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

by

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Abstract

In today's fast-paced and competitive business environment, organizations often struggle with communication and collaboration due to silos that form between departments and teams. The lack of knowledge sharing, and collaboration can lead to inefficiencies, missed opportunities, and decreased innovation. To address this problem, we developed a knowledge sharing platform for internal businesses.

Our methods and procedures involved conducting research on existing knowledge sharing platforms, conducting interviews with employees to identify their needs, and designing and developing a user-friendly platform that allows employees to share and access knowledge across departments and teams. The platform includes features such as discussion forums, document sharing, and a searchable database of expertise.

Our findings indicate that the knowledge sharing platform has been successful in breaking down silos and improving communication and collaboration across the organization. Employees have reported increased efficiency, improved decision-making, and a greater sense of shared purpose. Additionally, the platform has helped to identify areas where additional training and resources are needed, leading to further improvements in the organization's overall performance.

In conclusion, the development of a knowledge sharing platform for internal businesses is an effective solution for breaking down silos and improving communication and collaboration across departments and teams. By leveraging the expertise and knowledge of all employees, organizations can achieve greater success and innovation in today's fast-paced business environment.

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Introduction

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.

The business departments that often share knowledge between each other are listed below:

* 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

## 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.

## 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.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 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. |

Table - Gap Analysis

## Feasibility Analysis

### 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.

### 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.

### 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.

### 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.

## 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.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **#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. |



# Background

Introduction

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, an overview will be provided of existing technical solutions and identify gaps that need to be addressed. Also, a review of similar tools/software/approaches will be created that can be used in the proposed solution and their limitations.

## Technical literature review

Organizations have access to various knowledge sharing platforms, including popular options like SharePoint, Miro board, Teams, Slack, and Nuclino. These platforms offer features like document, workflow, and project management, as well as social collaboration, messaging, and analytics. However, these solutions also have their limitations.

Both Nuclino and SharePoint can be challenging to implement within businesses due to their complexity and cost. According to a review by *PCMag (2020)*, Nuclino requires users to have technical expertise to set it up and configure it properly, and its pricing model is based on the number of users *(Capterra, n.d.).* Similarly, *TechRepublic (2020)* notes that SharePoint can be complex and time-consuming to set up and configure, and its licensing model can make it expensive for organizations with many users or advanced feature requirements. These factors may make it difficult for smaller organizations with limited IT resources to adopt these platforms. However, for larger enterprises with more complex needs, the advanced functionality of these platforms may still make them a viable option *(Microsoft, n.d.).*

Teams and Slack focus on social communication and collaboration, rather than robust document management and workflow capabilities *(Microsoft, n.d.)*. While they do offer basic file sharing and project management features, they may not provide advanced functionality like version control or document approval workflows *(TechRepublic, 2020)*. As a result, they may not be the best choice for organizations with more complex knowledge management needs.

To gain a better understanding of their capabilities and limitations, I have conducted a detailed review of three of these solutions.

## Team on MS Teams

MS Teams is a leading messaging app designed specifically for businesses. It excels in providing a collaborative workspace for real-time collaboration, meetings, file and app sharing, and chat. MS Teams has evolved into a vital tool used for day-to-day file sharing among siloed departments, facilitating the exchange of knowledge content (*What is Microsoft teams? (2019))*. Its real-time messaging and file streaming capabilities enable seamless and efficient information sharing between users. Moreover, MS Teams integrates with Azure Active Directory, ensuring enhanced security through single sign-on (SSO) authentication. The business has organized teams in a way that assigns users to their respective departments, granting them access to specific channels.

### 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.

## 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 *(Microsoft. (2023). SharePoint Online Service Description)*.

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.

### 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 *(MHR. (2023) MHR Knowledge base:2)*.

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.

## Miro board

Miro is positioned as a user-friendly collaborative digital whiteboard that offers a range of features. Users can easily organize objects, take notes, and communicate through online chat or embedded video calls, all within the software itself. Within the business, Miro is currently utilized as a workspace for whiteboard sessions, enabling team members to share and collaborate on feature projects. If employed as a knowledge platform, Miro would primarily serve as a visual knowledge platform, complemented by additional functionalities. To facilitate seamless navigation across the board, internal linking can be implemented, providing vital content linking capabilities. The actual knowledge base content can be generated using various tools such as shapes, text, connection lines, and pen tools *(MHR. (2023) MHR Knowledge base:2)*. Additionally, Miro board offers access through Single Sign-On (SSO), allowing employees to access the service without relying on external email accounts outside of the business.

### 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 *(MHR. (2023) MHR Knowledge base:2)*.

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.

## 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).

### 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).

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## Research Studies

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

### 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 *(Schwartz et al., Knowledge management 2021)*.

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.

### 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.

### 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.

### 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.

## 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 (Natural Language Processing), social network analysis, and machine learning algorithms, organizations can enhance their decision-making processes and drive innovation.

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

### Legal Issues

**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 licensing. 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 the project would become open source and require no official software licensing, it can provide a MIT licence.

**Intellectual property of content**

Intellectual property infringement damages can range from an injunction to a judgement for several million pounds. The knowledge platform can 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 came from an external source outside of the business.

**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)*

**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.

### Social Issues

**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 policies 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.

**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.

### Ethical Issues

**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 the order of posts on other users’ feeds.

**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.

### Professional Issues

**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.

**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, 2011)* –

* 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 the 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.

Several steps will be taken to integrate the BCS Code of Conduct into a knowledge-sharing platform. First, the platform will undergo careful curation to make sure that the available content complies with the Code's ethical standards. This entails choosing books, articles, and training materials that place a strong emphasis on protecting people's privacy, security, and overall well-being. The platform will also offer instructions on how to respect others' legal rights and carry out professional obligations without bias or discrimination. Additionally, it will encourage participation from all societal groups while promoting equal access to IT benefits.

We can promote a culture of responsible software development and ethical business practises within our company by incorporating these principles into the platform's content and making it easily accessible to employees.



Project Definition

Introduction

This chapter outlines the aims and objectives, requirements, planning, and success criteria for the knowledge sharing project. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the project and its goals.

## 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.

### 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

### Research and Discovery

The acquisition of requirements will be facilitated through a collaborative process known as a joint application design (JAD) session, which aims to align the business needs identified in the GAP analysis (Contributor, T.T., 2007). Since this is a new project without an existing system to replace, the focus of the JAD session will be on identifying and developing new requirements without drawing comparisons to any pre-existing systems. Through effective communication and active participation from JAD session participants, a deeper understanding of the project's goals and objectives will be achieved based on their expertise and knowledge. This collaborative approach will help clarify any uncertainties and ensure that the final deliverables meet the desired goals and expectations.

In addition to the JAD session, surveys will be created and distributed to selected individuals within each department of the organization. These surveys aim to gather information from key stakeholders about how knowledge is currently shared within their respective departments and teams. The objective is to analyse any variations and similarities in knowledge sharing practices. The insights gained from these surveys will be utilized in brainstorming and workshop sessions to gain a comprehensive understanding of the system users and to develop practical solutions that facilitate cross-departmental knowledge sharing.

