Breaking Down Silos: Developing a Knowledge Sharing Platform for Internal Business.

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# Executive summary

## 1.1 Introduction

A software system known as a knowledge sharing platform has both contemporary features that enable users to communicate information in real time and as a knowledge base. Users from around the organisation can post content or pose questions using this technology and, subject matter experts, can publish their comments in response.

Items are often shared between departments on an ad-hoc, informal basis, which can lead to duplication of effort or (unintended) exclusion of departments from useful findings.

Departments include:

* Product Design – who need to understand the needs and challenges of customers, what competitors offer, market trends etc through means such as desk research, webinars, conferences, and customer events/feedback.
* UX – who need to understand how to present the requirements of product features in the UI, using desk research, user testing and customer events/feedback.
* Research – who look towards the horizon of new technology and its applications, through desk research, webinars, conferences, early access demos, in-house trials, and developing prototypes.
* Marketing – who need to understand MHR’s place in the market, the needs and challenges of potential customers and the competitor space, though means such as desk research, webinars, conferences, and customer events/feedback, as well as access to research institutions such as Gartner and IDC.

Other departments around the company will also do their own research, such as DPO for keeping up to date on data privacy regulations and their effect on product development, but for the scope here, we will focus on the above four departments.

Items discovered/produced because of the research take on different forms, such as:

* Links (to articles, solutions, competitor websites, upcoming webinars, etc)
* Papers (academic papers, whitepapers produced by research organisations and/or competitors, etc)
* Books (several in the Research bookcase, and more dotted around the company)
* Videos (webinar recordings, YouTube videos, Teams meeting recordings, etc)
* Summary write ups/word documents/blogs/presentations produced (e.g. as a result of an investigation or of the findings from a conference)
* Excel spreadsheets of analysis (e.g. competitor analysis)

Items are shared between departments on an ad-hoc and informal basis. This sometimes leads to duplication of effort or (unintended) exclusion of departments from useful findings.

Means of ad-hoc sharing currently include:

* Email and Teams messaging
* SharePoint and OneDrive
* People First communities
* Miro
* Ad-hoc conversations

## 1.2 Opportunity

MHR is a leading HR service provider who strives for continuous evolution of its product, which requires mass research be shared across the business. Currently departments are siloed between each other, causing harm to company culture, and decreasing efficiency. The opportunity to bring in a revolutionary way to share knowledge between departments would be a huge asset to the business. Initial improvements would be seen in the reduced duplication of effort, and as time advances it would encourage the reduction of silos by increased collaboration, sharing of knowledge, and between department idea generation.

## 1.3 Gap Analysis

Table 1 shows a gap analysis which identifies and examines two primary areas that this proposed initiative addresses: two business procedures requiring development.

We are investigating a new method for between department idea generation and sharing of such ideas and knowledge, whilst allowing users to search and comment on posted content.

Table 1 - Gap Analysis

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Current State | Desired State | Action to state |
| Content is currently shared between departments on an ad-hoc, informal basis, which can lead to duplication of effort or (unintended) exclusion of departments from useful findings. | An application for departments to manage and tag content. | Develop a cloud application where departments can share and tag content for other departments in a social feed. |
| Presently there is no access to globally search across the business for knowledge content, which causes increase of time due to not knowing content location. | Simplistic searching of content to allow users to use subjects. | Tagging of content and provide search functionally to filter down content. |
| Content has no managed structure and data is shared in different formats, making it difficult to analyse and report on. | Provide basic content structure and types to allow for manageable knowledge resources. | The system should allow users to enter content via forms which has strict content types, links, word documents, images, etc. |
| Content shared around the business has no feedback feed for employees to share thoughts on the knowledge resources. | Have collaborative feedback feature to allow for employees to feedback. | Have comments to be posted on the content for the author to review and reply. |

## 1.4 Feasibility Analysis

### 1.4.1 Operational

Departments will need to ensure that their staff will use this system in part of the process of knowledge sharing. It will become integrated into day-to-day business operations of sharing information. This system will be trialled on selected departments before being rolled out to the rest of the business.

### 1.4.2 Technical

This project will use the identical technology stack as other products within the business, meaning there will not be a need for project participants to receive additional training. The stack is Microsoft.NET for backend services, Angular for front end application and SQL database for persistence layer. The code will be deployed and maintained on the same cloud platform, Azure.

### 1.4.3 Schedule

A single team could take on this project, or run it in parallel with a current project, as there are several development teams operating within the company, provided they have redundancy and multiple developers per discipline.

### 1.4.4 Economic

As this is intended to be an internal tool, rather than a sellable product or to incorporate into another product, the project’s return on investments will be modest. Although it will not generate sales or outside income, it reduces duplication of effort around the departments and increase idea generation between departments.

## 1.4 Risk Analysis

Table 2 shows the risk analysis for the system, identifying risk itself, the probability, impact, and how we can mitigate or reduce the risk.

Occurrence probability [1 unlikely – 5 very likely]

Impact [1 low – 5 very high]

Table 2 - Risk analysis

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| #ID | Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigation |
| 1 | Requirements are not fit | 3 | 5 – Requirements gathered does not match what the stakeholders want out of the system. | Complete business cases and provide questions for project stakeholders and document everything. |
| 2 | Scope Creep | 5 | 5 - When scope creep results in software development projects missing deadlines and taking longer than expected, risks can result. | Get the management approval before putting the project scope down in a Project Initiation Document. Throughout the project, refer to it and compare all modifications to it to ensure that they are in line with the Business Case. |
| 3 | Poor risk management | 3 | 4 – Poor risk management can lead to disruptions. These setbacks frequently result in one or more serious failures of a poorly thought-out software development project. | Create an in-depth risk assessment for the project which covers all risk and its mitigations. |

# Technical literature review

Knowledge sharing platforms are important tools that enable organizations to share and leverage knowledge for better decision-making, innovation, and problem-solving. In this technical literature review, I will provide an overview of existing technical solutions and identify gaps that need to be addressed. I will also review similar tools/software/approaches that can be used in the proposed solution and their limitations.

