



KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Empowering Users With Information





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INTRODUCTION

Curating a Hub of Knowledge

Every successful company grows from building a foundation of knowledge accumulated over years of industry experience. All too often, some of that knowledge remains inaccessible to the people who need it the most. Digital spaces like well-organized websites, landing pages, and cloud-based file sharing systems are all products of progress in the effective sharing of knowledge.

These online platforms provide the perfect solution for:

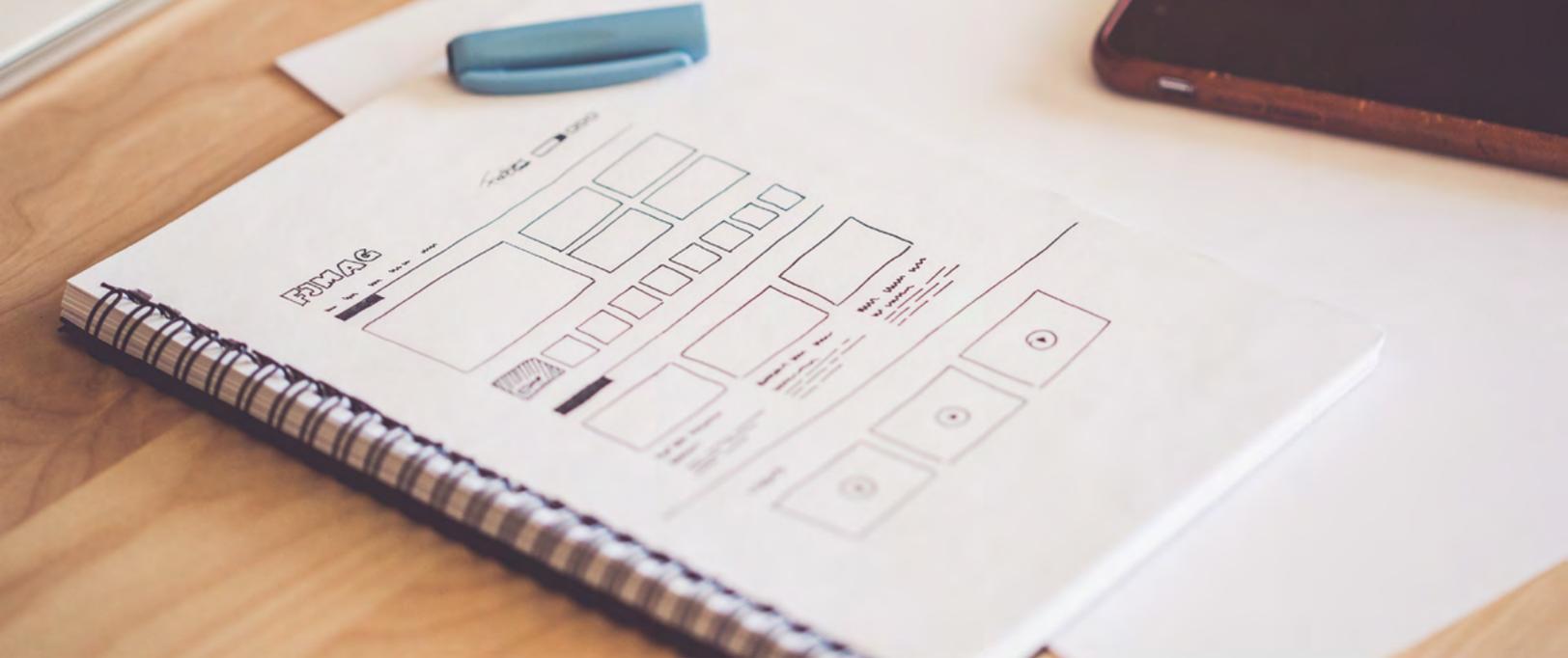
- Aggregating information
- Re-distributing company knowledge
- Organizing data
- Maintaining a modern workplace
- Enhancing communication

Knowledge is powerful, but only if it has a place to go. Without an effective system in place for the storage and transmission of your company's information, it can be easily wasted.



THE COMPLEXITY OF DATA ORGANIZATION

There are an incredible number of factors at play when designing a system to manage content. Even experienced web designers have a hard time explaining what exactly separates a good page from a great page. But as hard as it is to define good design, it's easy to know it when you see it, and more importantly when you use it.