To gain further insights into the current situation from different perspectives, several questions can be asked, including:

* Where do you currently store your notes, papers, and links?
* When you attend an event, do you share your notes? If yes, with whom?
* Do you share any knowledge (links/papers/documents) with other departments?
* What would be beneficial to you if you could search through another department's notes/documents?
* When people share articles or videos with you, do you find the time to read/watch them?

By employing these requirement elicitation techniques, the risk of inadequate requirements, specifically the '#1 - Requirements are not fit' risk, can be significantly reduced during the risk analysis phase.

The JAD session will span three days, and each survey will be carefully analysed to generate appropriate questions. The breakdown of the JAD session is as follows:

* Day 1: Review of survey feedback and examination of use cases.
* Day 2: Analysis of requirements, brainstorming, and workshop activities.
* Day 3: Specification design session.

To ensure effective decision-making and representation, a senior stakeholder, such as the CEO, CIO, or project manager (Davidson, E.J., 1999), will be present during the JAD sessions. This stakeholder will have the final authority in making related decisions. Attendees will be actively engaged throughout the process, and their input will be valued to foster a sense of ownership and alignment with the project objectives. If any initial concerns or worries are raised, the stakeholder will make efforts to address and alleviate them.

## Software Development Methodologies

In this section there are two different approaches presented that are potential methods for competition of this project.

### Waterfall

The waterfall model, discussed by Dennis et al. (2015) in "Systems Analysis & Design," is a traditional approach used in the system development life cycle for designing systems in a linear and sequential manner. As the name suggests, this model progresses methodically from one phase to the next, resembling the flow of a waterfall. Each phase in the model is completed before moving on to the next, with no overlap between them. The output of one phase serves as the input for the subsequent phase, as Dennis et al. (2015) explain, highlighting the strict sequential nature of the waterfall model.

Since each step is pre planned 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).*

### 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 “wishlist” 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).*

### 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 that 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 therefore 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.

## Functional and Non-Functional requirements

Below is the analysis of the requirements given by the identified stake holders, these requirements will be split 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.

Below is the detail of each requirement and reference from the requirement.

### Functional Requirements

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

### Non-functional Requirements

**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.

**Usability**

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

**Reliability**

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

**Compatibility**

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

### 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.

## 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 organisation, 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 analyse 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.

## 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 behaviour, 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.

### 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 the database and shown on other user’s content feeds. * User logs out of application. |
| **Exceptions** | * User credentials are not valid or timed out. * Profanity filter picks up words. |

Table - Use case #1

### 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 - Use case #2

### 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 be 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 - Use case #4

## MoSCoW

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

### 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.

### 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.

### Could-have:

* Integration with third-party tools, such as project management or collaboration platforms.
* Content creation templates for standardising 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.

### 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

This section aims to provide an overview of the project planning, including the required timeline and resources. It will also outline the chosen project management approach.

## Scope

The objective of this project is to create a cloud-based central knowledge platform that streamlines processes, encourages collaboration, facilitates the sharing of ideas and knowledge, and promotes idea generation across different departments. The central repository will enable MHR employees to effectively manage, provide feedback, and share content with one another.

## Schedule plan

The project is scheduled to commence in early November 2022 and is expected to conclude in mid-June 2023, encompassing a total project duration of four months. To accommodate unforeseen work requirements or potential delays in completing existing tasks, the project timeline includes buffer periods. Each timebox, following an agile approach, will be allocated work items prior to its commencement, typically spanning a two-week period. This enables the team to gauge the capacity of each member for the upcoming sprint, facilitating the planning of sufficient work while allowing for contingency time to address any issues or bugs that may impede progress on the project's tasks.

## 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, explaining why each role is needed for the project –

1. Lead Full-stack Engineer:

A Lead Full-stack Engineer is essential for overseeing the technical aspects of the project. They will be responsible for managing the overall development process, coordinating with other team members, and ensuring the platform's smooth operation. Their expertise in both frontend and backend technologies enables them to provide guidance and make critical decisions regarding system architecture, scalability, and performance.

1. Software Engineer (.Net):

A Software Engineer with expertise in .Net brings valuable skills for developing the backend of the knowledge sharing platform. They will focus on building robust and efficient server-side components, implementing business logic, and integrating external services and APIs. Their knowledge of the .Net framework allows for rapid development, seamless integration with Microsoft technologies, and ensuring security measures are properly implemented.

1. Frontend Web Developer:

A Frontend Web Developer is responsible for designing and developing the user interface and user experience (UI/UX) of the knowledge sharing platform. They will create engaging and intuitive interfaces, ensuring a seamless user experience and optimal usability. Their expertise in HTML, CSS, and JavaScript frameworks enables them to implement responsive design, interactive features, and accessibility standards, ensuring a visually appealing and user-friendly platform.

1. UX Designer:

A UX Designer plays a critical role in shaping the overall user experience and interface of the knowledge sharing platform. They conduct user research, gather requirements, and create wireframes and prototypes to design an intuitive and user-cantered system. By considering user needs, behaviour, and feedback, they ensure that the platform is easy to navigate, visually appealing, and optimized for efficient knowledge sharing and retrieval.

1. Business Analyst:

A Business Analyst acts as a bridge between the technical team and the business stakeholders. They analyse and understand the internal users' requirements, identify key features, and translate them into functional specifications for the development team. They help prioritize tasks, define user stories, and ensure that the knowledge sharing platform aligns with the organization's goals and objectives. Additionally, they assist in managing project scope, conducting feasibility studies, and facilitating effective communication among all stakeholders.

By having these roles in the project, the team can leverage their specialized skills and knowledge to build a comprehensive and user-friendly knowledge sharing platform that meets the organization's needs while providing a seamless and intuitive experience for the internal users.

## Gantt Chart & PERT Diagram

Annex 1 contains the project's resource plan in the form of a Gantt chart, available in the file 'COMP37005\_Project\_Management\_Plan\_GANNT.mpp'. Additionally, the project's PERT diagram can be found in the same annex, accessible through the file 'COMP37005\_Project\_Management\_Plan\_PERT.mpp'. The PERT diagram illustrates the project's dependencies.

The Gantt chart project plan provides a comprehensive overview of critical tasks within the project. It begins with the initial analysis and requirement gathering phase, followed by establishing the scope specifications. The development timeline for phase 1, consisting of three timeboxes, is also outlined. Task dependencies have been identified, forming the critical path for the project.

Certain tasks can be executed in parallel with others. For example, within timebox 1, tasks 4.1.2.1, 4.1.2.2, and 4.1.2.3 can be simultaneously carried out. These tasks are only dependent on the refinement of work (4.1.1.1) and do not rely on each other. They are performed independently by different team members. Another instance of parallel tasks is seen in 2.6.1 and 2.6.2, both involving modelling tasks. These tasks can be executed concurrently as they do not have any dependencies on each other, but rather depend on the project requirements being defined beforehand.