There are several existing knowledge sharing platforms that organizations can use. Some of the most popular solutions include SharePoint, Miro board, Teams, Slack, and Nuclino. These platforms provide a range of features such as document management, workflow management, project management, social collaboration, messaging, and analytics. While these platforms are effective, they also have some limitations. For example, SharePoint and Nuclino can be expensive and complex to implement and maintain, while Teams and Slack are primarily designed for social communication and may not provide robust document management or workflow capabilities.

I picked out 3 existing solutions and did a more in-depth review to understand their capabilities and limitations.

## 2.1 Team on MS Teams

MS Teams is the best messaging app on the market, for businesses. Microsoft (2019) says it offers a workspace for real-time collaboration, meetings, file and app sharing, and chat.

Currently, MS Teams is being used as a day-to-day file-sharing application for siloed departments to share knowledge content. Its benefits of being a real-time messaging system and file streaming service allow for quick sharing of information between users. Also, MS teams is integrated with Azure Active Directory, which secures its services by SSO, single sign-on.

The business has setup teams so that each user is assigned to their departments, which allow them to access certain channels.

### 2.1.1 Limitations

MS Teams does not provide, in isolation, services required to meet the business’ desired state as described in the above gap analysis (Table 1). MS Teams has a static library structure which makes arranging and organising of knowledge difficult and near to impossible without SharePoint. This does not fit our need to have an application that enables users to manage and tag content. Additionally, MS Teams does not provide a solution for simple content sharing as you must search between each channel and chat manually meaning there is no solution for global search of files or information.

## 2.2 Dedicated SharePoint site

Microsoft SharePoint is a document management and collaboration platform that allows corporations to manage archives, documents, reports, and other content that is essential to its operational procedures.

It will be simpler for staff who are already accustomed to using SharePoint for daily document management and business activities to switch to a full knowledge management solution set up within their current environment.

### 2.2.1 Limitations

SharePoint has a search capability that, when used with wide query parameters, can be sufficient for obtaining a limited number of files, although the performance quickly falters when used with larger data sets and more specific search criteria.

Below are some limitations on searching –

* Without further customization, the only factor that can be used to filter search results is the document's age.
* The user's current site collection is the only one that may be searched.
* How administrators configured the functionality has a significant impact on the user search experience.

*(Brooks & Ryan Brooks, 2020)*

The above limitations impact the suitability of SharePoint, as a knowledge platform, due to it not achieving the desired state of global searching content. Searches are frequently for popular articles or rules, amongst others content. Although, several items have similar search phrases, there is frequently only one item that will provide the query’s answer.

## 2.3 Miro board

Miro positions itself as a collaborative digital whiteboard that is simple to use. You can arrange objects, make notes, and connect via online chat or embedded videocalls all within the software. Miro is currently used by the business as a whiteboard session workspace, allowing team members to share and collaborate on feature projects.

If we were to use Miro as a knowledge platform it will primarily aid most as a visual knowledge platform, alongside the additional uses listed below.

* For each unique activity, you can construct a separate board, or you can make a single board for the complete knowledge base.
* To implement "Navigation" across the board, use internal linking. If the navigation is done right, this will prove to be a vital element to allow for content linking.
* You can generate the content for the actual knowledge base by utilising different shapes, text, connection lines, and pen tools.

Miro board also provides access through SSO (Single-Sign on) which allows employees to access the service without using external emails outside of the business.

### 2.3.1 Limitations

An issue with using Miro, is that if it is not managed it can become unwieldy and become hard to go back to existing boards. Users have limited structure or templates to fill in content within Miro board, which does not fit in with our desired state manageable, knowledge resources. Furthermore, this solution would also make it difficult to analyse and report on current knowledge content, shared within the system.

Additionally, Miro board doesn’t not have searching capabilities, other than the name of the board, which further does not fit with the desired state of content searching, meaning users must open multiple boards before finding the resources they require.

## 2.4 Nuclino

Teams may share and edit documents in real-time with the aid of the knowledge management and collaboration platform Nuclino. It has a variety of capabilities, such as visual editors and third-party connectors, and is quite simple to use.

By creating material from scratch or using a template from their extensive library, it is easy to adapt to team requirements. This fits with our desired state of having a manageable knowledge resource structure and would allow the business to analyse knowledge resources across the business.

Furthermore, the effective search function rapidly displays pertinent results, and the phrases are highlighted in the results, making it simpler to locate desired information (Hero, 2021).

The system also supports real-time collaboration and commenting, by showing group changes in real time. This also achieves our desired state of collaborative feedback, by allowing employees to comment and share thoughts on knowledge resources shared by the author (Hero, 2021).

### 2.4.1 Limitations

A limitation of Nuclino is that it is a novel tool outside of the business infrastructure, meaning knowledge is hosted outside of the business environment, which would limit any internal confidential content being shared.

Nuclino uses a pricing structure (£4.00 per user, per month) which could be a limitation due to budgetary constraints, going against the desired need for the knowledge platform to be accessible companywide. If the business were to implement Nuclino, it would cost £40,800.00 per year on licenses (£4.00 x 850 employees).

## 2.5 Gap in Existing solutions

One of the gaps in existing solutions is the lack of efficient searching capabilities for knowledge repositories. While some platforms offer keyword-based search, this method can be limited in providing context-specific results. Therefore, there is a potential market for knowledge sharing platforms that utilize graph databases and tagging to improve searching efficiency. Graph databases can allow for more complex relationships between data points and enable the platform to suggest relevant information based on those relationships. Additionally, tagging can improve search results by allowing for more granular categorization of information. By incorporating these features, knowledge sharing platforms can better support the organization's knowledge management efforts and enhance decision-making processes.