DESIGN BASICS

Here are a few basics to keep in mind when evaluating the way you're hosting your own content:

READABILITY:

It can be tempting to take advantage of the wide variety of fun fonts out there, but when it comes to the important information, a clean and simple font is all you need. Complicating a user's ability to read is the quickest way to lose their attention.

KEEP IT MODERN:

There's always a new and improved way to host content online, and with over 50% of web traffic occurring on smartphones, it needs to be optimized for mobile use. Keeping an eye out for fresh design concepts will help keep your digital awareness sharp while allowing you to judge whether or not your own site is up to par. Ultimately, you may want to work with a web design company to ensure it checks all the boxes of a modern and functional site.

IMAGES AND COLORS MATTER:

As simple as it may seem, colors and images can hurt a page's effectiveness even more than they can help. Colors set the mood for the page, and must agree with one another. Images must be relevant, high-quality and non-intrusive to the function of the site. It may be in your best interest to work with a graphic designer who will have a decent grasp on what works and what doesn't when it comes to color schemes.

SHAREABILITY:

Whether it's a social sharing button, an email link, or even an obvious download button, be sure to make it as easy as possible for your users to save information for themselves and share it with others.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

FOCUSING ON ACCESSIBILITY

Communication is at the core of successful business, and in the modern marketplace, it's all happening in the form of digital engagement. Whether you're communicating with existing customers, prospective customers, or even colleagues, digital interaction is the norm. That being said, it's undergoing a pretty significant change.

That's because many of today's websites are in a state of transition. They've either been recently updated, or they're in desperate need of an upgrade. More often than not, it's an issue of accessibility. Users need access to the information they're seeking as quickly as possible, and that information needs to exist in places that make sense.

In order for both customers and employees to get the most out of their digital communication efforts, they need a modern way to access information. We'll start by exploring the implications of knowledge sharing on customer relations, and then we'll take the conversation in-house to address communication in the workplace.

COMMUNICATING WITH CUSTOMERS

From a customer's standpoint, there's nothing more frustrating than dealing with multiple points of contact at a company who aren't communicating with each other. These types of interactions are inefficient, unproductive, and overall discouraging for all parties involved.

So how do you ensure that every interaction between employee and customer is as effective as possible? The solution can be found in the way you record, interpret, and leverage the information you're getting from customers every single time you interact with them. That requires an effective system of knowledge sharing to gather, store, and access information.

There are all sorts of products on the market that claim to take care of all of these issues for you, and many of them do a great job of organizing information. But at the end of the day, the effectiveness of a hub of knowledge is up to the dedication of the people using it.

IN PRACTICE

Here are some tips that utilize a knowledge sharing system to accomplish customer service goals:

RECORD:

Take notes on the interactions you're having with customers and save them in a place where files are accessible company-wide. It's possible that the customer doesn't usually interact with anybody besides you, but it doesn't hurt to have a log of what has transpired in your business relationship. Plus, if you find yourself out of work for any length of time, coworkers can pick up where you left off.

INTERPRET:

Now that you have a record of what's been happening during the interactions you're having with customers, use that information! What may come across as ordinary conversations may reveal a larger theme over time that can only be discovered by looking at the big picture.

Perhaps they've made a small comment or two about the way your product is delivered or packaged. Maybe they've mentioned a personal preference for how they like to pay bills. These details may not be noticeable on a small scale, but interpreting them on a bigger scale can allow you to solve small problems before they grow.

LEVERAGE:

Now that you have a record of customer interactions and you've taken the time to extract some of the larger themes, you can use that information to the advantage of all parties involved. This is where you have the opportunity to get creative. Offer a service before it's requested or send a note of congratulations for an accomplishment mentioned in passing. This is what customer service is all about; small details that pay huge dividends in the long run.



IN HOUSE COMMUNICATION

Cutting down on office time-wasters is an ongoing process in any workplace. A well-crafted system of knowledge sharing can work wonders in streamlining the process of communication in the office.

Think about it this way: If a simple file sharing app saves a single employee just 10 minutes per day that would otherwise be spent searching for files or requesting them from coworkers, that saves 50 minutes a week. Over the course of a year, that's more than 43 hours. Apply that to a company of 50 employees and you have an entire year's worth of billable hours spent inefficiently looking for files.

That example may seem a bit dramatic, but it's actually quite tame. In fact, one report found that the average worker spends ["20% of their work week looking for internal information or tracking down colleagues who can help with specific tasks."](#) That's a huge problem with a simple solution.