## 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. |

Table - Risk Assessment

## Azure DevOps

DevOps is an approach to software development that emphasises collaboration, communication, and automation between development and IT operations teams (Humble & Farley, 2010). Azure DevOps is a cloud-based platform that provides a suite of tools for managing the software development lifecycle, including agile project management, version control, continuous integration and delivery, and automated testing and deployment. By using Azure DevOps, teams can improve their efficiency, increase collaboration, and ensure high-quality software delivery (Kapoor, 2021).

Using Azure DevOps, teams can easily track their tasks and become more agile by breaking down projects into smaller sprints. This iterative process allows for faster delivery of high-quality software and ensures that teams meet project deadlines. At the end of each sprint, teams can release the latest features for feedback and make necessary adjustments before moving on to the next sprint.



Design

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed analysis of the design aspects of the project. The chapter will include a justification of the design choices made, as well as a summary of the initial design completed prior to development. In addition to the summary, the chapter will also include full design documentation as appendices. Depending on the type of project, this documentation may include UI design mock-ups, system diagrams, and diagrams from formal design methodologies such as UML. If an iterative methodology is being used, analysis of feedback received, and changes made based on this feedback will also be included in the chapter.

## 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.

Figure 1 is the architecture diagram for a containerized Web application with SSO and a Neo4j database as its persistence layer.

Diagram

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Figure - Azure architecture infrastructure diagram showing the azure components

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.

### 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 Overview).*

Blazor's lightweight design is one of its main advantages. Applications built using Blazor can be compact and quick because they don't need a lot of JavaScript or other complicated dependencies. Instead, the application's logic can be written in C# and either run on the server or compiled to WebAssembly. Blazor's lightweight design makes it particularly advantageous for projects that move swiftly since it enables programmers to produce applications quickly and with few dependencies.

### Open ID Single Sign On (SSO)

A standards-based, open-source authentication system called Azure OpenID enables you to authenticate users across numerous apps and services. It is a component of Microsoft's Azure Active Directory (Azure AD), a solution for cloud-based identity and access management. You can offer single sign-on (SSO) to the applications using Azure OpenID, enabling users to access numerous applications using a single set of credentials. Blazor supports several different authentication services, including Azure AD. This will make it easy for us to integrate the Blazor app with the company's AD.

### Azure container instances

Azure Container Instances (ACI) is a serverless container hosting solution that allows you to run the 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 the containers with a simple command or through the Azure portal.
* Scalability: ACI allows you to scale the containerized application easily, without having to manage the underlying infrastructure. You can scale up or down the container instances based on the workload requirements, and ACI will automatically manage the resources needed to run the application.
* Cost-effectiveness: With ACI, you only pay for the resources you consume while running the container instances. This means you can run the 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 the application and data are secure.

By using Azure Container Instances to host the 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 the application with minimal effort.

## Graph database design

Figure 2 represents the graph database design diagram.

Diagram

Description automatically generated

Figure - Graph database design showing all node types and relationships.

The graph database design consists of four types of nodes: **Department**, **Person**, **Post**, and **Tag**.

**Department** nodes have a one-to-many relationship with **Person** nodes, representing the fact that a department can have many employees. They also have a one-to-many relationship with **Tag** nodes, representing the fact that a department can have multiple interests or preferences.

**Person** nodes have a one-to-many relationship with **Post** nodes, representing the fact that a person can write multiple posts. They also have a one-to-many relationship with **Tag** nodes, representing the interests or preferences of the person.

**Post** nodes have a one-to-many relationship with **Tag** nodes, representing the fact that a post can have multiple tags.

**Tag** nodes represent the interests or preferences of a department, person, or post. Each **Tag** node is connected to one or more **Department**, **Person**, or **Post** nodes via a "LIKES" or "HAS\_TAGGED" relationship, respectively.

This graph database design is good for quick searching of tags for posts and recommendations of posts based on users' liked tags because it models the relationships between posts, tags, and users in a highly connected graph structure. For example:

* To search for posts that are tagged with a certain tag, you can simply traverse the graph from the Tag node to the **Post** nodes, returning all posts that are associated with the given tag.
* To recommend posts to a user based on their liked tags, you can first traverse the graph from the **Person** node to the Tag nodes representing the user's liked tags. Then, you can traverse from each **Tag** node to the Post nodes, returning all posts that are associated with the user's liked tags.

Overall, this graph database design enables efficient querying and searching of the data, making it ideal for applications that require quick access to data based on relationships between entities.

### Node properties

The node bodies in the graph database design represent entities such as Department, Person, Post, and Tag, and are designed to capture specific attributes and properties of these entities.

**Department**

* name: a string representing the name of the department.
* description: a string representing a description of the department.
* location: a string representing the location of the department.

**Person**

* name: a string representing the name of the person.
* age: an integer representing the age of the person.
* email: a string representing the email address of the person.

**Post**

* title: a string representing the title of the post.
* body: a string representing the body of the post.
* timestamp: a datetime object representing the time when the post was created.
* type: a string which represents the type of post.

**Tag**

* name: a string representing the name of the tag.
* description: a string representing a description of the tag.

The **Post** node will consist of a property called “type”. This will allow for different types of posts to be added, such as Linked content, Article content, etc. This will provide a more templated approach for posts. The .NET project will initialise the correct object based on the type.

## UI design

Web design is an essential aspect of building a successful online presence. This section will describe the UI designs that been created to allow for the platform to be visually appealing, easy to navigate, and functional. It is essential to make sure that the knowledge sharing platform's user experience (UX) complies with both the PSEL and the BCS Code of Conduct (section 2.12). To encourage equitable access and engagement for all users, the UX will be designed to put accessibility, simplicity, and inclusion as a top priority. Simple navigation, user-friendly interfaces, and intuitive design principles can all help with this. The knowledge sharing platform can promote a good and ethical software development environment by integrating these ethical principles into the UX. The result will be an efficient and responsible user experience that upholds the principles of the BCS Code of Conduct or pertinent PSEL.

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated

Figure - Main display design wireframe

* Left-hand navigation: Common UI element for quick access to different sections of the application, regardless of page.
* Create post button: Prominent button to encourage users to create new content.
* Profile and manage (admin-only): Users access profile and manage settings; admins have additional management features.
* Top-hand navigation with search bar: Quick access to search functionality in a prominent location.
* Main display with scrollable post feed: Primary display for engaging with content; scrollable feed for easy browsing.

Overall, this thoughtfully designed platform offers a user-friendly experience that is fit for purpose. It not only provides easy access to various features but also encourages user engagement and facilitates efficient account management.

Based on valuable feedback, a recommended enhancement is the inclusion of tag checkboxes for post filtering, which would significantly enhance flexibility and complement the existing search function.

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated

Figure - Main display redesign wireframe

Figure 4 displays the redesigned wireframe after the feedback mention from figure 3.

Graphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated

Figure - Create post design wireframe.

Figure 5 showcases the create post design, enabling users to choose from various post types, dynamically adjusting the required input fields accordingly. Additionally, users can add tags to the post at the bottom of the screen. This design is sleek and straightforward.

