reach of—current KM practices include rapid growth, geographical expansion, and feedback from knowledge workers that the current infrastructure isn't supportive of their KM efforts.

The potential downside of driving a cultural change through the introduction of an enabling technology is that the amount of time from when the early adopters start using the technology to when laggards embrace the technology can span several years. For example, when e-mail was first introduced into a large organization, it typically took several years for everyone to come online. There are exceptions, of course, as when senior management dictates that paper memos are no longer allowed. However, it's impossible for management to dictate the formation of communities of practice and expect them to produce meaningful results. The easiest, quickest path to Knowledge Management is when technology follows and enables established KM practices.

Establishing a Budget

Establishing a budget for a minor or even a major Knowledge Management initiative typically isn't as challenging as actually obtaining the funds for the project. However, when faced with coming up with a reasonable budget, the best approach is to consult with companies of roughly the same size and scope in the same field that have installed KM technologies. Another approach is to hire a consultant with the requisite experience in KM technologies. However, when a consultant is used, the issue becomes one of locating someone who isn't wedded to a particular vendor or approach.

From a practical perspective, the incremental cost of implementing a corporate-wide KM initiative varies from about $100 to $6,000 or more per seat for software alone. A major component of the cost is the infrastructure, including the underlying network, support hardware and software, and desktop or hand-held systems. The incremental cost reflects the expense of software licenses, hardware upgrades, and training.