## 2.6 Similar Tools/Software/Approaches

Graph databases and tagging have been utilized in other knowledge management tools, such as Neo4j and Ontotext, to improve searching efficiency and provide more accurate recommendations. However, these tools are often targeted towards developers and require technical expertise to implement. There is a potential market for knowledge sharing platforms that incorporate graph databases and tagging in a user-friendly manner, providing non-technical users with the ability to leverage these features for more efficient knowledge management. By providing easy-to-use tagging and search functionalities, knowledge sharing platforms can improve the accuracy and relevance of search results, enabling users to quickly access the information they need. Incorporating graph databases into these platforms can further enhance the user experience by enabling the platform to suggest relevant information based on complex relationships between data points. Overall, the use of graph databases and tagging in knowledge sharing platforms has the potential to revolutionize the way organizations manage their knowledge and drive innovation.

## 2.6 Commercial Context

Knowledge sharing platforms are widely used in various industries such as healthcare, finance, and technology. According to a report by MarketsandMarkets, the knowledge management software market is expected to grow from $6.1 billion in 2020 to $16.3 billion by 2025, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 21.5%. This growth is driven by the increasing need for organizations to leverage knowledge for better decision-making and innovation. The proposed solution can address the gaps in existing solutions and provide organizations with a competitive advantage by enabling personalized and context-specific recommendations and incentivizing knowledge sharing and collaboration.

## 2.7 Research & case studies

Below are three case studies done on Knowledge sharing platforms and what results and impact they had.

### 2.7.1 Deloitte's knowledge-sharing platform

D Street is a digital platform that enables Deloitte's employees to collaborate and share knowledge across the company's various business units and geographic locations. The platform was launched in 2012 and has since become a critical tool for Deloitte's knowledge management strategy.

Some of the key features of D Street include:

1. Search functionality: D Street allows users to search for relevant content using keywords, filters, and advanced search options. The platform uses algorithms to suggest relevant content based on the user's search history and activity on the platform.
2. Content curation: D Street's content team curates and organizes content to ensure that it is accurate, up-to-date, and easily accessible. The team also creates new content based on user feedback and analytics.
3. Collaboration tools: D Street includes tools that enable users to collaborate on projects and share knowledge in real-time. These tools include discussion forums, instant messaging, and video conferencing.
4. Analytics: D Street uses data analytics to track user activity and measure the effectiveness of the platform. The analytics help Deloitte's leadership team identify areas for improvement and make data-driven decisions about the platform's development.

Since its launch, D Street has had a significant impact on Deloitte's knowledge management strategy. Some of the benefits of the platform include:

1. Increased knowledge-sharing: D Street has led to a 400% increase in the number of users accessing the platform, which has helped to break down silos and encourage collaboration across the company.
2. Improved content quality: D Street's content team has been able to improve the quality and relevance of the content on the platform, which has led to better decision-making and problem-solving across the company.
3. Reduced duplication: D Street has helped to reduce the duplication of efforts and resources, as employees can now easily find and build on existing knowledge within the company.

Overall, D Street has become a critical tool for Deloitte's knowledge management strategy, and has helped the company to improve collaboration, productivity, and innovation across its various business units and geographic locations.

### 2.7.2 Knowledge Sharing in Digital Platform Ecosystems: A Textual Analysis of SAP's Developer Community

The paper titled "Knowledge Sharing in Digital Platform Ecosystems: A Textual Analysis of SAP's Developer Community" explores the concept of knowledge sharing within a digital platform ecosystem using SAP's developer community as a case study. The study uses textual analysis to identify the factors that promote and inhibit knowledge sharing within the community and examines how the community members' characteristics impact their engagement in knowledge sharing.

The study found that the community members' motivation and willingness to share knowledge, as well as the trust and support within the community, are key factors that promote knowledge sharing. In contrast, factors such as complexity and ambiguity of the platform, lack of time, and absence of recognition for contributions inhibit knowledge sharing. The study also identified that different types of community members, such as core developers and peripheral members, exhibit different patterns of knowledge sharing.

Overall, the paper provides insights into the complex dynamics of knowledge sharing within digital platform ecosystems and highlights the importance of understanding the factors that influence knowledge sharing to enhance the effectiveness of such communities.

### 2.7.3 Social Media for Knowledge-Sharing: A Systematic Literature Review

The paper titled "Social Media for Knowledge-Sharing: A Systematic Literature Review" provides a comprehensive analysis of the existing literature on the use of social media platforms for knowledge sharing. The authors conducted a systematic literature review of 39 studies published between 2008 and 2017, and identified the various ways in which social media platforms can enhance knowledge sharing.

The paper finds that social media platforms can provide a collaborative environment for sharing ideas, facilitate informal learning, and enable access to a wide range of expertise. The success of social media for knowledge sharing depends on several factors such as organizational culture, technology adoption, and user motivation. The authors suggest that organizations need to develop strategies for implementing social media platforms and integrating them into their knowledge-sharing practices to achieve their full potential.

The paper highlights the need for further research in this area to better understand the role of social media in knowledge sharing. In summary, this paper provides valuable insights for organizations looking to leverage social media platforms for knowledge sharing, as well as for researchers seeking to explore this topic further.

### 2.7.3 Comparison

Some differences between the three papers –

1. Focus and scope: The three papers focus on different platforms and contexts for knowledge-sharing. Deloitte's knowledge-sharing platform, D Street, is designed for internal use within Deloitte, while the other two papers examine knowledge-sharing platforms in the context of digital platform ecosystems and social media.
2. Methodology: The papers use different research methods. Deloitte's case study is based on internal data and analysis, while the other two papers use textual analysis and literature review methodology to analyse the content and trends in digital platforms and social media.
3. Audience and stakeholders: The three papers have different intended audiences and stakeholders. Deloitte's case study is primarily aimed at Deloitte's leadership and employees, while the other two papers are targeted at researchers, practitioners, and industry professionals interested in knowledge-sharing and digital platforms.

Overall, these studies demonstrate the importance of digital platforms for knowledge-sharing in organizations. While the studies focus on different platforms and contexts, they all highlight the importance of collaboration, innovation, and continuous learning in promoting effective knowledge-sharing. The studies also highlight the importance of features such as search functionality, content curation, and analytics in facilitating knowledge-sharing and improving organizational performance.