Graphical user interface, table

Description automatically generated

Figure - Admin posts design wireframe

Figure 6 presents the admin screen, granting users with admin privileges the ability to manage posts within the system. Admins can delete any inappropriate posts directly from this screen. The design is straightforward and fulfils the necessary functionality.

Graphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated

Figure - Profile design wireframe

Figure 7 shows the profile design, displaying users' profile details and social statistics, including the number of posts created, comments received on their posts, and the number of likes received. Users can also like tags, which serves functionality on the home screen where recommended posts from liked tags can be obtained. Additionally, at the bottom of the screen, users can manage all their posts, including editing and deletion.



IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

This section will include discussing the coding standards we used to ensure high-quality code that is easy to maintain and modify. We will also provide an overview of the project layout, including the organisation of the codebase.

Next, we will outline some of the issues we encountered during development, including bugs, integration problems, and performance issues. We will describe the steps we took to address these issues and the lessons we learned from them.

## 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.

### 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.

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.

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

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

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

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

### 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.).

**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.

**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.

**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.

## NET Project layout (Layered architecture)

The .NET solution name will be called “KnowledgeShare”.

Creating a .NET project with a layered architecture consisting of KnowledgeShare.Web, KnowledgeShare.Core, and KnowledgeShare.Persistence is a good design because it promotes separation of concerns, improves maintainability, and enhances testability of the application.

Here's how each layer contributes to the overall design:

* KnowledgeShare.Web: This layer represents the presentation layer of the application, and it's responsible for handling user interactions, displaying views, and handling HTTP requests and responses. By keeping this layer separate from the other layers, we can easily swap out the front-end technology or framework without affecting the rest of the application.
* KnowledgeShare.Core: This layer represents the business logic layer of the application. It contains the core domain objects, services, and interfaces that encapsulate the application's behaviour. By separating this layer from the presentation and persistence layers, we ensure that the business logic is not tightly coupled to any specific technology or data storage mechanism.
* KnowledgeShare.Persistence: This layer represents the data access layer of the application. It contains the code that interacts with the database or other data storage mechanisms. By separating this layer from the other layers, we can easily switch to a different data storage technology or implement caching without affecting the rest of the application.

By using a layered architecture, we can achieve the following benefits:

* Separation of concerns: Each layer is responsible for a specific set of tasks, and there is clear separation between the layers. This makes it easier to reason about the application's behaviour and helps to prevent "spaghetti code."
* Improved maintainability: With a layered architecture, changes in one layer can be made without affecting the other layers, making it easier to maintain the application over time.
* Enhanced testability: Each layer can be tested independently, allowing for more comprehensive testing of the application. This also helps to identify issues earlier in the development process when they are easier and less costly to fix.

Overall, using a layered architecture with KnowledgeShare.Web, KnowledgeShare.Core, and KnowledgeShare.Persistence is a good design because it promotes separation of concerns, improves maintainability, and enhances testability, which are all important factors in building robust, scalable, and maintainable software applications.

Graphical user interface, text

Description automatically generated

Figure - .NET project layout

## Automated deployment to Azure

The ability to deliver updates and new features more frequently and with fewer errors makes automated deployments crucial in the software development process. An automated deployment process can automatically build, test, and deploy changes to the production environment rather than requiring manual deployment of code changes. By doing so, the risk of human error is diminished, and it guarantees that the new changes are tested and validated before being made available to end users.

The software delivery process can be automated with the help of a set of procedures called continuous integration and continuous deployment (CI/CD). Using CI/CD pipelines, developers can automatically create, test, and deploy code updates to live environments. Developers can more quickly find and fix problems by implementing CI/CD, which leads to shorter time to market and shorter software development cycles.

### Github workflow

GitHub Workflow is a feature that allows developers to automate their software development processes using workflows. GitHub workflows can be triggered by events such as code pushes, pull requests, and issue comments. Workflows consist of a set of jobs, which are composed of one or more steps. Each step runs in its own environment and can be used to perform a specific task.

For the knowledge sharing platform CI/CD, a Github workflow was created that includes the following jobs –

Check out the code from the repository.

1. Build a Docker image for the .NET application and tag it with "mhr-ksp:latest".
2. Log in to Azure Container Registry using a service principal.
3. Push the Docker image to the Azure Container Registry.
4. Deploy the Docker image to Azure Container Instances.

The workflow will automatically trigger whenever a commit is pushed to the master branch. This will build and deploy the .NET application to a container in Azure Container Instances, enabling a faster and more reliable deployment process.

We can also create triggers to run a new set of jobs for deploying to production when a commit is pushed to a release branch. Having a release branch for deployment to production is a common best practice in software development, as it provides a stable and reliable environment for deploying code changes to production. Brown, A. (2019).

## Test driven development

Delivering high-quality software is essential in the world of software development to guarantee customer satisfaction and business success. Test-Driven Development (TDD) is one of the methods that developers use the most frequently to guarantee the quality of their software.

Software developers who use the test-driven development methodology first write tests for their code before writing any actual code. With this technique, a test case that outlines an expected behaviour or outcome of the code is written before the code is written to pass the test. To ensure that code is thoroughly tested and that any issues are found early in the development process, before they can become more serious issues, tests are written first.

### Benefits of Test-Driven Development

There are several benefits to using TDD in software development. Some of the key benefits include:

1. Ensuring code correctness: Developers can make sure their code adheres to the requirements and expected behaviour by writing tests first. In the long run, this method may help save time and money by lowering the likelihood that the code will contain bugs and errors.
2. Improving code design: TDD encourages developers to create readable, testable code that is modular and clean. By reducing technical debt and enhancing code design, this method can make it simpler to maintain and update the codebase in the long run.
3. Saving time and effort: Writing tests may seem like an extra step, but in the long run, it can save time and effort. Early problem-solving can save developers time later in the development process when complex problems need to be debugged.

### Using NUnit in C# to Create Tests

NUnit is a popular testing framework for C# developers that makes it easy to write and run automated tests. This framework provides a range of features and tools to help developers write unit tests, integration tests, and other types of automated tests.

By using NUnit to create tests around the business logic, we can ensure that the code is thoroughly tested and meets the expected behaviour and requirements. This approach can help improve software quality, reduce the risk of bugs and errors, and save time and effort in the long run.

## Development iterations

This section will be discussing three sprints that contain what has been completed, the feedback received, and the challenges faced and their mitigations. Each sprint will represent a specific iteration in the development process and will provide insight into the progress made during that time. Each sprint will be also given a sprint goal, this will allow the team at the end of each sprint to measure their success in summary.

### Sprint 1

During this sprint, the development team focused on three key tasks. The sprint goal was set as the following.

“Allow users to login with Microsoft SSO and Building Basic Graph Database Models”.

**Tasks -**

First, the team set up single sign-on (SSO) authentication with Microsoft .NET, to improve the security and ease-of-use of the application. This involved integrating Microsoft's authentication system into the .NET project and configuring the necessary authentication protocols and tokens.

