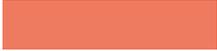


# Knowledge Management

Share knowledge and speed up your service desk



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# Introduction

Is your service desk dealing with a lot of simple, recurring calls? Do your employees tend to forward too many calls to your second line of support? And are you wondering how to resolve calls more effectively? Knowledge management is the answer.

This e-book will help you discover what knowledge management can do for your organization. Read what knowledge management according to Knowledge-Centred Service (KCS) means, and why you should invest in knowledge management.

The e-book also contains an example that lets you calculate how much time your organization could be saving.

Happy reading!

Judith Lumbela and Joost Wapenaar,  
Consultants and knowledge  
management experts with TOPdesk





## There has to be a smarter way

It's Friday morning; John receives a call saying that the printer has a paper jam. It's happened a couple of times already this week – but who fixed it those times? And how did they do it? After spending half an hour asking around and going through old calls, John finds the answer and emails the customer. Then, John sits back and wonders: “There has to be a smarter way to do this, right?”

# 1. What is knowledge management?

What is knowledge? It's all of the knowledge that exists within your service desk, which extends far beyond manuals and documentation. It also includes answers to frequently asked questions or step-by-step plans. Knowledge is often not recorded anywhere and exists only in employees' heads. And when someone leaves the company, they take all of that knowledge with them, forever.

So, what's a better way of managing that knowledge? By recording it in a knowledge base and sharing it with your co-workers. Is any

information missing? Simply add any knowledge you've gained while processing the customer's call. Just don't do this on a Friday afternoon when you know you won't be getting around to it anyway.

Does that mean you're solely responsible for keeping all that knowledge up to date? No, of course not! All your co-workers have knowledge, are specialized, and responsible for the knowledge base. Entrust the team with managing this wealth of knowledge; let everyone share and develop their knowledge.



## 2. What is KCS?

At many service desks, knowledge management never really takes off. Why is that? It's often a case of the knowledge manager not having enough time. They'll block out their Friday afternoons for writing and updating manuals, but end up spending those afternoons catching up on the growing list of calls.

KCS\*, Knowledge Centered Service, allows you to change your service desk's priorities. Recording knowledge becomes your new objective, instead of processing calls. Why? With a properly detailed answer, you'll resolve more than just one call – you'll help all customers with the same question in the future.

\* Knowledge Centered Service is a methodology developed by the Consortium for Service Innovation. Everything contained in this e-book is an interpretation of that methodology and in no way pretends to be the right interpretation thereof. All rights and leading interpretations belong and will continue to belong to the Consortium for Service Innovation and can be found on [www.serviceinnovation.org](http://www.serviceinnovation.org).



“We receive many of the same calls. Thanks to KCS, we are able to solve those kinds of calls with just a few clicks of a button.”

