

Understanding staff needs

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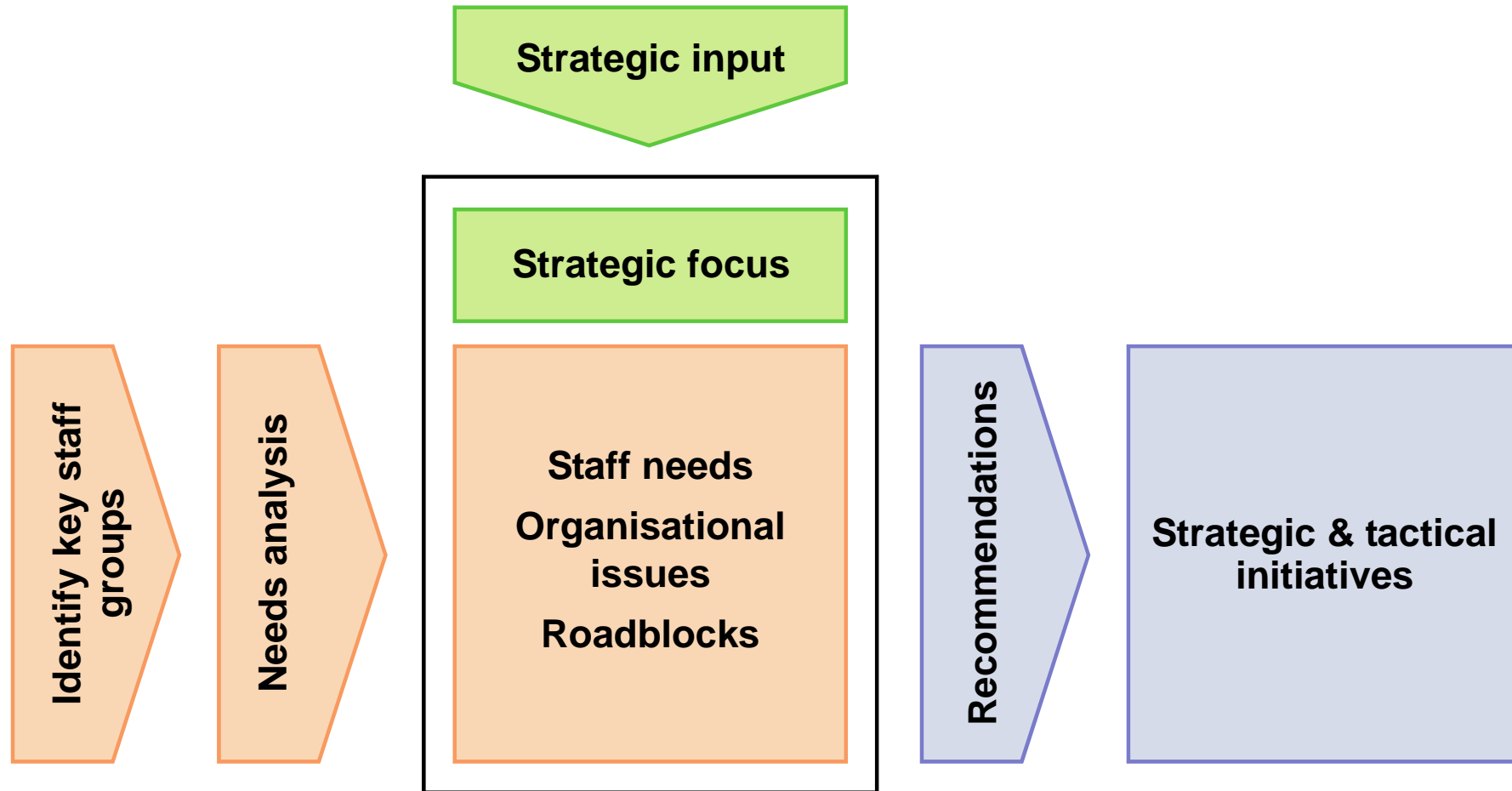


Understanding staff needs

- Many knowledge management initiatives are driven from the “top down”
- These often fail to deliver lasting benefits or changes
- Performance or productivity benefits are gained by supporting the daily activities of those who do the real work
- The starting point is to gain an understanding of staff needs, issues and environment
- This can then be used to deliver a meaningful and tangible KM strategy...