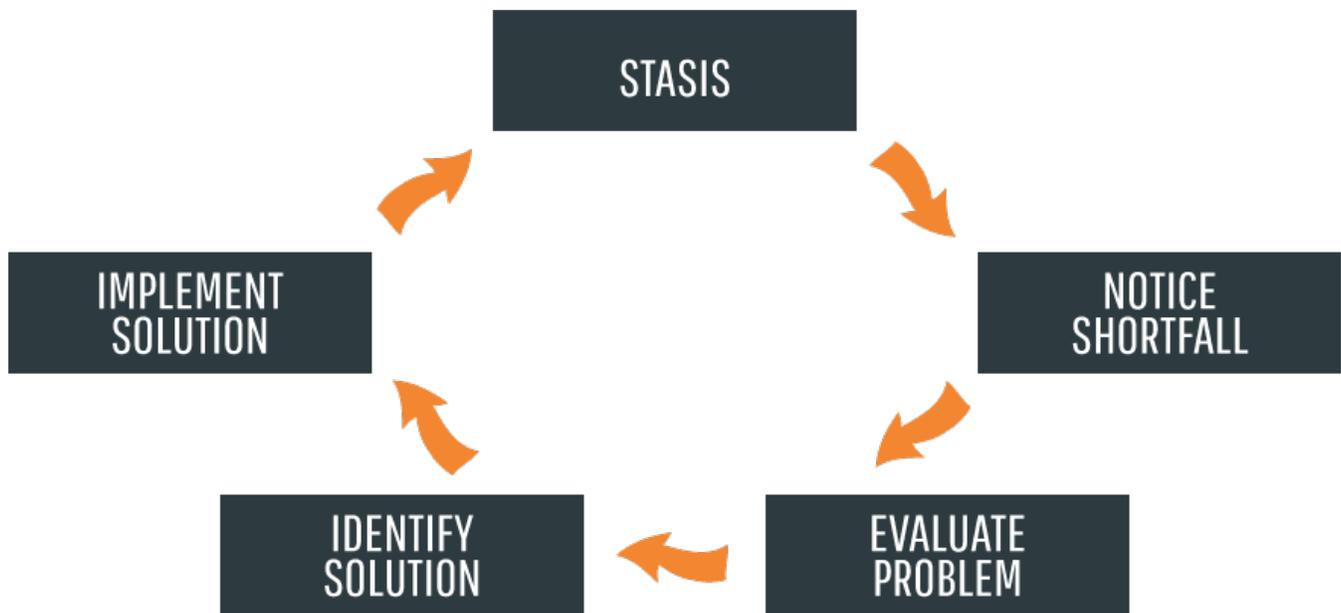
Whether it's an application, software, or a well-managed website, leveraging the benefits of a knowledge sharing system allows any combination of users to create, view, and edit content in a more modern and efficient manner.

BRIDGING THE GAP

Effective knowledge sharing goes beyond just improving the way we communicate; It also eliminates a lot of the tedious communication that can have a negative impact on productivity.

For customers, that means providing enough information on a website to answer any questions from the beginning of their buying process. They can gather all of the basic information themselves and then make a call when they're more informed and prepared to make a deal. That means less leg work in the front office and a more informed customer base.

For employees, it means eliminating housekeeping duties like responding to emails, cleaning up inboxes, filing physical copies of documents, and searching for updated files. That leaves more time for creative problem solving and innovation.



PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH ANALYSIS

As digital tools get more advanced every year, there are always more data points to gather and analytics to file away. The problem is that the supply of data often exceeds demand; in other words, many business sites just aren't leveraging a lot of the data they collect.

Without a history of data to analyze, there's no way to make informative decisions when the time comes for a change. When that happens, businesses often find themselves struggling to overcome setbacks rather than outpacing them. This kind of short-term learning approach in business often ends with an unhealthy cycle of decision making which ends up looking like the flowchart below.

With this cycle, problems do eventually get solved. However, that's as far as it ever goes. Every resource is optimized to achieve normalcy, and no matter how quickly it's accomplished, the only outcome is that it will happen again. This isn't necessarily a guaranteed road to failure, but it will definitely hinder growth in the long run.

Instead of merely treading water, it's in a company's best interest to break out of that cycle at the point of stasis. That can be done by using the concept of knowledge sharing to more effectively benefit from the analytics your company is capable of collecting. The result is a whole new cycle of growth that looks something like this:



When a company finds itself in a state of general comfort, it's often a red flag that change is right around the corner. By establishing a system to collect, share, and interpret your company's site analytics, it's much easier to make difficult decisions ahead of time and with an informed opinion. This allows forward-thinking companies to break into a cycle of growth that strengthens their presence in the marketplace every time around.