Ron van der Steen,  
*All-round network and  
system manager, Woonbron.*

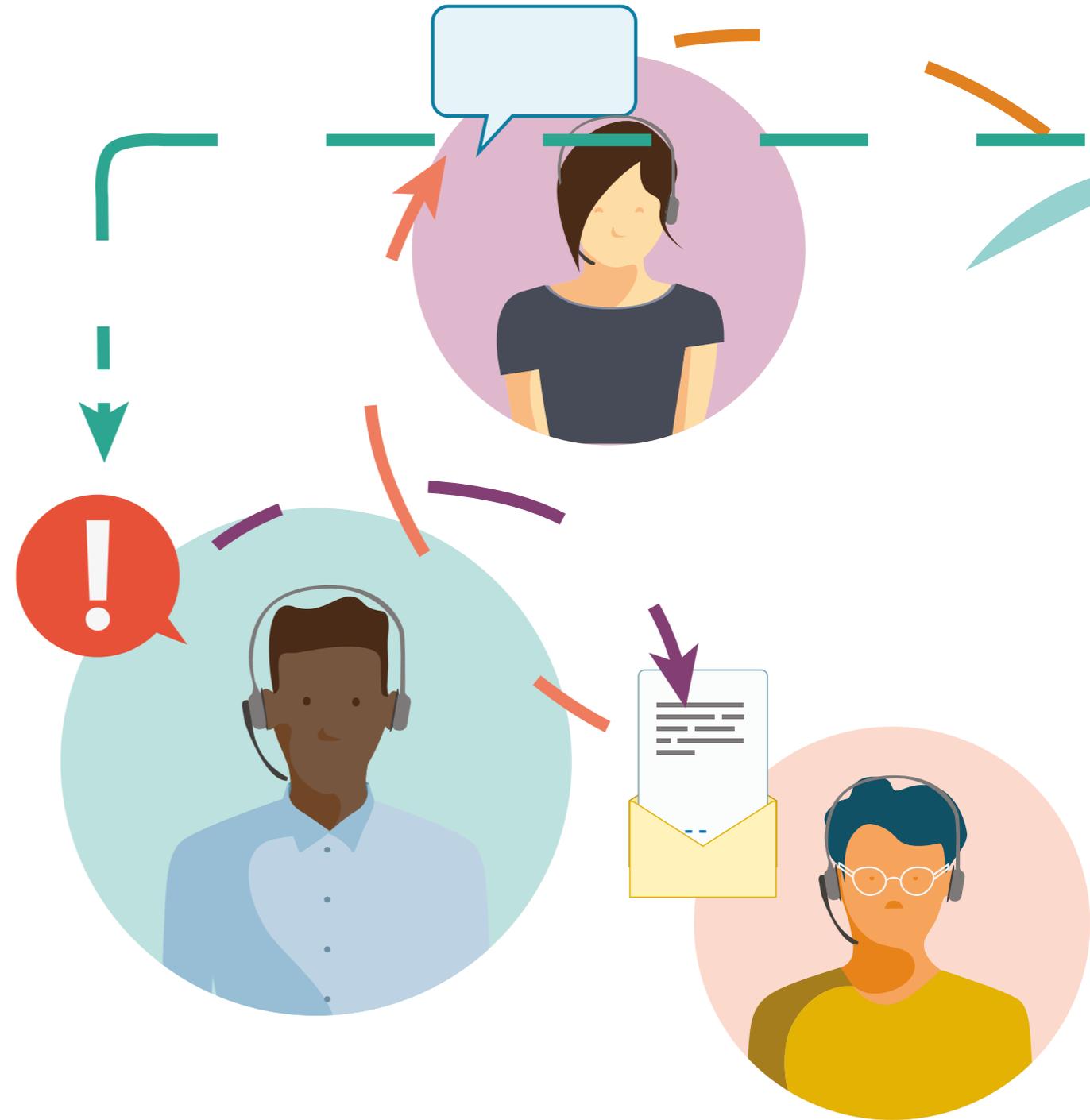


KCS consists of two elements:  
Solve and Evolve.

## Solve

'Solve' is about recording or improving knowledge using the incoming calls. Here's how it works.

You receive a call. First, you check the knowledge base to see whether the question has been answered before. If not, record the question and your answer in the knowledge base and resolve the call. Does the knowledge base already contain an answer? Check whether that answer is correct. If so, reuse it. If not, edit the answer so that your co-workers will be able to use it right away next time around.





## Evolve

When you've just started KCS, you'll have your hands full dealing with the Solve stage. But once you've been using it for a while, you can start working on the so-called Evolve stage. The Evolve stage involves everything you do to improve your knowledge management. This is the stage in which you analyse your knowledge base: which answers are consulted frequently, and how can you answer the questions before they're asked? The Solve stage also involves introducing KCS within other teams.

## Classic knowledge management

VS

## KCS

### Round

Recording knowledge after the fact

1

Recording knowledge while processing calls

Resolving a single call

2

Resolving multiple calls at once

A single person is responsible

3

Everyone is responsible

Offer-oriented:  
What do we want to explain?

4

Question-oriented:  
which kinds of questions are we getting?

Winner:

**KCS**

### 3. Why invest in knowledge management?

Now you now know what knowledge management and KCS are.

The next question is: why should you invest in these things? Here are 4 reasons:

1

#### **You spend less time on recurring calls**

A complete knowledge base lets you process recurring calls much faster. In our experience, implementing this methodology reduces the time spent resolving a call by 20%. And by making that knowledge available to your customers, you can even prevent calls in the first place by enabling customers to solve their own problems.

