

## KNOWLEDGE HARVESTING

### **What is Knowledge Harvesting?**

'Knowledge Harvesting' is not as technical as it sounds. It is a conversation/interview based process aimed at capturing and recording the knowledge that resides in peoples' heads; knowledge that is highly valuable to others and that the individual in question may not even realise they have!

### **When and how do you carry out Knowledge Harvesting?**

People have to volunteer to share their knowledge; they can't be forced. However, experience tells us that in the majority of cases, people are happy to share.

Knowledge Harvesting is most commonly carried out when an individual is leaving an organisation. The experience and knowledge they have accrued whilst being at the organisation is highly valuable and Knowledge Harvesting ensures that this knowledge is captured and passed down to the individual's successor.

Knowledge Harvesting can consist of one session, or can be a staggered process over a series of instances. Who is present can also vary; from just two people, to a group of people.

### **What sort of things does Knowledge Harvesting consider?**

Knowledge Harvesting consists of eight key steps, or areas of discussion:

1. Introductory details
2. Key internal and external contacts
3. Internal information sources, resources and references
4. External information sources, resources and references
5. A year in the life of
6. Lessons learnt from experiences
7. Handover and housekeeping information
8. Additional comments

These topics however are not set in stone. It can sometimes be useful to set a rough structure to the Knowledge Harvesting session, but to let the session develop quite organically. Information you may not have even considered can often be revealed in this way.

### **What to do after Knowledge Harvesting has been completed?**

It is vital that as much of the information as possible is recorded from the Knowledge Harvesting session. It is therefore important to use a template. Codifying and recording the information in this way presents it in an accessible form for the organisation and the individual's successor.

## KNOWLEDGE HARVESTING: CHECKLIST FOR INTERVIEWER

### Things to consider/techniques to use

- Always refer to the knowledge harvesting 8 steps – they should all be considered. The depth and breadth of each step will vary and is dependant on: the value of the knowledge at risk; the level of risk of loss
- A journalistic mindset is required to ask the right questions to elicit the right responses and to record the information in an interesting but informative manner
- Consider the learning styles and preferences of the individual being harvested – for e.g. some people like to focus on the detail, the facts, the here and now; whilst for others the possibilities and connections/patterns of their work are important

### Interview questions to consider

- What are the names, addresses and contact details of your key internal and external contacts?
- How and why are these key contacts useful?
- In what system/format are you key contacts maintained? E.g. Outlook Contacts folder, Notes. Can they be transferred/copied or can access be given to your successor/other team members?
- Give examples of the main sorts of documents you produce
- What are the key websites you have used and why?
- What are the critical books, reports/publications you use?
- What are the lessons learnt/best practice stories (and anecdotes) you wish to share with others?
- What has it been like working in the organisation/directorate/department/team?
- What insights have you gained during this job?
- What knowledge comes with this role?
- What are the key attributes you think are essential to be able to do your job?
- What would you class as “good practice” in dealing with your type of work?
- What are some of the possible pitfalls you would advise your colleagues to avoid?
- What are the top three lessons you have learned?
- What are the key decisions you have to make in your job?
- How did you take some of these decisions?
- What have been some of the enablers and barriers to doing your job?
- Elevator speech - If you had 90 seconds to describe this role to your successor, what would be some of the key bullet points?
- What training courses and events e.g. conferences, workshops, communities, associations, news alerts have you attended and why?

## KNOWLEDGE HARVESTING TEMPLATE

*Template sections to be completed*

1. *Introductory details*
2. *Key internal and external contacts*
3. *Internal information sources, resources and references*
4. *External information sources, resources and references*
5. *A year in the life of*
6. *Lessons learnt from experiences*
7. *Handover and housekeeping information*
8. *Additional comments*

### 1. Introductory details

Interviewee Information		Facilitator Information	
Name		Name	
Position		Phone	
Department		Email	
Email			
Phone		Interview Information	
Line Manager		Interview date	
Start date		Completion date	
Leaving date			
Successor (if known)			
Personal phone			
Personal email			

## 2. Key internal and external contacts

INTERNAL							
	Names	Role	Department	Phone	Email	Specialist Knowledge	Additional Information
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
EXTERNAL							
	Names	Role	Organisation	Phone	Email	Specialist Knowledge	Additional Information
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							

*(add as necessary)*

**3. Internal information sources, resources and references**

	What is it?	Where (or from who) can it be found?	Importance (1= high, 4= low)	Why is it important/useful?	Risks if not available	Additional information
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						

*(add as necessary)*

4. External information sources, resources and references

	Information source/resource/reference	Where (or from who) can it be found?	Importance (1= high, 4= low)	Why is it important/useful?	Risks if not available	Additional information
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						

*(add as necessary)*

5. A year in the life of a [add role]

	Main activity/events/deadlines	Key steps/activities involved	Key contacts	Hints and tips for successor	Additional information
Jan					
Feb					
Mar					
Apr					
May					
June					
July					
Aug					
Sep					
Oct					
Nov					
Dec					

**6. Lessons learnt from experiences**

	Activity or event that led to learning	How did you cope with this, what were the outcomes?	Key contacts associated?	Hints and tips for coping with a similar situation in the future?	What professional development activities have helped you with this task/role?	How could the handover to your successor include information on this?	Additional information
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							

*(add as necessary)*

**7. Handover and housekeeping (to be completed during staff handover)**

	Specific task/handover item	Associated contacts	Handover completion date	Completed (Y or N)	Comments from receiver	Additional information
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						

*(add as necessary)*

## 8. Additional comments

Interviewee's comments	Interviewer's comments

Completion date: .....

Signed (Interviewee): .....

Signed (Interviewer): .....