Knoco Newsletter

December 2017
The draft ISO KM standard and how to review it.
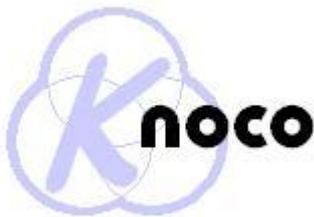
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The ISO Knowledge Management standard, ISO 30401, is now available for public review in draft form.

This newsletter tells you about the standard, how it was developed, how it is structured, where to find it, how to comment, and what happens next.

The KM ISO standard - what is it exactly?

Before you review and comment on the standard, it is worth a short explanation of what the standard is, and what is isn't.

The standard document is not the finished article. It is a draft, constructed over the last couple of years by an international committee of KM experts (including Knoco's Nick Milton), and reviewed by mirror committees of KM experts in the main contributing countries, but it is a long way from being complete. The purpose of the current stage of public review is to gather comments from as many interested parties as possible, prior to a second round of development. Your voice counts, and if the standard seems incomplete or inadequate to you, then help us finish it. Once all comments have been compiled, the various committees will meet again, with the aim of incorporating the comments and completing the standard in 2018.

The standard contains some fixed text within a fixed structure. The ISO KM standard is what is known as a "Management systems standard". ISO have many such standards for various management systems, and they have a common fixed format and quite a lot of fixed text. Your comments are all welcome, but if it turns out you are commenting on fixed text, then I am afraid

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we can't make any changes. You can see the ISO Management systems structure in Appendix 2 of this document, and it is worth printing this out so that you don't waste time commenting on text which cannot be altered.

The standard does not attempt to suggest a standard approach to Knowledge Management. That would be stupid - there is no single approach to KM which applies to all sectors and all organisational sizes. Some organisations need to include communities of practice in their KM approach, others don't. Some need knowledge bases full of customer articles, others don't. The standard is not a standard approach to KM, but a standard for the management system which is applied to KM. It ensures this system is complete, is focused on business needs, is resourced, defined, reviewed and managed properly, while still allowing tremendous latitude in terms of the KM approaches which can be applied.

The standard is principles-based. Wherever possible we have based the standard on established principles of Knowledge Management. It is left to the organisation which practices and technologies they use within this framework of principles, and if the principles are adhered to, the outcome should meet the standard.

We cannot share the text of the standard with you. The document is copyright ISO, and you can either buy it from ISO or view it on secure sites, as explained below. Therefore we cannot share any of the content of the standard with you in this newsletter I am afraid.

The KM ISO standard working group at a recent meeting

Contact Knoco if you want help with your Knowledge Management principles.

Do we need a KM standard at all?

Is there any merit in people being able to qualify or accredit themselves against a standard for KM? Some people feel that Knowledge Management is more a philosophy than it is a management system, and that you cannot have philosophical standards. Others feel that the need for accreditation is unnecessary and would add administrative burden without adding value. Others think that KM is too broad a field for coverage by a standard. We certainly agree that a KM standard would not work if it tried to impose a uniform approach to KM on organisations, but a KM standard will work if it helps people avoid the common pitfalls that still plague the topic. We see the following three key arguments why a KM standard would be a really positive addition to the KM field.

Knowledge Management is a very poorly defined field, for which a standard would add clarity. It has been poorly defined for a long time, and the main confusions have been with content management, information management, innovation management, training and development, and data management. There is no single body that talks for Knowledge Management, and which can help with establishing a definition. ISO, on the other hand, is a recognised international authority. It already has a set of published standards (or standards under development) for various disciplines, including Records Management, Information Management, Innovation management and so on, and still a "white space" remains into which Knowledge Management neatly fits. An ISO KM standard would at last provide a definition, from an international body, of the scope of the KM field. We may not all agree with this scope (and we will be able to comment during the review phase) but at least we will have an international definition to refer to.

Knowledge Management is prone to common and persistent errors, which a standard would help avoid. I am sure we are all aware of the high failure rate of KM projects, and of the common reasons for failure, some of which are listed below

- KM is not introduced with a business focus
- KM is not introduced as a change program
- Only parts of the KM solution are implemented (usually only the technology parts)
- There is no effective high-level sponsorship
- The KM team does not have the right capability to deliver change
- KM is not embedded into the business

The Knowledge Management standard should guard against all of these pitfalls. An organisation should not be able to certify, or self-certify, against the standard

without a clear link between KM and the organisational objectives, a complete working solution (appropriate to the organisational scale and context), a change management plan, a high level sponsor, a skilled and accountable KM individual or team, etc.