## 2.8 Summary

In conclusion, knowledge sharing platforms are essential for organizations to manage their knowledge and drive innovation. However, existing solutions have limitations, such as the lack of efficient searching capabilities and the need for technical expertise to implement more advanced features. Graph databases and tagging have been utilized in other knowledge management tools to improve searching efficiency and provide accurate recommendations, but they are often targeted towards technical users. There is a potential market for knowledge sharing platforms that incorporate graph databases and tagging in a user-friendly manner, providing non-technical users with the ability to leverage these features for more efficient knowledge management. By incorporating these features, knowledge sharing platforms can improve the accuracy and relevance of search results, enabling users to quickly access the information they need. Furthermore, with the growing knowledge management software market, the proposed solution has the potential to offer organizations a competitive edge by enabling efficient knowledge sharing and collaboration while providing personalized and context-specific recommendations. By leveraging machine learning techniques and gamification, such as NLP, social network analysis, and machine learning algorithms, organizations can enhance their decision-making processes and drive innovation.

# Aims & Objectives

The aim of this project is to create a knowledge sharing platform that will promote collaboration, information sharing, and transparency within the company, while breaking down silos between departments. The platform will provide a centralized location for employees to share their knowledge and expertise, access information and resources, and collaborate with colleagues across different teams and departments.

## 3.1 Objectives

* To create a user-friendly and intuitive platform that encourages active participation and engagement from all employees.
* To promote a culture of transparency and knowledge sharing by providing easy access to relevant information and resources.
* To break down silos between departments and encourage collaboration by providing a centralized location for sharing knowledge and expertise.
* To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of internal communication by providing a platform for real-time feedback and discussion.
* To increase productivity and reduce duplication of effort by providing employees with access to a wide range of resources and expertise.
* To ensure that the platform is secure and compliant with relevant data privacy regulations, such as GDPR or CCPA.
* To integrate the platform with existing internal systems and workflows to maximize adoption and usability.
* To provide analytics and reporting features that allow admins to track user engagement and content performance, and to use this information to continuously improve the platform.

# Requirement analysis

## 4.1 Research and Discovery

Requirements will be acquired through a joint application design (JAD) session to match the business needs found in the GAP analysis. As this is a fresh project, with no existing system to replace, the JAD session will concentrate on developing new needs without comparison to an existing system. The JAD session participants can communicate and provide a better grasp of the aims and goals, relative to their abilities and knowledge. This should clear up uncertainties regarding the deliverable’s ultimate goals, objectives, and expectations.

In addition to a JAD session, surveys will be created and provide to selected individuals within the business, in each siloed department. Each survey will gather information of key stakeholders regarding how knowledge is shared within their departments and team, with the aim of analysing variations and similarities. This information will be used in brainstorming and workshop sessions to better understand system users, and to produce applicable solutions which allow all types of knowledge to be shared companywide.

Some questions to ask people to understand the current situation from their points of view and add more to this section:

* Where do you currently store notes, papers, links etc
* When you attend an event, do you share your notes? With who?
* Do you share any knowledge (links/papers/documents) with other departments?
* What would be useful to you if you could search in another department’s notes/documents?
* When people share articles/videos with you, do you have the time to read/watch them?

If these requirement elicitation techniques are achieved, it will reduce the ‘#1 - Requirements are not fit’ risk, within the risk analysis.

The JAD session will be divided of three days. Each survey will be given out on a conduct needs analysis, to create appropriate questions.

* Day 1 – Survey feedback review and use cases
* Day 2 – Requirements analysis, brainstorming and workshop
* Day 3 – Specification design session

A senior stakeholder will be present within the JAD sessions, who will be a project representative and have final say on related decisions. Said stakeholder could be the CEO, CIO, or project manager (Davidson, E.J., 1999). Attendees will be made to feel as if they are a part of the process and the project objectives stated. Should initial worries be voiced, the stakeholder should strive to alleviate them.

## 4.2 Software Development Methodologies

There are two approaches that might be employed for this project: waterfall and agile.

### 4.2.1 Waterfall

A traditional model used in the system development life cycle to design a system with a linear and sequential approach is the waterfall model. Because the model progresses methodically from one phase to the next in a downward direction, it is known as a waterfall model. The output of one phase is utilised as the input for the following phase in this model, which is broken up into several phases. There is no overlap between phases; each must be finished before the next one begins.

Since each step is preplanned in a linear order, one drawback of the waterfall project management method is that it is not very adaptable. Any alteration in stakeholder objectives or demands will throw off the arrangement and necessitate a revision or maybe a completely new blueprint. For knowledge-based tasks, like computer programming, waterfall project management performs less well. However, waterfall workflows can be simply duplicated for upcoming, comparable activities, making up for its lack of flexibility. *(What is Waterfall Project Management? 2016).*

### 4.2.2 Agile/Scrum

Agile methodology employs the "Waterfall" style of software development and focuses on communication and results. The concept focuses on self-management, short timescales, and flexible planning, enabling system improvements over time.

It eliminates the possibility of timelines that span months or years and lessens the likelihood that projects would fail because of errors made earlier on. Each phase is kept brief—under 4 weeks—which enables the system to advance quickly. Even though there is less documentation, the project places a strong emphasis on putting the key stakeholders needs first by allowing teams and employees to collaborate closely with them.

Scrum is the component of Agile approach that we will focus on. Most firms utilise this model since it offers a simple framework for processes. In Scrum, a product owner creates a prioritised wish list known as the product "backlog." From this backlog, teams, which are often small, will take bits of the backlog and produce a sprint. A sprint is a period (between 2-4 weeks) during which this item on the backlog will be evaluated, created, and integrated into the larger system. The teams will gather each day for a meeting called a "daily scrum," which tracks progress on the sprint and is run by a Scrum Master to keep the team on task. When the sprint is finished, they review and deploy the changes, then a new sprint is started.