2

#### **You increase your customer satisfaction levels**

Your customers want the right answer quickly. A knowledge base enables you to process more questions in your first line of support. It also guarantees the quality of your answers, because the knowledge used is based on the collective knowledge of your entire service desk. One organization where we introduced knowledge management saw their customer satisfaction go up from a 5 to an 8 out of 10.

3

### **New employees are up and running much faster**

Familiarizing a new co-worker often takes a lot of time, especially at a skilled service desk. But what if your new co-worker had a complete knowledge base at their disposal? They would be able to get started right away and begin processing simple questions.

4

### **The work at the service desk becomes more fun**

Solving things yourself provides a greater sense of satisfaction than forwarding questions to other people. Working on complex issues makes for more of a challenge than repetitive work. In short, KCS will make the work at your service desk more fun. And as for why that's important, happy people provide better service! On top of that, it will decrease staff turnover.



“Within a few months, we have created 600 knowledge articles. These articles are frequently used to provide our customers with solutions.”

Nico Schoenmaker,  
*Automation Coordinator, Pluryn*



## 4. Calculate how much time you would be saving

Knowledge management helps you save time. But how much time, exactly?

In our experience, knowledge management leads to an average decrease of 20% in the time it takes to resolve recurring calls within 2 to 4 months. Around half of that time saved is used for supplementing and updating your knowledge base. This means that the net reduction in the time it takes to resolve recurring calls is 10%.

To calculate your potential time savings, look up these 2 figures:

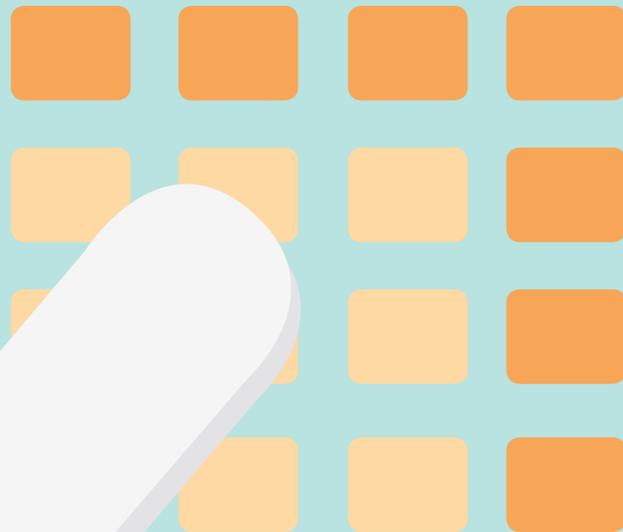
### **How many hours a week do your teams spend on processing calls?**

Estimate this figure.  
Say you have 4 people working fulltime in your front office, and 4 people spend 2 days a week on calls in the back office. You would then end up with the following calculation:  $[4 \times 40] + [4 \times 16] = 224$  hours a week.

### **What percentage of calls could be resolved faster?**

This applies to questions, requests, and malfunctions. Usually, around 60 to 90% of all calls could be resolved faster. Of course some calls, such as complaints, can't be resolved more efficiently. You will probably be able to see how many calls, requests, and malfunctions could be resolved faster by consulting your service management tool. If the tool you use doesn't let you create such reports, then simply go through a list of recent calls and estimate the percentage.

[...] hours a week spent on calls x [...] % of calls could be resolved faster using knowledge management x 0.10 (net time savings) = hours of time saved each week



### Calculation example

Say your teams spend a joint total of 224 hours a week on processing calls, and 75% of your calls could be resolved faster if you implemented knowledge management. That would result in the following calculation:

$224 \text{ hours a week} \times 0.75 \text{ of calls} \times 0.10 = 16.8 \text{ hours of time saved each week.}$

This means that one of your service desk employees could spend 2 days each week doing other things!

## 5. Implementing KCS

Now you know the advantages of KCS it's time to get started. The following pages feature a step-by-step approach to implementing KCS.



# Conditions

Can't wait to implement KCS at your organization?

Keep the following things in mind:

- Does your manager agree to you spending time on KCS?  
The start-up phase will give your team less time for incoming calls.
- Do you want to give all your team members permission to create and adjust knowledge items?