A standard would give a way to ensure your outsource partners manage your outsourced knowledge. Sometimes organisations don't manage their knowledge themselves. Sometimes they outsource it to partners or contractors. Say you have an outsource partner managing your customer support, for example, or your tax preparation, or your website design. You want them not only to provide a good service, but to manage their knowledge about service provision, tax preparation and website design. But how do you do this, without a standard to judge them against? If the KM standard makes it through the review stage and is finally published, then the outsource partner can demonstrate, through certification (provided the certification is good), that they have a complete KM system and have not fallen into any of the common and persistent pitfalls.

Contact Knoco to learn more about the common KM pitfalls and how to avoid them

Where to find the standard, and how to comment

You can buy a copy of the draft standard from the ISO site for 58 Swiss francs, or your own national standards body may allow you to view and comment on the standard online.

The British site for review and comment is here. You will need to register to be able to comment, and you can then read the document section by section, view existing comments, and add comments of your own.

The German site allows you to order copies in English or in French for 69 Euros, while the French site leads you to a survey which you can complete. Your own national site may allow you to comment in other ways

The component elements of the ISO KM standard

The ISO KM standard contains the following ten elements, in accordance with the ISO Management systems standard structure. All of these ten elements need to be included in any ISO management systems standard.

Section 1; Scope. A very short section which should not be contentious.

Section 2; Normative reference. This describes the reference standard. You do not need to comment on this.

Section 3; Terms and Definitions. Many of the definitions in this section are standard ISO definitions, and cannot be altered. Where we have added new definitions, we have had to follow specific rules; it has to be a single sentence, and it has to be a definition and not a description. You will see that many definitions are illustrated by "Notes to Entry" which give a bit of an explanation. Also note that we have not defined terms which do not appear in the document. "Tacit" and "Explicit" are not defined, for example, as these don't appear in the document text.

Section 4; Context of the organisation. This is the section where we most need your comments, as this is where we talk about how the KM framework itself meets the organisational context. This section contains subsections on;

- Understanding the organisation and its context, as it applies to the KM management system (KM Framework);
- Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties (stakeholders);
- Determining the scope of the KM framework;
- The KM framework itself, including the ways it addresses the knowledge lifecycle, the various transformations knowledge goes through, the various enablers, and the issue of KM culture.

In each case we make the point that the KM framework needs to be appropriate to the organisational context; be it a 10-person organisation or a multinational giant.

Section 5 - Leadership. This section contains a lot of fixed text, and your opportunities to make changes will be limited. The section covers Governance elements such as leadership and commitment, policy, and organisational KM roles and accountabilities.

Section 6 - Planning. This section also contains a lot of fixed text, and covers the planning needed to implement the KM system, the setting of Knowledge objectives and planning to achieve them.

Section 7 - Support. This section covers the support that needs to be in place to sustain the KM framework, including Resources, Competence, Awareness, Communication and Documented Information (i.e. documented information about the KM Framework itself).

Section 8 - Operational planning and control. This section is almost 100% fixed text.

Section 9 - Performance evaluation. This section covers the ways in which

the KM Framework, and use of the Framework, is monitored and measured, audited, and reviewed by management. This section also follows the ISO template, as they believe these issues are common to all management systems; not just KM.

Section 10 - Improvement This section covers the issues of non-conformance, corrective action and continuous improvement and, like section 9, follows the ISO template closely.

The standard also has an introduction covering the principles of KM, and several appendices covering issues such as the Knowledge spectrum, boundaries between knowledge management and adjacent disciplines, and Knowledge Management Culture. These sections are explanatory, and will not be considered during certification.

Core to the whole standard is the context of a Management System, or what we call a Management Framework for KM. Contact Knoco for advice designing, building and completing your KM Framework.

What happens after you have commented?

The different sites have different deadlines for comment. BSI invites public comments until 16 January, while AFNOR invites comments until 19th December (so be quick! Allez vite!). After the deadline, the different national bodies collate and review all the comments they have received from the public, and from their own members. These are then passed on to the international committee for review. Any editorial comments (spelling errors, punctuation errors or deviation from the ISO structure) are likely to be accepted, while all technical content errors will be discussed and, where appropriate, incorporated into a final version of the standard.