An agile strategy might be used to increase the project's adaptability to changes and start delivering work sooner so that stakeholders could inspect it and provide input, ultimately giving end consumers a richer result. *(Denning, 2022)*

### 4.2.3 Chosen Development Method

The Agile methodology makes use of short, fixed-length iterations that concentrate on a small number of components of change. Each iteration is produced, tested, and distributed using prototypes, which allows for quick user feedback to inform current and subsequent revisions, this will allow to understand and create the correct solution for internal use.

This internal system is very heavily prototyped, allowing the requirements to be abstracted and divided into smaller timeboxes with a minimum number of features would benefit flexibility of change and adapting of features. *(Alberto Sillitti, 2011)*

One of the main principles of Scrum is that the business gives the scrum team authority to complete the task. The scrum team develops into a self-sufficient division of the company. This will allow the team more control on the work, not rushing each task to a deadline.

Although Agile approaches first appear to result in greater development costs and extended project timeframes due to the crucial role conversations across teams/companies play, this gradual process empowers users and promotes collaboration.

Requesting software specifications and requirements from key stakeholders using the waterfall process meant they had to specify exactly what they needed up front. Their specifications were outlined in a document that the development team and testers used to make sure they delivered exactly what the client had requested, without adding or removing anything.

This strategy assumed that customers knew what they wanted from the start. However, this was infrequently the case, and customers frequently requested changes to the specification after changing their minds, this increases our risk of “requirements to not fit.” The impact on the delivery date and who would be responsible for the cost of the change were then discussed.

The project will be using the Agile Scrum structure to plan, research, and create this system. Agile is a great lightweight framework for small, straightforward projects with compressed timelines.

## 4.2 Functional and Non-Functional requirements

Below I will analyse the requirements given by the identified stake holders, from there I will split these requirements into Functional and Non-Functional requirements. Functional consist of features that the system or data must contain. Non-Functional is aspects of the system which is general behaviours that the system needs.

I will detail each requirement and reference from the requirement.

## 4.2.1 Functional Requirements

### 4.2.1.1 User Authentication and Authorization

* The platform shall require users to authenticate themselves before accessing any content.
* The platform shall grant different levels of authorization to different types of users, such as admins and regular users.
* The platform shall integrate with Active Directory for Single Sign-On (SSO) to simplify user authentication and authorization.
* The platform shall authenticate users against the company's Active Directory domain.
* The platform shall provide users with a seamless login experience by using their existing Active Directory credentials.
* The platform shall allow admins to manage user access and permissions through Active Directory groups and roles.

### 4.2.1.2 Content Creation and Management

* The platform shall allow users to create and publish new content, including articles, open texts, and books.
* The platform shall allow admins to manage content, including reviewing and approving new posts before they are published, and removing or archiving posts that are outdated or no longer relevant.

### 4.2.1.3 Tagging and Search Functionality

* The platform shall include a robust tagging system that allows users to tag their posts with relevant keywords and categories.
* The platform shall include a powerful search function that allows users to easily find content based on specific keywords or categories.

### 4.2.1.4 User Engagement and Collaboration

* The platform shall encourage user engagement and collaboration through features such as commenting and rating.
* The platform shall allow users to connect with other users who share similar interests or expertise.

### 4.2.1.5 Analytics and Reporting

* The platform shall provide analytics and reporting features that allow admins to track user engagement and content performance, such as views, likes, and comments.
* The platform shall allow admins to export data for further analysis.

### 4.2.1.6 Security and Data Privacy

* The platform shall be secure and comply with relevant data privacy regulations, such as GDPR or CCPA.
* The platform shall include features such as encryption, user access controls, and data retention policies.

### 4.2.1.7 Integration with Other Systems

* The platform shall be able to integrate with other systems used by the company, such as an internal communication or project management system.
* The platform shall allow for easy sharing and collaboration between different teams and departments.

## 4.2.2 Non-functional Requirements

### 4.2.2.1 Performance

* The platform shall be able to handle a large volume of users and content without significant degradation in performance.
* The platform shall be responsive and load quickly.

### 4.2.2.2 Usability

* The platform shall be easy to use and navigate.
* The platform shall include user-friendly interfaces for content creation and management.

### 4.2.2.3 Reliability

* The platform shall be always available and accessible to users.
* The platform shall include backup and disaster recovery mechanisms to ensure data integrity.

### 4.2.2.4 Compatibility

* The platform shall be compatible with a variety of devices and browsers.
* The platform shall comply with relevant web standards and protocols.

## 4.2.3 Conclusion

The knowledge sharing platform will be an important tool for internal communication and collaboration within the company. By following the requirements outlined in this software requirement specification, the platform will provide a secure and efficient way for employees to share knowledge and expertise, while also facilitating user engagement and collaboration.

## 4.3 Use Case Analysis

Use case analysis is an important tool for understanding how a software system will be used by its users and stakeholders. It helps to identify user requirements, define system behavior, and specify system functionality. This information is critical for developing an effective testing strategy that ensures the system meets the needs of its users and stakeholders.

The system's primary functionality is represented by the three use cases listed below.

### 4.3.1 Use Case #1

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Use Case Name | A user adds knowledge content |
| ID | 1 |
| Priority | High |
| Actor | Subject matter expert (user) |
| Description | The user selects content template to fill (links, papers, books, free-texts). Once form is completed, the user will click save and publish, this will then persist this knowledge resource in a database. |
| Trigger | The user wants to use this system to share a piece of knowledge information with the rest of the business. |
| Preconditions | The application has verified and approved the user credentials. |
| Normal Course | User clicks on add content button  User selects content template from dropdown  User fills out content form  User submits and publishes the content |
| Postconditions | Content is persisted within database and shown on other user’s content feed.  User logs out of application. |
| Exceptions | User credentials are not valid or timed out.  Profanity filter picks up words. |