Did you answer 'yes' to all these questions?

Then let's get started!

# Step 1: Set your goals

Before you embark on your KCS journey, let's start with setting some project goals.

How do you find out what management and your team members want?

Write your goals on post-its together with your project group. Then prioritize these goals.

## **In practice we come across these 6 goals:**

- Reduce the call duration
- Do the same work with fewer people
- Improve the quality of service
- Improve the customers' self-sufficiency
- Shorten the training period for new staff
- Make it easier to transfer work

## Step 2: Determine the benchmark

Are your goals all set? Then it's time to determine the benchmark. The benchmark, or zero measurement, lets you discover how you're currently doing and where there's room for improvement.

**1**

Make sure your benchmark is based on a good representation of the types of calls you get. For instance, try using all calls you received last year.

**2**

See which calls you can solve more quickly with knowledge management, and break this down for each operator group or team.

## Baseline per goal

### **Self-sufficiency:**

Check how many calls are logged via your self-service portal. After you've published your knowledge base in your self-service portal, it could happen that the number of calls rises before it drops. Have you created knowledge items yet? See how often they've been viewed. Keep in mind that a user isn't necessarily helped after they've read a knowledge item.

### **Transfer fewer calls from one team to the other:**

Look at the number of calls that were transferred once, or more, from one team to another team, for instance from 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> line support.

### **Fewer calls:**

Look at the average number of calls per month for each operator team.

### **Shorten average duration:**

Look at the average duration per call for each operator group. Keep in mind that the duration will increase after the initial introduction of KCS, because you'll need time to create knowledge items for each call you receive.

### **Improved customer experience:**

If you want to measure your customer satisfaction periodically, take a look at the score of your latest customer satisfaction measurement. Haven't measured your

customer satisfaction yet?

Then we advise you to perform another baseline measurement.

Do your users already rate how well you've handled their calls? Check your average score on processing calls.