Developing a KM strategy



www.steptwo.com.au/papers/kmc_kmstrategy



Developing a KM strategy (cont)

- Identify key staff groups
- Conduct 'needs analysis' to identify staff needs, issues and environment
- Match those against the strategic goals for the organisation
- Out of all the possibility activities, select the initial activities that support strategic goals
- Once the first round of changes is complete, select the next issues to address



Conducting needs analysis

- Needs analysis applies practical techniques to identify staff issues and requirements
- Can also be called:
 - user research or user-centred design
 - ethnographic research
 - field studies
- All apply same basic principles of observation and discussion
- Whatever you do don't ask users what they need!



Don't ask users

- Questioning users about their KM needs is generally ineffective
- Staff have little (or no) idea about what “KM” or “knowledge sharing” is
- Even if they want to help, they are unable to self-analyse their activities
- Key activities will be missed, and minor needs inflated
- Staff understand the problem, we should then be able to identify the solution



Benefits of needs analysis

- Ensures that the KM project will be of value to staff
- This will then be reflected in adoption solutions
- It also ensures that limited resources are used in the most effective way
- Understanding needs allows a meaningful strategy to be developed
- Builds an understanding of the working environment
- Beyond this, a range of other cultural and process issues will be identified



Surveys & focus groups

There are two traditional investigation methods:

■ Focus groups

- unstructured
- often does not reach consensus
- can be dominated by a few vocal members

■ Surveys

- staff will tell you what you want hear
- results don't match reality
- difficult to create, time-consuming to analyse



Staff interviews

- Conduct staff interviews with **actual** users
- Focus on jobs, not KM, with questions like:
 - What are the main activities that make up your job?
 - Who do you communicate most frequently with?
 - What information do you use during a normal working day?
 - Where do you obtain this information from?
 - How do you find out about what's happening in the organisation?
- This is a simple form of knowledge mapping
- Can be the first time staff are actually listened to



Staff interviews (cont.)

For more on this, see the following articles:

- **Stakeholder interviews as simple knowledge mapping**

www.steptwo.com.au/papers/cmb_interviews

- **Selecting staff for stakeholder interviews**

www.steptwo.com.au/papers/cmb_interviewselect

- **Fast-tracking research with paired interviews**

www.steptwo.com.au/papers/cmb_pairedinterviews



Workplace observation

- Involves going 'out into the field', and watching staff conduct their normal activities
- It is a **holistic** approach that can identify many issues and needs
- Need to spend enough time to 'blend in'
- Must be done ethically
- Very effective in a 'front line' environment, such as call centres, branches, etc.



Contextual inquiry

- This is a combination of stakeholder interviews and workplace observation
- Involves sitting with a staff person in their normal working environment
- Ask them questions about their working day
- Get them to actually show you how they complete tasks (using IT systems, phone, etc)
- The facilitator is the **student**, the staff person is the **teacher**



Planning needs analysis

- A representative cross-section of staff should be involved
- Alternatively, in-depth research can be conducted with a single group
- 3-5 days of research will identify many issues
- About the same time again is required to analyse the research
- If more formal needs analysis is not possible, even a little time spent with staff is of value!



Using the results

- The issues of operational staff are often invisible to senior management
- Bringing the needs and issues of staff into the boardroom is a powerful way of building a business case
- Use narrative techniques to capture and convey the results of the needs analysis
- Also invaluable in building closer ties with end users, thereby ensuring relevance and adoption



Summary

- “Top down” KM doesn’t work
- Staff needs and issues must be understood for KM to succeed
- There are a range of practical techniques that can be used
- Using these techniques will ensure that benefits are realised in practice
- They are also a powerful way of building a business case



Questions?

- **James Robertson**
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- We will be running workshops in Canberra in the new year, visit our site shortly for details...