WHAT ARE ANALYTICS AND WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?

If you're already familiar with analytics, feel free to skip to the next section. For a quick refresher, continue below.

In their basic form, analytics are a peek into the backstage of a website. There's data like how many people are visiting, where they're visiting from, what they're clicking on, what content is popular, etc. There are all kinds of data, and it's up to each individual company to decide which is most pertinent to their needs.

There are a variety of ways to view analytics. Most website platforms (Wordpress, Squarespace, Weebly, Wix, etc.) offer built-in analytics that can be accessed by logging into the administrator access to the site. Google also offers analytics that they collect through small snippets of javascript code that you embed in each page on your site.

If this sounds a bit complicated, don't fret. It's the reason many companies opt to work with a web design or marketing agency to build and maintain a website for them. Those agencies specialize in creating modern, functional websites while delivering interpreted analytics on a regular basis. These modern sites are a great way to establish a clean and up-to-date system of knowledge sharing that will benefit visitors, customers, and employees alike.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING APPS

File Sharing



GOOGLE DRIVE

Google curates an incredibly powerful suite of programs that allow users access to files no matter where they are. You can create documents that are only available to you, or you can share any number of individual files or folders at your discretion. All you need is an internet connected device and your login information.

Google Drive covers all the bases when it comes to creating basic documents and spreadsheets, and it's the go-to option for drafting and editing content in a collaborative way.



DROPBOX

Like Google Drive, Dropbox allows users to access shared or personal files from anywhere. It doesn't have a suite of document creation apps like Google does, but it does have an open Application Program Interface (API), meaning it can be integrated into almost any program.

All of these cloud-based file sharing programs are free to join and then require memberships if you ever want access to more storage. With Dropbox, you can earn that extra storage by connecting to social media and referring the service to friends or coworkers.



OWNCLOUD

Like the other programs in this list, ownCloud does a great job of hosting your files and providing access to whomever it is granted. The one thing that sets it apart is that you can install it on your own server. That means you can put all of your information in a secure and trusted place while providing the opportunity for multiple people to access it remotely.



EVERNOTE

Evernote is a great tool for quickly creating documents and sharing them with other users. It offers a bunch of different ways to take notes, whether it's clipping web pages, recording audio, or simply jotting down your thoughts.

Organization



TRELLO

Trello is an organizational app that uses the concept of “boards” to separate and classify tasks and information. Users can create multiple boards for the various projects they’re working on, and within those boards they can create cards for specific tasks that need to be accomplished for that project. It’s a dynamic and customizable way to create tasks and check them off as they’re completed.



FEEDLY

Feedly is a highly customizable website aggregator, and it’s perfect for those who spend a lot of time staying up to date on developments within their industry. It allows users to view the RSS feeds of all their favorite sites on Feedly, meaning all of the content is available in one place.

Eliminating the need to visit and browse a handful of different websites saves a lot of time and energy while allowing users to quickly find only the most pertinent information.



BASECAMP

Basecamp is designed as an all-in-one productivity tool. It allows users to separate projects into to-do lists, host documents and files, share schedules, interact on message boards, and even engage each other with a quick chat tool. These functions are good, but where Basecamp really shines is in its capacity for accountability.

Basecamp allows users to assign each other with tasks and then track the status of those tasks as they’re completed. It also has an auto check-in function at the end of each day where users can detail what they accomplished in a day without needing to waste time on status meetings.

Communication



SLACK

Slack is designed for quick and casual communication either between team members or within a larger channel of users. Channels can be customized to include any group of people, whether it’s a small project or a company-wide announcement. It does a good job of sending attachments, and it even has Google Drive compatibility built in.