Table 5 - Use case 1

### 4.3.2 Use Case #2

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Use Case Name | A searches knowledge content |
| ID | 2 |
| Priority | High |
| Actor | Content consumer (user) |
| Description | The user should be able to search for the content with the system via headers and tags. |
| Trigger | The user wants to use this system to learn different knowledge around the business. |
| Preconditions | The application has verified and approved the user credentials.  Content has already been added in the system with tags. |
| Normal Course | User click on navigation icon on menu bar  Text field appears for user to write into  User press enter with text field filled  List of content results are returned |
| Postconditions | User can click content.  The user logs out of the system. |
| Exceptions | The user's login credentials are not valid.  No content in the system was added. |

Table 6 – Use case 2

### 4.3.3 Use Case #3

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Use Case Name | Add comments to content |
| ID | 3 |
| Priority | Medium |
| Actor | Users |
| Description | The user should be able to comment and reply on content. |
| Trigger | The user wants to use this system to provide, or ben given feedback on knowledge shared around the business. |
| Preconditions | The application has verified and approved the user credentials.  Content has already been added in the system with tags. |
| Normal Course | User navigates to content  User enters comment text field and press enters  User enters reply comment text fields and press enters (for reply to threads) |
| Postconditions | The user logs out of the system. |
| Exceptions | The user's login credentials are not valid.  No content in the system was added. |

Table 7 - Use case 3

## 4.4 MoSCoW

Below are the identified functional and non-functionals requirements MoSCoW.

The term MoSCoW stands for must-have, should-have, could-have, and won't-have (or will not have right now) for the project.

### 4.4.1 Must-have:

* User authentication and authorization with Active Directory integration.
* User profile creation and management.
* Content creation, including articles, books, and open texts, with the ability to tag and search for content.
* Admin dashboard for managing users, content, and platform settings.
* Recommended post feed for users based on their interests and engagement.
* User feedback and discussion features for each post.
* Analytics and reporting features for admins to track user engagement and content performance.

### 4.4.2 Should-have:

* Social features, such as liking and sharing posts.
* Comment moderation tools for admins.
* The ability to follow users and subscribe to topics.
* Notification system for updates and activity on posts and subscriptions.
* Mobile-responsive design for easy access from different devices.
* Integration with existing internal systems and workflows.
* Customizable email templates for notifications and alerts.

### 4.4.3 Could-have:

* Integration with third-party tools, such as project management or collaboration platforms.
* Content creation templates for standardizing formatting and structure.
* User gamification features, such as badges or leaderboards.
* Machine learning algorithms to improve the accuracy of recommended posts.
* Integration with external knowledge sources, such as industry publications or news sites.
* Integration with external social media platforms for sharing content.

### 4.4.4 Won't-have:

* Support for outdated web browsers or devices.
* Integration with external payment systems for purchasing content.
* Native mobile applications for iOS or Android.

# Project management

## 5.1 Scope

This project is to develop a cloud-based central knowledge that reduces duplication of effort, increases collaboration, sharing of new ideas/knowledge, and idea generation between departments. The central repository will allow users to manage, feedback and share content between employees of MHR.

## 5.2 Schedule plan

The project will begin at the start of November 2022 with an estimated end date mid-April 2023, a total project time of 4 month. The project timescales include additional time to allow for contingency of work items, if in case additional tasks are needed or existing tasks needs more time to be completed. Work items will be planned into each timebox before it starts, following the agile pattern with a two-week timeboxes. This way, the capacity of each team member for the following sprint is known, and enough work can be planned with contingency time for issues or bugs that may prevent the team from progressing the work items for the project.

## 5.3 Resource planning

The project plan tools details and outline the tasks and scope of the project with each team member assigned to it. The engineers, within the business, already possess the necessary technical expertise and skills for the project, both analysis and use of technology, this means no outside resources will be required to complete this project. It is crucial that at least one executive level participant attend the design sessions of the project.

Below describes the development project team, the team only consist of 5 members –

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Job titles | Skills |
| Lead Full-stack Engineer | * Lead project manager for team * Full stack (Angular & C#) * Architecture design |
| Software Engineer (.Net) | * NET (C#) * SQL Database * Microservices design * CI/CD pipelines (backend services) * Automated testing |
| Frontend Web developer | * Angular (Typescript) * HTML/CSS3 * CI/CD pipelines (frontend application) * Automated testing |
| UX Designer | * Design UX for requirements |
| Business analyst | * Details requirements * User acceptance testing * Senior Stakeholder |

## 5.4 Gantt Chart & PERT Diagram

A Gantt chart resource plan has been created and can be accessed within the file *‘COMP37005\_Project\_Management\_Plan\_GANNT.mpp’*, which can be found in annex 1.

A PERT diagram can be also found within the fille *‘COMP37005\_Project\_Management\_Plan\_PERT.mpp’* via annex 1, shows the dependencies of the project.

The Gantt chart project plan details the critical tasks with project, such as initial analysis and requirement gathering phase, foundations for identifying the specifications for scope, and then the development timeline for phase 1, which consists of 3 timeboxes. Tasks has been mapped out with their dependencies which has created the critical path for the project. Some tasks can be started and finished in parallel with others, such as timebox development work. Within timebox 1, tasks 4.1.2.1, 4.1.2.2, 4.1.2.3 can be ran in parallel of each as its solo dependency Is the refinement of the work (4.1.1.1) and are not dependent on each other and ran in isolation with different team members. Another example of parallel tasks is 2.6.1 and 2.6.1, the two modelling tasks, these can be run in parallel because are not dependent on each other as well and requirements of the project being defined before beginning.

## 5.5 Analysis of Legal, Social, Ethical and Professional Issues

### 5.4.1 Legal Issues

#### 5.4.1.1 Licensing

Currently the project is only for internal use and is not required to be licenced. If the business wants to transition the project to customer consumption, the product will require licencing. The rights of the creator and user of a piece of software are outlined in the software licence. It outlines the software's usage restrictions and how to pay for it. *(Lutkevich & Lebeaux, 2021)*.

If project would become open source and require no official software licencing, it can provide a MIT licence.

#### 5.4.1.2 Intellectual property of content

Intellectual property infringement damages can range from an injunction to a judgement for several million pounds. The knowledge platform be legally taken down if it violates a patent, trademark, copyright, trade secret, or trade dress.