The second major task of the sprint was building the basic graph database models, based on the designs provided by the product team. This involved translating the design specifications into functional code, using the Neo4j graph database platform. The team worked to ensure that the database models were optimized for performance and scalability, while also meeting the functional requirements of the application.

The last task that was planned for this sprint was building the basic landing page for the application. This page will be a simple landing page for users, which serves as the primary entry point for the application. The team worked to create a visually appealing and intuitive user interface, incorporating the branding and design elements specified by the product team. The team benefited off the pre-existing designs found in Chapter 4.

#### SSO (App registration)

The development team faced a few challenges during this sprint, particularly around the complexity of the authentication integration process. The team had to work closely with Microsoft support resources to ensure that the SSO implementation was properly configured and secure.

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated with medium confidenceWorking with Microsoft support, the team identified that to set up SSO for the application, it will need an Azure app registration. Setting up app registration in Azure involves creating an identity for your application to interact with Azure resources. This will allow users to authenticate and authorize on the application to access the resources securely. Once app reg is added, we configured the redirect URI to the localhost endpoint, Azure AD will use this endpoint to send the authentication response after the user successfully authenticates.

Figure - Azure app registration

Within figure 6, it shows the app registration setup with the businesses Azure subscription. It has the redirect URL to the local host machine. This app registration will be also used to once hosted into Azure on a container.

#### Graph database

The initial challenge in developing the graph database was configuring the application's persistence layer to interface with a Neo4j database. This involved installing Neo4j on the local machine and ensuring that the connection between the database and .NET application was properly established.

Text

Description automatically generatedTo set up the Neo4j driver in .NET, the team utilized NuGet to install the Neo4j .NET driver package to the .NET application. Additionally, they installed Neo4j Desktop to enable local database instance management and establish a connection to the database in their .NET application using the driver, specifying server address, port, and credentials.

Figure - Neo4j configuration

In Figure 7, the C# code sets up the Neo4j driver to connect with the Neo4j database by using the appsetting.json configuration to gather details of the local connection. The driver is then registered within the Dependency Injection container.

Once the Neo4j database and driver are set up, developers can proceed with implementing the data model. In accordance with the layered architecture outlined in section 5.3, the application consists of three layers: Web, Core, and Persistence. The data model will be represented in the Core layer as domain models, with their corresponding repositories in the Persistence layer. These repositories will contain the implementation of queries and commands to create, update, read, and delete nodes within the Neo4j database. This approach promotes high cohesion and avoids coupling the business logic of the application A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated with medium confidencewith the database interface.

Figure - Neo4j Bloom database

Figure 8 shows a graph of the data model within Neo4j database, this uses bloom that allows for queries to be directly ran on the database and shown visually.

One of the challenges when creating the persistence layer using Neo4j graph is developers must consider the impact of graph database features such as node relationships, which can introduce complexity when implementing data access and retrieval operations. Ensuring the application does not hydrate/initialize to many nodes into memory on the application as this will not scale in the future if the database grows.

#### Landing page

A picture containing shape

Description automatically generatedThe landing page was designed to provide users with an overview of the application's functionality. The team incorporated various interactive elements, such as buttons and forms, to ensure that the user experience was engaging and easy to navigate.

Figure - Landing page

Figure 9 shows the landing page created within the sprint. One of the feedback items given by the sponsors of the project was to have the username instead of the email account logged in. This can be achieved by using the Microsoft Graph API to retrieve logged user information, such as first and last name.

One of the major challenges faced by the development team during this sprint was ensuring that the landing page was responsive and compatible with a wide range of devices and browsers. The team also worked to optimize the performance of the page, to minimize load times and improve the overall user experience.

### Sprint 2

During this sprint, the development team focused on three key tasks. The sprint goal was set as the following.

“Allow users to create a link, book and a free form post and display them on the landing page with relevant tags”.

**Tasks -**

The first task planned in the sprint was to implement a user interface for creating a link, book, and free form post. The interface was designed to be easy to navigate and allowed users to input the necessary information for each type of post. To ensure that posts are displayed with relevant tags, one of the team stories was to implement a tagging system. Users will be able to add tags to their posts when they create them. A search function was created on the landing page that allows users to filter posts by tag.

The team’s second story was to store the post in the backend so that it can be retrieved and displayed on the landing page. The team created a post service that handles the creation and read of a post. The service is also be designed to handle data in different formats, depending on the type of post.

The last task in the sprint that was planned was to add the created posts to the landing page, allowing users to filter and search by tags and titles.

#### Create posts & tags

The creating post user interface was designed to be intuitive and easy to navigate for users. It was implemented using the Blazor framework. The interface allowed users to select the type of post they wanted to create - link, book, or free-form post - and input the necessary information for each type. Users were required to input a title, summary, and URL for links and books, and could input any text they wanted for free-form posts. Users could also add tags to their posts.

Graphical user interface, application, Teams

Description automatically generatedHowever, implementing the user interface using Blazor posed some challenges. The main challenge was getting the forms to submit correctly. It took some time to get the form validations and submission working properly.

Figure - Create post page.

Figure 10 shows the final implementation of the create post page. This shows the Link type post, where users can create a post with a title, link, and summary.

The user interface included the ability to tag, this was input a box that allow users to dynamically tag. Also giving the functionality to delete tags from the posts.

Feedback on the user interface was generally positive. Users found it easy to navigate and appreciated the modern look and feel. However, some users suggested that the form validations could be improved to make it clearer what fields were required. This feedback was considered, and improvements were made where fields will outline with green if valid, red if not.

##### Create post service.

The UI also was linked up to the create post service. The service was tested using the UI and NUnit tests to ensure that data was being stored and retrieved correctly.

One challenge faced during the implementation of the service was ensuring data consistency. The team had to ensure that data was being stored and retrieved accurately and consistently, regardless of the format or type of post. The service also must be secure and protected against unauthorized access if was prompted by the application.

Feedback on the service was generally positive, with users finding it easy to use and reliable. Users suggested that editing or deleting posts, would be useful. This feedback was considered and implemented in subsequent sprints.

##### Tagging system

A tagging system was implemented to ensure that posts were displayed with relevant tags. Users were able to add tags to their posts when they created them.

The main challenge occurred in this development was ensuring the graph database had unique tags with multiple posts as relationships, this meant checking if tags exist before adding them into graph database, to make sure there weren’t any duplicates.

#### Posts on landing page

Posts with relevant tags were displayed on the landing page using a search bar and filterable tags. Users could search for posts by typing in keywords or selecting relevant tags.

Graphical user interface, application, Teams

Description automatically generatedOne challenge faced by the developers during the implementation of the search and filter functions was ensuring that the results were accurate and relevant. The team had to ensure that the search algorithm was able to accurately identify relevant posts based on keywords and tags. They also had to ensure that the filter function was able to accurately filter posts based on selected tags.

Figure - Landing page posts

Figure 10 shows the final implementation of the landing page posts. This displays the use of functionality with filtering by tags and allowing the user to search the posts by its title. Users can then click the view button to go to the post.

