Are you *truly* prepared to lose your key staff if s/he/they walked out the door tomorrow? Do you have a solid plan in place?
 - Can you name two people who could take your place *tomorrow* if needed?
 - Do you have staff who feel as if they are being “punished” for being your stars (burn out)? Could some of this work start to be transferred to staff who wish to promote?

Going Forward

- Are there any slackers or negative types who are interfering with your ability to implement some knowledge transfer techniques? Have you dealt with this, or are you choosing to ignore it because of the potential headache it will cause?
- Are there any upcoming projects that could be overseen by leads and completed by lower level staff (even if it's just a partial aspect of a project)?

Going Forward

- Do you have any RAs or staff close to retirement in your unit who could participate in an expert interview?
- Could you be creative by using half of a PY for an RA and the other half to recruit new blood?
- Have you considered allowing teleworking or flexible schedules for some or all of your staff (business needs permitting)?

Going Forward

- How much documentation are you currently requiring vs. hoping for? Can anyone create templates? Is anyone capable and willing to train others?
- Would it be helpful to have your staff complete a Knowledge/Skills and Training Inventory, a Professional Development Questionnaire, or a Stay Interview?
- Is it feasible to promote anyone in place right now? What's holding you back?

And Finally....

- These knowledge transfer methods are definitely not one size fits all—there are some methods that will work better for some of you more than others
- Start small and experiment with at least one tool or technique that you think will best complement your particular unit's dynamic
- Implementing good knowledge transfer practices does not need to be a major burden—use your Workforce Planning Consultant to help you with any of these tools and techniques

Recommended Reading for Supervisors

- *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay* by Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans
 - Provides lots of excellent tips on how to engage and retain your most valuable staff

