Knowledge Management Takes Time

Realistic implementation times for developing a workable KM system range from a few months to years, depending on the complexity of the processes that must be analyzed, the size of the company, the number of employees, and the managers involved. Even in the most technologically challenging KM implementation, the pace of corporate cultural change, not the availability of resources or technology, is the rate-limiting step.

Investment Requirements Can Be Significant

Establishing and maintaining a KM program can be an expensive proposition. A KM system for customer support is an ongoing investment, not a one-time expense. Consider that as soon as the sales reps stop adding questions and answers to the bank of FAQs, the value of the KM system drops precipitously. Eventually, the point will be reached when the time spent searching through the FAQs might not be worth the time or effort of the customer support staff.

Corporate Legacy Must Be Acknowledged

In designing a KM system, it's generally easier to start from scratch. It isn't surprising that the dream of most knowledge officers is to have a new venture built from scorched earth with no history and no legacy data. However, the reality is that most KM programs are implemented in existing companies with established processes for handling orders, deciding on best practices, and dealing with customer support issues. As such, these processes and attitudes will have to be folded into the new KM process. In other words, the KM program should complement the existing business and strengthen existing processes—not turn the company inside out, resulting in processes optimized for Knowledge Management, and no employees to execute them.