The timescale for this further stage is unknown. We may complete the standard within 2018, or it may (as the diagram below from the French AFNOR site suggests) be 2019 before all discussion is complete and the new standard is published.

Norme **En conception**	Norme **Enquête publique**	Norme **Publiée**	Norme **En réexamen**
Inscrite le : 24/11/2015		**Prévue le :** 05/06/2019	

Publication process as shown on the AFNOR site
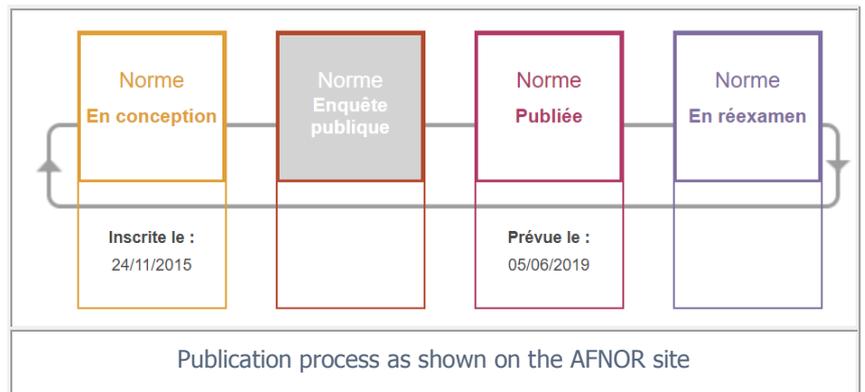
Subscribe to the Knoco newslettter (if you have not already done so) to receive further updates on the development of the ISO KM standard.

How will the ISO standard be used?

The ISO KM standard can be used internally within any organisation as an independent document against which to check or audit their own KM system. It may suggest things to think of which you had not previously considered, and is an excellent comprehensive cross-check for you. You may decide, on reflection and discussion, that some elements of the standard are not relevant for your own context, but at least you will have had that discussion.

Like any other ISO standard, it is likely that you could choose to be certified against the standard. You might choose to do this for a number of reasons:

- To convince your management that your internal KM framework is of international standard. Many organisations aim to gain a MAKE award as a demonstration of KM success, but MAKE is a measure of reputation (the A is MAKE stands for "admired") rather than of a complete KM framework;
- To convince your clients that you have a credible KM framework. Some government bodies and some of the large multinationals require their subcontractors to be competent, and KM certification would demonstrate this.
- To convince other stakeholders that you have a credible KM framework. The government of the UAE, for example, aspires that every department is competent in KM. Certification to the ISO standard is a way of demonstrating this.

ISO Certification is a seal of approval from a 3rd party body that a

company runs to one of the internationally recognised ISO management systems. Certification against the standard will be provided by one of the ISO-accredited certification agencies, who will provide an audit service for you. Contact your local standards organisation to find a list of such agencies.

How can you get ready for the ISO standard?

The best way to get ready for the ISO KM standard is to make sure your internal KM Framework is complete, robust, and fully documented, and that you have a KM policy which defines the purpose which KM will fulfil for the various stakeholder groupings.

Knoco can help with this. Our KM Framework and KM Policy offerings are fully aligned with the ISO KM standard (we were involved in the drafting of the standard), and we can help you get ready for the standard, and will identify actions that, in your best view, you need to complete before asking for accreditation. We cannot accredit you, not can we guarantee that you will become accredited (that relies on the auditor) but we can help you get in good shape.

News from Knoco

Some updates from across the Knoco family are listed here.

Welcome to Knoco Mexico

Welcome to Jorge Blanco, Knoco's newest Affiliate, working out of Mexico, Colombia, and other countries in Spanish-speaking South America. Jorge, and his company Glumin, has a long history providing IT and KM services to the region, and has now extended his offering to include the Knoco services as well. Welcome to Jorge and his team.

Jorge Blanco

A 3 day KM Masterclass was successfully run in Jakarta by Knoco Indonesia from 27-29 November 2017. It was attended by 25 participants from 11 companies. All participants gave very positive feedback. They now know very well on how to structurally and systematically develop KM using Knoco's KM framework. At the end of the class, we asked them to make a KM plan. This plan will be reviewed by us with no consulting charge within 6 months timeframe."

Indonesia Masterclass