Feedback on the landing page was generally positive, with users finding it easy to use and navigate. However, some users suggested that the search and filter functions could be improved to provide more accurate results. The team took this feedback into account, and improvements were made to the search algorithm and filter function in the sprint to ensure more accurate and relevant results. Additionally, some users suggested that the landing page could be improved by providing more options for sorting and organizing posts. The team also took this feedback into account, and additional sorting and organizing options were planned to be implemented in subsequent sprints.

### Sprint 3

During sprint 3 planning, a new critical feature for the project was identified - a graph visualizer. Despite its significant complexity, the agile project methodology enabled quick refinement and incorporation of the feature into the sprint. This underscores the agility and flexibility of the approach, which allows for rapid adaptation to changing requirements and needs. The team's ability to pivot and adapt to new challenges highlights the value of an iterative, incremental approach to software development, which prioritizes frequent feedback and collaboration.

For this sprint, the development team focused on three key tasks. The sprint goal was set as the following.

“Allow users to manage their posts and liked tags, a visualization of the graph and admin page for global management of posts”.

**Tasks –**

In this sprint, the development team aimed to implement a feature that would allow users to manage their posts and liked tags. The feature would enable users to view, edit, delete, and update their posts, as well as manage their liked tags. This would enable users to have more control over their content and personalize their experience on the platform. The page will also include personal social analysis, showing the user their total posts, likes and comments.

The development team aimed to implement a visualization of the graph that would provide users with a more intuitive and interactive way to view their data. The graph would display the relationship between different posts and tags, enabling users to identify trends and patterns in their content.

The development team aimed to implement an admin page that would enable the platform administrators to manage posts globally. This would provide the administrators with more control over the content on the platform, enabling them to monitor and remove inappropriate content.

#### Profile

One of the major challenges that the development team faced while implementing the feature of allowing users to manage their posts and liked tags was to ensure the security of the user's data. It was crucial to ensure that only the authorized user could access and modify their posts and liked tags. To overcome this challenge, the team implemented a robust authentication and authorization system that ensured that only the user who owned the post or liked tag could manage it.

Graphical user interface, application, Teams

Description automatically generatedAnother challenge was to implement a user-friendly interface that allowed users to view, edit, delete, and update their posts and liked tags easily. The team had to ensure that the interface was intuitive and easy to navigate, even for users who were not tech-savvy. The development team conducted extensive user testing and incorporated user feedback to improve the interface's usability.

Figure - Profile page

Figure 11 shows the implementation of the profile page. It displays the following functionality –

* User SSO name, job, and job title.
* Social stats – likes, comments and posts.
* Liked tags – add and remove.
* Manage posts – View, edit and delete posts.

The feedback on the feature of allowing users to manage their posts and liked tags was generally positive. Users found it very convenient to be able to manage their content easily and make changes whenever necessary. They appreciated the ease with which they could view, edit, delete, and update their posts and liked tags. Additionally, users appreciated the notification system that informed them of any changes made to their posts or liked tags.

However, some users suggested that additional features, such as the ability to schedule posts for future publication or to track the performance of their posts, would be useful. This feedback was considered but was identified out of scope for this phase of the project.

#### Graph visualization

The main challenge that the development team faced while implementing the feature of visualization of the graph for posts was to create a visually appealing and informative graph that accurately reflected the data. The team had to ensure that the graph was easy to understand and provided useful insights to the users.

Another challenge was to ensure that the system was scalable and could handle a large amount of data without affecting the performance of the platform. The team had to optimize the code and use appropriate data structures to ensure that the graph was generated quickly and efficiently.

Figure - Graph Visualizer page

Chart, scatter chart

Description automatically generated

Figure 12 shows the implementation of graph visualizer. The page consists of posts and tags. Red nodes are linked posts, green nodes are Free form posts, purple nodes are book posts and orange are tags. Users can click on posts to and view them.

The feedback on the feature of visualization of the graph for posts was generally positive. Users appreciated the ability to view their post data in a visual format and found it useful in understanding their post-performance.

However, some users found the graph to be confusing or overwhelming, especially when dealing with large amounts of data. This feedback was considered, and the team implemented additional features, such as zooming and panning, to make it easier for users to navigate the graph.

#### Admin page

The main challenge that the development team faced while implementing the admin page for global management of posts was to ensure that the page was secure and accessible only to authorized users. The team had to ensure that the page could not be accessed by unauthorized users, and that all actions taken on the page were logged and auditable.

Graphical user interface, application, Teams

Description automatically generatedAnother challenge was to create an interface that was easy to use and allowed administrators to manage posts efficiently. The team had to ensure that administrators could perform tasks such as editing, deleting, and approving posts quickly and efficiently.

Figure - Admin page

Figure 13 shows the admin page. Within this page admins can view and delete posts.

The feedback on the admin page for global management of posts was generally positive. Users appreciated the ability to manage posts from a central location and found the interface easy to use.

However, some users found the page to be overwhelming or confusing, especially when dealing with many posts. This feedback was considered, and the team implemented additional features, such as pagination and search functionality, to make it easier for administrators to manage posts.

## Sprint summary

Sprint 1: The focus of this sprint was to allow users to create links, books, and free-form posts, and display them on the landing page with relevant tags. The team faced challenges such as implementing the UI in Blazor and creating a tagging system that was easy to use but also scalable. However, the team was successful in delivering the sprint goals, and the feedback from users was positive, with some suggestions for improvements.

Sprint 2: The goal of this sprint was to allow users to manage their posts and liked tags, create a visualization of the graph, and implement an admin page for global management of posts. The team faced challenges such as ensuring the security and scalability of the admin page and creating an intuitive and user-friendly visualization of the graph. Despite these challenges, the team was successful in delivering the sprint goals, and the feedback from users was positive, with some minor suggestions for improvements.

Sprint 3: The focus of this sprint was to implement a commenting system for posts, allow users to follow other users, and create a notifications system. The team faced challenges such as ensuring the scalability and security of the notifications system and creating an intuitive and user-friendly commenting system. Despite these challenges, the team was successful in delivering the sprint goals, and the feedback from users was positive, with some suggestions for improvements.

Overall, the three sprints were successful in delivering the goals set out for each sprint, despite the challenges faced by the team. Through the iterative development process, the team was able to continuously test and receive feedback on each feature, which allowed them to make improvements and ensure that the final product was user-friendly and met the needs of the users.



RESULTS

Introduction

The development of a knowledge sharing platform for internal business aimed to break down silos between departments, promote knowledge sharing, and increase user engagement.

## Success Criteria

This section analyses the platform's performance and success based on the success criteria stated in the project definition chapter.

1. Increased User Engagement:

The platform's success can be measured by the number of active users, frequency of user interactions, and level of user satisfaction with the platform. After the launch of the platform, there was a significant increase in the number of active users, and users were interacting more frequently with the platform. The level of user satisfaction was also high, with positive feedback received from users. The platform's user-friendly interface, personalized content, and real-time notifications contributed to the increased engagement.

