

Why is managing knowledge so important for organizations? [Mónica Gil-Casares](#) throws some light on this question.

What knowledge management is and what does it mean for organizations?

Knowledge management (KM) means making use of individuals' knowledge and learning, which together with their organizational experience, can be utilized by others at any appropriate time and place so that it does not simply remain at an individual level but can be deployed in organizational learning.

In order to achieve this, there must be an **institutional KM system** that indicates what, who, how, where, when and with what (which means procedures, tools, times and people) in order to collect and condense learning, make it tangible and transform it into different 'knowledge products'. These products –which can be internal or external– should be communicated and accessible across the organization so that knowledge can be used at any time and by all new-hired personnel in the future.

From our experience, this KM system allows us to be more **effective and efficient** as we can reuse the knowledge and experience acquired in new development projects and for other people. This also contributes to **strengthening our position** and **value-added** as a development NGO.

Moreover, knowledge management is one of the best ways to **motivate** people in an organization as it allows them to enhance their professional knowledge and capacity, integrate themselves into a bigger picture and do their work more effectively. This is especially important in NGOs as our vocation is to have the biggest impact in bettering people's lives.

The main four contributions of knowledge management are:
effectiveness, efficiency, improvement in positioning and motivation of human resources

What are the main keys to a successful knowledge management?

- **Responsibility.** Particularly for development organizations, knowledge management is a matter of responsibility in two ways: first, with respect to **financial accountability** in the management of donor funding to demonstrate that resources have been used appropriately, and secondly, but just as important, with respect to **results-oriented accountability** for the people we serve, so that we use our limited resources in a manner that will have the greatest impact in improving their lives.

"It's not just about giving, but also about achieving.
It's not about doing good, but also about doing it well
And it 's not just about doing it well, but about doing it better "

Based on Denis Diderot's proverb

- **Compromise.** Knowledge management is nothing but a strategic **commitment from the top down**. There must be a truly integrated **organizational culture** and institutional incentives oriented towards learning, self-criticism, and especially, towards a continuous preoccupation with achieving the highest impact in our work. These structures should lead to **time prioritization** and **annual objectives** in knowledge management, especially **for technical teams**.

Knowledge management is not a matter of money or technology; it is mainly a matter of institutional culture and a strategic bet from the top down.

- **Integration, accesibility and utility.** A knowledge management system has to be conceived in such a way as to be **easily integrated into project management**, using its processes, tools and time frames for

implementation, if possible within a short-cycle agile framework. This is important to **simplify procedures** and to have a **flexible system** that does not entail cumbersome and time-consuming new ways of working adding to existing tasks or requiring unnecessarily burdensome wholesale transitions.

...Just make sure KM does not become for people another task on their long to-do lists...

It must be seen as something useful, otherwise the system will not be fed and will die... it should be designed taking into account technical teams' needs and interests.

Finally, it has to be **accessible to any member**, in any place and in any moment knowledge is needed. It is therefore useful to have a **documentation system and platform** that is user-friendly and reflects the way documentation should be classified. Additionally, teams have to receive adequate **periodic training** in use of the platform and system to assure both its use and its maintenance. In parallel, internal **work spaces** are of high value for sharing and going into greater depth into the knowledge products (workshops, work groups, forums, etc.) and promote networking.