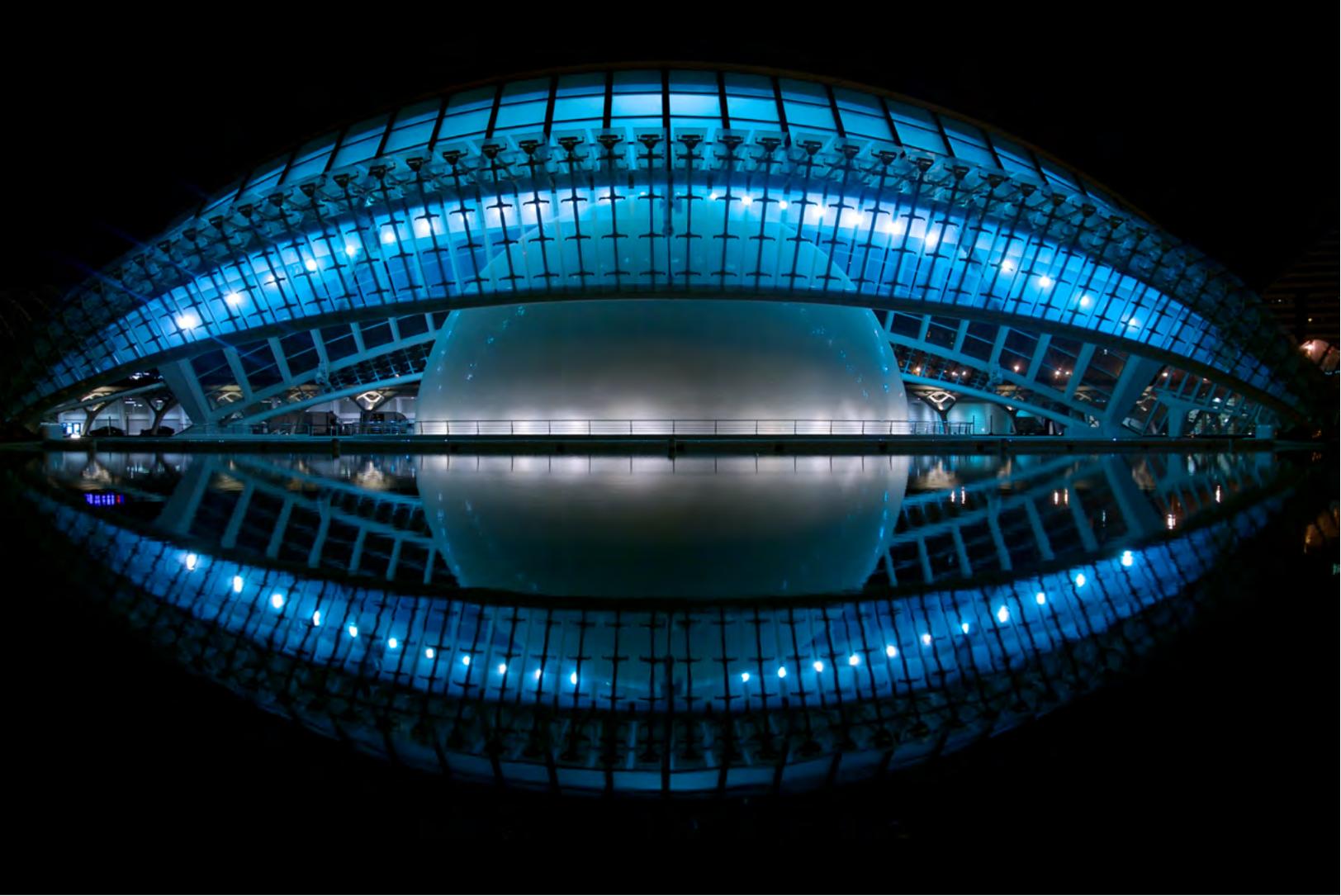
HIPCHAT

Similar to Slack, Hipchat allows users to quickly chat no matter their location. Like OwnCloud, it can also be stored on your company’s server. The basic package is free, but there’s also an option to pay per user for things like video chat, screen sharing, and unlimited storage.



CISCO WEBEX

Cisco WebEx operates as a sort of “virtual meeting room” that can be accessed in a multitude of ways. Users can call in with mobile phones, log in on their computers, or even join a group video chat. Depending on the tier of service you choose, you can also gain access to additional features like webinars and training tools which allow you to interact with users on multiple levels.



IN CONCLUSION

In the modern marketplace, sharing information is easy; the hard part is getting everybody on the same page. There are a variety of ways to establish a more effective system of knowledge sharing in any given workplace. It could be a file sharing program, a communication app, or even a simple website update. In the end, the key to success is helping employees and customers to adopt knowledge sharing as a school of thought.

Whether it's a file sharing program, a communication app, or even a simple website update, the biggest hurdle in any major institutional change is adopting it. When it comes to knowledge sharing, the hassle of adopting new systems for the transfer of information is far outweighed by the benefit of a more efficient, modern, and engaged workplace.



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