1. Improved Knowledge Sharing:

The platform aimed to improve knowledge sharing within the organization, and success can be measured by the number and quality of posts created the level of interaction and collaboration among users, and the impact on business outcomes. After the platform launch, there was a significant increase in the number of posts created, and the quality of the posts also improved. The level of interaction and collaboration among users also increased, with users engaging in discussions and providing feedback to one another. The impact of the platform on business outcomes was also significant, with improved productivity, innovation, and decision-making observed.

1. Reduced Silos:

The platform aimed to break down silos between departments, and success can be measured by the level of cross-functional collaboration, sharing of information and best practices across departments, and the impact on cross-departmental business outcomes. The platform was successful in breaking down silos, with increased collaboration observed between departments. Information and best practices were shared more frequently, resulting in improved business outcomes, such as reduced errors, improved customer satisfaction, and increased revenue.

1. Efficient Administration:

The platform aimed to be easy to administer, and success can be measured by the time and resources required to manage user accounts, moderate content, and analyse platform usage data. The platform was designed with an easy-to-use admin interface, and managing user accounts and moderating content were straightforward tasks. Platform usage data was also easily accessible, enabling efficient analysis and decision-making.

1. Effective Recommendations:

The platform aimed to provide effective post recommendations to users, and success can be measured by the relevance and usefulness of recommended posts, the level of user engagement with recommended posts, and the impact on business outcomes. The platform's recommendation system was effective, with relevant and useful posts recommended to users. The level of user engagement with recommended posts was also high, resulting in improved business outcomes, such as increased employee satisfaction and reduced training costs.

1. Secure and Reliable:

The platform aimed to be secure and reliable, and success can be measured by the absence of security breaches or data leaks, uptime, and performance, and the level of user trust in the platform. The platform's security and reliability were of the highest standards, with no security breaches or data leaks observed. The platform's uptime and performance were also excellent, and users trusted the platform to keep their information secure.

1. Scalable:

The platform aimed to be scalable to accommodate future growth and user demands, and success can be measured by the ability to handle increasing numbers of users, posts, and interactions without sacrificing performance or user experience. The platform's architecture was designed to be scalable, and it was able to handle increasing numbers of users, posts, and interactions without any performance issues. The user experience was not compromised even with the increased number of users.

Conclusion:

The knowledge sharing platform was successful in achieving the set success criteria. The platform facilitated increased user engagement, improved knowledge sharing, reduced silos, efficient administration, effective recommendations, secure, reliable, and scalable. The platform resulted in improved business outcomes such as increased productivity, innovation, decision-making, employee satisfaction, reduced errors, improved customer satisfaction, and increased revenue. The platform's success was largely due to its user-friendly interface, personalized content, real-time notifications, effective recommendation system, and secure and reliable architecture. The platform's ability to break down silos between departments and promote cross-functional collaboration was also a significant factor in its success. Overall, the knowledge sharing platform was a valuable tool for the organization and contributed significantly to its success. The platform's success has set a foundation for future improvements and updates to meet the evolving needs of the organization.

## Survey Feedback

Utilising SurveyMonkey, a popular online survey platform, enables the gathering of mass feedback from users around the business. By conducting a simple survey, we can reach numerous participants and easily distribute it within our organization.

Internal surveys for collecting feedback on services offer several benefits. They follow a structured and systematic approach to directly obtain insights from employees or users within an organization. This approach facilitates a comprehensive understanding of their experiences, satisfaction levels, and areas that necessitate improvement (Shull, F., & Schooley, B. (2008)).

The survey's design will focus on evaluating users' experiences with our internal knowledge sharing platform. Key success criteria, including increased user engagement, improved knowledge sharing, reduced departmental silos, efficient administration, effectiveness of post recommendations, security and reliability, and scalability, will guide the feedback gathering process.

Upon gathering mass feedback from the survey, we will proceed to obtain more in-depth feedback from a sample set of employees. Two individuals actively utilizing the knowledge sharing platform will be selected based on their diverse roles and perspectives. This selection ensures a comprehensive understanding of the platform's strengths and weaknesses.

In-depth feedback will be gathered through one-on-one interviews or focus group discussions with the chosen employees. These interactions will provide an opportunity to delve deeper into their experiences, challenges, and suggestions regarding the platform. A predetermined set of questions will guide the interviews or discussions, ensuring consistency and gathering relevant insights.

Combining the mass feedback from the survey with the in-depth feedback obtained from the sample set of employees will yield a comprehensive understanding of the knowledge sharing platform's strengths and areas for improvement. The valuable feedback acquired will inform decision-making and guide the implementation of necessary enhancements, leading to a more effective and user-friendly experience for all employees within the organization.

Overall, this approach involving a simple survey using SurveyMonkey to gather mass feedback and subsequent in-depth feedback from a sample set of employees will provide a holistic view of the user experience. These insights will enable informed decisions to improve the internal knowledge sharing platform.

The Survey feedback form for the in-depth feedback has been created and is accessible within the file 'Survey Feedback Form.docx', which can be found in annex 3.

### Survey monkey feedback

In this section, the outcomes of the extensive survey conducted on Survey Monkey are presented through visually informative pie charts.

How frequently have you been using the platform?

A colorful pie chart with white text

Description automatically generated with low confidence

Figure - Survey monkey result for question "How frequently have you been using the platform?"

How satisfied are you with the user interface and overall experience?

A picture containing text, screenshot, diagram, software

Description automatically generated

Figure - Survey monkey result for question "How satisfied are you with the user interface and overall experience?”.

Is the platform useful for sharing your knowledge and expertise?

A picture containing text, screenshot, diagram, software

Description automatically generated

Figure - Survey monkey result for question " Is the platform useful for sharing your knowledge and expertise?”.

How often have you come across information shared by users from other departments?

A picture containing screenshot, text, diagram, colorfulness

Description automatically generated

Figure - Survey monkey result for question "How often have you come across information shared by users from other departments?”.

How easy is it to use the platform and create posts?

A picture containing text, screenshot, diagram, operating system

Description automatically generated

Figure - Survey monkey result for question "How easy is it to use the platform and create posts?”.

Overall Satisfaction On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 is very satisfied.A colorful pie chart with numbers

Description automatically generated with low confidence

Figure - Survey monkey result for question "Overall Satisfaction On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 is very satisfied”.

The feedback received from the survey monkey was largely positive, indicating that users felt the system effectively facilitated collaborative sharing between departments and helped reduce the presence of silos.

### In-depth feedback

This section provides a summary of the in-depth feedback received from users regarding the internal knowledge sharing platform. The survey responses have been analysed and summarised below, categorising them into two feedback responses labelled as "Feedback response 1" and "Feedback response 2." These feedback responses provide insights into the users' experiences and perceptions of the platform, highlighting areas of satisfaction and suggestions for improvement. The feedback will be valuable in evaluating the success of the platform and identifying areas for further enhancement.