A simple prevention for this is all employees must reference any knowledge shared on the repository if it’s it came from an external source outside of the business.

#### 5.4.1.3 Data ownership

The product provides the feature of allowing a user to enter in information and content, because of this it falls under the GRPDR act. Data collection and storage must adhere to the regulation, and software should only request and handle the data essential for the software to operate.

Any violations must be disclosed to individuals impacted, failure to comply with this can result in significant fines and a negative company reputation. *(Art. 5 GDPR – principles relating to processing of personal data 2021)*

#### 5.4.1.4 Source control

All the code of the project will be stored away within source control, Azure DevOps. It’s very important to ensure we use a verified source control provider as we want to code to be secure. The implementation is not open source, meaning no external individual will be given read or write access to the repository. This will protect the IP (Intellectual Property) of the product.

Only verified personnel within the business, using Azure Active Directory, will have permission on the repository.

### 5.4.2 Social Issues

#### 5.4.2.1 Free text content

A feature of the product is allowing the user to enter free text as content to share. This could lead to users posting insensitive texts and content around the system that would offend other users which will lead to social issues within the business. Social issues are guarded by company polices on communication and interaction of software between employees.

Content admins are allowed to manage all content around the system, this will allow the admin to review all free text shared on the system and remove any inappropriate content.

#### 5.4.2.2 Content sharing

Another feature of the product is allowing users to share external content within the system. This could lead to users sharing inappropriate work content across the system, which again could lead to users being offended and social issues.

A prevention for this is content admins will have a list of verified domains, and users can only share information from a domain which has been verified.

### 5.4.3 Ethical Issues

#### 5.4.3.1 Commenting for relative feed (gamification)

It is possible that users will try and force other users to comment on their knowledge content so that their post is more likely to come up in other users’ feeds. This is very unethical as users will try and exploit the commenting system for gamification. For this reason, commenting has no effect on order of post on other users’ feeds.

#### 5.4.3.2 BCS (Code of conduct)

Software developers are required to abide by a code of ethics and a set of guidelines when creating, designing, and maintaining software.

Below are some examples from BCS Code of conduct for making software for everyone *(BCS Code of conduct)* –

* have respect for the environment, other people's well-being, their privacy, security, and public health.
* respect the legal rights of others as they deserve.
* conduct your professional duties without prejudice based on a person's gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, colour, nationality, ethnicity, religion, age, or disability, or any other condition or requirement.
* encourage equal access to the advantages of IT and work to advance the participation of all societal segments whenever chances present themselves.

#### 5.4.3.3 Plagiarism

With the sharing content feature, a user might try and plagiarise knowledge content as their own. Copying someone else’s work is unethical because it does not give credit to the author which can lead to false impression about people skills and callabilities.

Content admins can verify knowledge content around system to ensure it’s not been plagiarised. An extra feature, if in scope, is to introduce a Turnitin like software which will check the content automatically as a part of the post feature.

### 5.4.4 Professional Issues

#### 5.4.4.1 Business related content

The content for this system should be limited to business or business skills related information to aid employees for upskilling and training purposes. Other content is not desired as this is a business tool for internal use.

## 5.5 Risk Assessment

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Description | Likelihood | | Impact | Severity | Owner | Mitigation |
| Scope of project might change | | Medium | Medium | Medium | Business Analyst | Ensure all scope is defined in detail via the design workshops and all stakeholders are involved. |
| Lack of communication leads to unclear thinking and misunderstanding. | | Low | Medium | Medium | Team | Create a communication plan that details the timing, purpose, and target audience for each communication. Timebox reviews will allow the team time to feedback on the timebox. |
| Deficient testing leads to large post go live bug list. | | High | High | High | Lead Engineer | Make sure the tester creates test cases and quality checks, and that they guard the window for testing and quality assurance. |
| Small team absences/sickness might delay project. | | Medium | High | High | Lead Engineer | Additional time buffer added to guard any unplanned absences or sickness. |
| Undefined project needs and purposes | | Medium | High | High | Business Analyst | Finish the business case and make sure the project charter's purpose is clearly stated. |
| Unexpected tasks that need to be accommodated | | Low | Medium | Medium | Lead Engineer | Verify each plan and each quantity survey. Record all planning assumptions before the project begins. |

## 5.6 Success Criteria

Below are the success criteria for the knowledge sharing platform project –

1. Increased User Engagement: The platform should see an increase in user engagement, as measured by the number of active users, the frequency of user interactions, and the level of user satisfaction with the platform.
2. Improved Knowledge Sharing: The platform should facilitate improved knowledge sharing within the organization, as measured by the number and quality of posts created the level of interaction and collaboration among users, and the impact of the platform on business outcomes.
3. Reduced Silos: The platform should help to break down silos between departments, as measured by the level of cross-functional collaboration, the sharing of information and best practices across departments, and the impact of the platform on cross-departmental business outcomes.
4. Efficient Administration: The platform should be easy to administer, as measured by the time and resources required to manage user accounts, moderate content, and analyze platform usage data.
5. Effective Recommendations: The platform should provide effective post recommendations to users, as measured by the relevance and usefulness of recommended posts, the level of user engagement with recommended posts, and the impact of recommended posts on business outcomes.
6. Secure and Reliable: The platform should be secure and reliable, as measured by the absence of security breaches or data leaks, the uptime and performance of the platform, and the level of user trust in the platform.
7. Scalable: The platform should be scalable to accommodate future growth and user demands, as measured by the ability of the platform to handle increasing numbers of users, posts, and interactions without sacrificing performance or user experience.

These success criteria can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the knowledge sharing platform and determine whether it has met its goals and objectives.

# Design

## 6.1 High-level architecture design

It's good to have a high-level architecture design for several reasons:

* Clarity: A high-level architecture design provides a clear picture of the system and its components. It helps in understanding the overall structure, the roles, and responsibilities of each component, and how they work together.
* Scalability: A high-level architecture design provides a framework for scaling the system. It helps in identifying the areas that need improvement and the ones that can be scaled horizontally or vertically.
* Reusability: A high-level architecture design promotes reusability of components. It helps in identifying the components that can be reused in different systems and the ones that need to be built from scratch.
* Maintainability: A high-level architecture design makes the system more maintainable. It provides a roadmap for maintenance activities and helps in identifying the areas that need attention.

