

CKO, most successful CKOs share some general traits. As Mary illustrated in her dealings with managers and employees at Medical Multimedia Company, regardless of the position title, managing a KM initiative requires exceptional interpersonal communications skills, knowledge of best practices in the industry, fluency in information technology, ability to speak the language of employees and management, and management experience.

Knowledge Management versus Process Reengineering

Business consultants and software information system vendors often bundle a KM initiative with other “flavors of the month,” from process reengineering and empowerment to various forms of teams. However, although Knowledge Management may be a component of other management initiatives, it’s often best addressed as a distinct entity. For example, although many vendors include a KM component in most process reengineering efforts, implementing both simultaneously is at best a waste of time and resources.

A KM initiative typically involves documenting and sharing information about what is, whereas process reengineering is about designing what should be. Knowledge Management is best applied in times of stable processes and as a follow-on to a reengineering effort, not as a parallel process. As illustrated in Exhibit 2.4, this means that KM activities should be avoided during and immediately following process reengineering and major hiring or downsizing activities, whether they are related to the reengineering effort or not. Many KM initiatives fail because Knowledge Management is performed in parallel with a reengineering initiative.

Consider Mary’s experience with Medical Multimedia, in which she first deals with process reengineering and then with Knowledge Management. Only after the processes surrounding handling of multi-