

for the knowledge they bring to the corporation depends on whether their knowledge is recorded or otherwise captured for future use.

So-called knowledge organizations—corporations that take a systematic approach to capturing this information—transform employees and managers to knowledge workers, regardless of their actual job titles or duties. But even the best knowledge organizations don't treat every employee as a knowledge worker.

The typical knowledge worker in corporate America works in marketing, intellectual property, engineering, programming, and other occupations that involve more thought than physical labor. For example, artists in the marketing division who produce the media files are typically considered knowledge workers, as media can constitute the intellectual capital of a company, whether the company is a knowledge organization or not. Knowledge workers typically add to the value of the corporation by contributing to the corporate knowledge assets, by documenting problems solving activities, by reporting best practices, and by disseminating information in newsletters, online, and in other publications. In each case, the knowledge worker is either the conduit for or the source of the information.

Customer support representatives are commonly considered knowledge workers because they work with information from customers through direct contact; through interactions through the phone, e-mail, or traditional mail; or through directly observing customer activity in a retail setting. Managers at all levels can be considered knowledge workers if they are involved in creating new revenues from existing knowledge by reformatting and repackaging information in existing markets or introducing existing products into new markets.

Most KM initiatives revolve around knowledge workers, whether they're interacting with customers directly, indirectly through computer systems, or with other knowledge workers and managers. This chapter