Below is the architecture diagram for a containerized Web application with SSO and a Neo4j database as its persistence layer.

[DIAGRAM]

The architecture for this application would consist of the following components:

* Presentation Layer: The presentation layer would consist of the Web application that would be containerized using Docker. This layer would be responsible for rendering the user interface and communicating with the other layers.
* Business Logic Layer: The business logic layer would consist of the services that would implement the business logic of the application. These services would communicate with the persistence layer to retrieve and persist data. They would also communicate with the presentation layer to receive and send data.
* Persistence Layer: The persistence layer would consist of the Neo4j database that would be containerized using Docker. This layer would be responsible for storing and retrieving data. It would communicate with the business logic layer to provide data access.
* Single Sign-On Layer: The SSO layer would be responsible for authentication and authorization of users. It would authenticate users and generate access tokens that would be used by the application to access the resources.
* Container Orchestration Layer: The container orchestration layer would be responsible for managing the containers running the application and the database. It would ensure that the containers are running, healthy, and accessible.

### 6.1.1 Web application framework

For the web application, this project will be using .NET Blazor, this is a web framework developed by Microsoft that allows developers to create web applications using C# and .NET instead of JavaScript.

It allows you to build rich, interactive user interfaces using a combination of HTML, CSS, and C#. Blazor provides two hosting models - server-side and client-side. In server-side Blazor, the application runs on the server, and the UI is rendered in the browser using SignalR. In client-side Blazor, the entire application is downloaded to the client browser and runs in WebAssembly. *(Microsoft. 2022).*

Blazor applications are built using components. A component is a C# class that defines a UI element, and it can contain both HTML markup and C# code. Components can be nested to create more complex UI elements.

### 6.1.2 Open ID Single Sign On (SSO)

Azure OpenID is a standards-based, open-source protocol for authentication that allows you to authenticate users across various applications and services. It's part of Azure Active Directory (Azure AD), which is a cloud-based identity and access management service from Microsoft. With Azure OpenID, you can provide single sign-on (SSO) to your applications, allowing users to access multiple applications with a single set of credentials. When it comes to authentication, Blazor supports various authentication providers, including Azure AD. This will allow us to simple integrate the businesses AD with the Blazor app.

### 6.1.3 Azure container instances (Container Orchestration)

Azure Container Instances (ACI) is a serverless container hosting solution that allows you to run your Docker containers quickly and easily without the need to manage servers or infrastructure. ACI is a great choice for hosting containerized Blazor applications with SSO and a Neo4j database as its persistence layer because it provides the following benefits:

* Easy Deployment: ACI makes it easy to deploy containerized applications without having to manage infrastructure or servers. With ACI, you can deploy your containers with a simple command or through the Azure portal.
* Scalability: ACI allows you to scale your containerized application easily, without having to manage the underlying infrastructure. You can scale up or down your container instances based on your workload requirements, and ACI will automatically manage the resources needed to run your application.
* Cost-effectiveness: With ACI, you only pay for the resources you consume while running your container instances. This means you can run your application cost-effectively without having to pay for unused resources.
* Security: ACI provides built-in security features such as network isolation, encryption at rest, and role-based access control (RBAC). This helps ensure that your application and data are secure.

By using Azure Container Instances to host your containerized Blazor application with SSO and a Neo4j database as its persistence layer, you can take advantage of the benefits of serverless container hosting and quickly deploy and scale your application with minimal effort.

# Implementation

## 7.1 Coding standards

Coding standards assist in the construction of less complex software programmes, which reduces. errors. If software engineering programming standards are followed, the code is consistent and easy. to maintain. This is since anyone may comprehend it and change it at any time.

### 7.1 SOLID

Single responsibility principle, open-closed principle, Liskov substitution principle, interface segregation principle, and dependency inversion principle are all acronyms for five essential design principles.

#### 7.1.1 Single Responsibility Principle

The SRP is based on the idea that each class, module, or function in a programme should have a single responsibility or purpose.

#### 7.1.2 Open Closed Principle

Classes should be open to extension but closed to modification, according to the Open-Closed Principle.

#### 7.1.3 Liskov Substitution Principle

Subclasses should be interchangeable with their base classes, according to the Liskov Substitution

Principle.

#### 7.1.4 Interface Segregation Principle

The Interface Segregation Principle is about keeping the interfaces separate, and segregation involves keeping things apart.

#### 7.1.5 Dependency Inversion Principle

The Dependency Inversion Principle emphasises that instead of concrete classes and functions, our classes should rely on interfaces or abstract classes.

### 7.2 Design patterns

In software engineering design patterns are common solutions that solves occurring problems in software design. A design pattern is not a finished design that can be used within every implementation of a piece of software but it’s a guide/template that can help you solve your problem (GeeksforGeeks. 2021.).

#### 7.2.1 Factory Pattern

The Factory Method design pattern is a creational design pattern that provides an interface for producing objects in a superclass while allowing subclasses to choose the type of objects created.

#### 7.2.2 Adapter Pattern

The adapter pattern acts as a link between two interfaces that are incompatible. This design pattern is classified as a structural pattern since it integrates the capabilities of two separate interfaces.

A single class is responsible for joining the capabilities of separate or incompatible interfaces in this design.

#### 7.2.3 Provider Pattern

Provider pattern allows for implementation of components to be introduced easily within a system. The provider object will have abstract logic or implementation that can be genetically referenced by other objects.

# Results

# Conclusion

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# Annex

## 6.1 Annex 1

GANNT Chart

Attached file named “COMP37005\_Project\_Management\_Plan\_GANNT.mpp”

PERT Diagram

Attached file named “COMP37005\_Project\_Management\_Plan\_PERT.mpp”