

without training in process and the use of the technology for storing and retrieving corporate knowledge typically results in costly errors and inefficiency. Most companies with successful KM programs have employee and management training programs in place. For example, a customer service representative who deals with customers via the telephone has to know how to access the list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) on specific topics and how to enter new questions into the system so that the questions and their answers can be made available to others customer service reps.

Overhead Can Be Considerable

Administrative and employee overhead associated with Knowledge Management can cut into efficiency and effectiveness, especially when the typical transaction is very brief. Customers may resent being asked personal questions when they place orders, for example. Saving and submitting customer questions for management to review and include in the store of FAQs in the corporate web site takes time. At issue is whether the expected return on investment in the time spent creating a bank of FAQs or other information makes economic sense.

Knowledge Management Is in Flux

Changes in the KM industry, including abuse of the Knowledge Management vocabulary and concepts by vendors and consultants, obfuscates what would otherwise be simple comparisons of products and services. For example, many database companies and reengineering consultants became KM companies overnight by simply modifying copy in their sales brochures. Companies intent on implementing a KM program have to wade through the unsubstantiated claims from vendors, many of which are made with jargon that serves only to obscure simple (and less expensive) concepts.