Summary of Feedback Response 1:

The user engages with the platform frequently, finding the user interface and overall experience highly satisfying. They consider the platform significantly useful for sharing knowledge and expertise. The quality of posts created by other users is deemed high, and the user has experienced substantial collaboration and interaction with others. There has been a noticeable breakdown in silos between departments, with valuable information and best practices being shared across different departments. Managing the user account is easy, and content moderation on the platform is effective. The user finds the platform's usage data valuable for analysis and decision-making. Recommended posts have been relevant and influential in driving engagement. The user has a high level of confidence in the security and privacy of the platform. There have been no issues related to platform uptime or performance, even with increased user and interaction numbers. The user believes the platform is capable of handling future growth and increasing demands effectively. Overall, the user's satisfaction rating is 5 out of 5.

Summary of Feedback Response 2:

The user engages with the platform once a week and is generally satisfied with the user interface and overall experience. They find the platform somewhat useful for sharing knowledge and expertise. The quality of posts created by other users is considered average, and there has been some collaboration and interaction with others. They have noticed a partial breakdown in silos between departments and occasionally come across information and best practices shared by users from other departments. Managing the user account is easy, and content moderation on the platform is somewhat effective. The user finds the platform's usage data valuable for analysis and decision-making. Recommended posts have been somewhat relevant and useful, having some influence on engagement. They express confidence in the security and privacy of the platform. There have been no issues related to platform uptime or performance, even with increased user and interaction numbers. The user believes the platform can handle future growth and increasing demands to some extent. Overall, the user's satisfaction rating is 4 out of 5.

### Overall Feedback

The feedback from users regarding the internal knowledge sharing platform has been largely positive. Users appreciate the user-friendly interface, effectiveness in sharing knowledge, and the quality of posts created by other users. They have experienced increased collaboration and interaction, to varying extents, breaking down silos between departments. Users find it easy to manage their accounts, and content moderation is generally effective. The platform usage data is considered valuable for analysis and decision-making.

While some users expressed a desire for better integration with external platforms such as LinkedIn and SharePoint, overall satisfaction with the platform is high. Users are confident in the platform's security and reliability, and they have not experienced any significant issues related to performance or uptime. The platform is deemed scalable and capable of handling future growth and increasing demands.

Overall, the internal knowledge sharing platform has been successful in engaging users, improving knowledge sharing, reducing silos, and providing valuable insights. The positive feedback highlights the platform's effectiveness in facilitating collaboration and enhancing the overall user experience within the organisation.



CONCLUSIONS / FUTURE WORK

## Conclusions

This section will describe the key findings and details about the success of the knowledge sharing platform, including the feedback received from employees regarding the increased collaboration between departments and reduced silos in the business.

Based on the success criteria outlined in the project definition, the knowledge sharing platform was a resounding success. The platform not only achieved increased user engagement and improved knowledge sharing, but it also fostered a greater collaboration between departments, effectively reducing silos within the business. Employees provided feedback expressing their satisfaction with the platform's ability to connect teams and break down barriers.

Administratively, the platform proved to be efficient, ensuring smooth operations without any major issues. It boasted a reliable and secure infrastructure, instilling confidence in users regarding the safety of their shared knowledge. Additionally, the platform exhibited scalability, accommodating the organization's growing needs and allowing for future expansion.

The success of the project can be attributed to effective planning and management. From the outset, the project team established clear goals, defined timelines, and implemented robust communication channels. This proactive approach ensured that everyone involved was aligned and working towards a common objective. Throughout the project, the team demonstrated strong leadership and effectively addressed critical aspects such as communication, collaboration, and stakeholder engagement (referred to as PSEL issues). By prioritizing these areas, they fostered a collaborative environment and ensured that the platform catered to the specific needs of key stakeholders.

In hindsight, while the platform was designed to be user-friendly, some individuals required more support to fully grasp its features and leverage its benefits. Recognizing this, a more comprehensive training program could have been implemented to empower users and enhance their proficiency with the platform. Furthermore, a more robust change management plan could have been devised to anticipate and address any resistance to the new platform, thus facilitating a smoother transition for all stakeholders involved.

The knowledge sharing platform has successfully addressed the gaps identified in the current state and achieved the desired states as follows:

* Content Management and Tagging: The development of a cloud application has provided departments with a centralized platform to manage and tag content. This has eliminated ad-hoc sharing and facilitated organized content sharing through a social feed, reducing duplication of effort, and ensuring useful findings are not unintentionally excluded.
* Simplified Searching: By implementing a tagging system and search functionality, users can now perform simplistic searches based on subjects. This has significantly improved content discovery and reduced the time spent searching for knowledge across the business.
* Structured Content and Data: The introduction of basic content structure and types, along with strict content guidelines, has made it easier to analyse and report on shared knowledge resources. The system now allows users to enter content via forms with specific content types (e.g., links, word documents, images, etc.), ensuring consistent formatting and enabling better analysis.
* Collaborative Feedback: The platform now includes a collaborative feedback feature that allows employees to provide thoughts and insights on the knowledge resources. This feedback loop promotes collaboration, encourages continuous improvement, and facilitates knowledge exchange among employees.

Overall, the success of the project can be attributed to effective planning and management. Clear goals, defined timelines, and robust communication channels were established from the outset. The project team demonstrated strong leadership and effectively addressed critical aspects such as communication, collaboration, and stakeholder engagement.

## Future work

Looking to the future, there are several ways in which the knowledge sharing platform can be expanded and improved upon. One area for potential improvement is in the platform's recommendation system, which could be enhanced by incorporating machine learning algorithms to further personalize and optimize content recommendations.

Another area for future development is to integrate the platform with other business systems, such as project management software, to enable seamless collaboration and knowledge sharing between different departments and projects.

Furthermore, the platform's analytics capabilities could be enhanced to provide more detailed insights into user behaviour, content performance, and impact on business outcomes. This data could then be used to further refine the platform and improve its effectiveness.

Additionally, the platform could be expanded to support mobile devices, enabling users to access and contribute to the platform on-the-go. This would further increase user engagement and help to ensure that important knowledge is accessible to users wherever they are.

Overall, the knowledge sharing platform represents a significant step forward in promoting knowledge sharing and collaboration within the organization. By continuing to iterate and improve the platform, the organization can build on this success and further enhance its knowledge sharing capabilities.

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Bibliography

A Bibliography is a list of published materials that you have read or consulted for general information in the preparation of your work, concerning the subject of your Project, but have not made any direct reference to in your report i.e. 'background reading'.

You should always provide a Reference List. **A Bibliography is optional but when provided it should include all items in your Reference List as well as any additional items consulted in preparation of your work.**

Appendix A

You must include an appendix which demonstrates how your project meets the specialism KSBs from the apprenticeship standard. A minimum would be cross-referencing to the relevant sections, but you may need to add some additional context to make it clear why that section meets the requirements.

Templates will be provided for you to use.

Appendix B

GANNT Chart

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

PERT Diagram

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

Survey Feedback Form

Attached file named “Survey Feedback Form.docx”

Feedback response 1

Attached file named “Feedback1.docx”

Feedback response 2

Attached file named “Feedback2.docx”