# Step 3: Design your KCS process

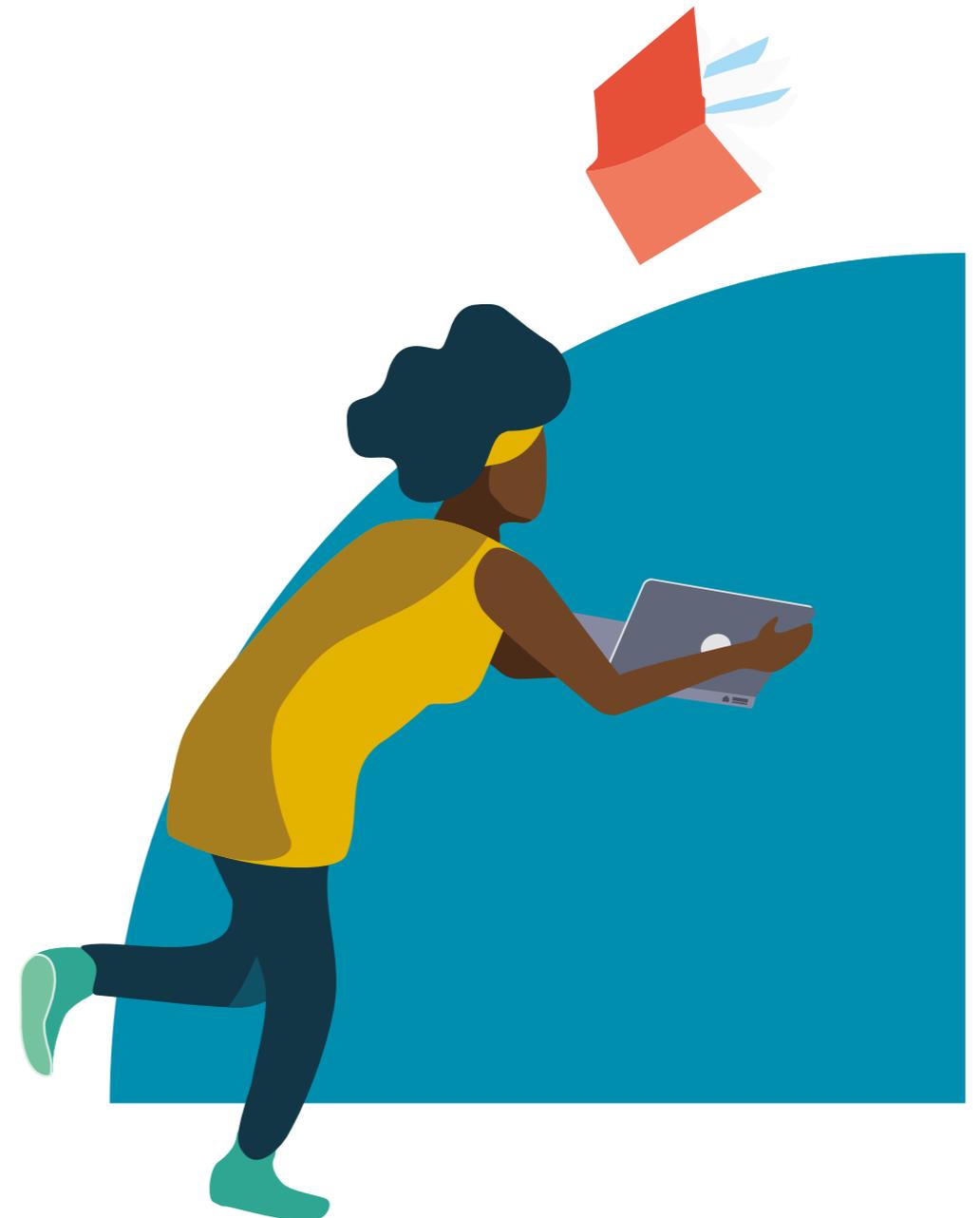
## Map your current call process

Which steps do you follow when a call comes in? And do you already have a knowledge management process in place? If so, how does this process work? Do you ask colleagues questions or look for answers in manuals?

In this step, it's important that you're realistic. Define how you currently work, and not how you'd like to work.

## Take a look at your KCS process and adjust it where necessary

There is a standard process for KCS, but that doesn't mean that you have to follow that process to the letter. Take a look at the KCS process and think about whether you want to make any adjustments. For instance: are there elements from your current notification process that you'd like to incorporate?



## Step 4: Make a template for knowledge items

Are you wondering what exactly you should write in a knowledge item? It's likely that your employees don't know either. Make it easy for your employees and create a template for knowledge items.

Another advantage? Standardized forms. The advantages of a template? Your employees create knowledge items more quickly, and you can be sure that they register all the necessary information.

How to create a knowledge item template? The next two pages feature a template, and a filled in knowledge item as an example. When writing a knowledge item, make sure that you always use your customer's language. For example, write 'call' instead of 'incident'.

<b>Template</b>	
Name	This is the title of the knowledge item. Use a keyword to start the title, followed by a colon. Behind the colon you briefly indicate what the knowledge item is about.
Description	Start the description with a heading: <b>'question'</b> or <b>'problem'</b> . With a question, the user would like an answer to a question. In the case of a problem, the user looks for a solution for a situation.
Content	The content starts with a heading: <b>'answer'</b> or <b>'solution'</b> . You answer the question or give the solution to the problem. When solving the problem, you should also mention the <b>'cause'</b> if possible. Start with a bold headline and describe the cause.
Explanation for operators	Use this field to write information that the end user doesn't need to see. For example: a note for fellow operators.
Keywords	In this field you place keywords and synonyms for previously used words. This way you can easily find the knowledge item.

## Filled out template

Name	Printer: The printer doesn't have enough paper.
Description	<b>Question:</b> The printer indicates that it doesn't have enough paper. What should I do?
Content	<b>Answer:</b> Normally, a red or flashing light indicates that the printer is running low on paper. Remove the paper tray and insert new paper. You will find new paper in the cupboard next to the printer.
Explanation for operators	Make sure that the paper supply is topped up by facility management.
Keywords	Printer, printer does not work, do not print, paper, run out of paper, facility management

# Step 5. Set up your service management tool to support the KCS process

Every tool is different, but there are three important steps to take with every tool:

- 1** Make the knowledge system accessible to the entire team.  
Why? Every service desk employee has knowledge that is valuable to share. By sharing the knowledge in a knowledge item, you help your colleagues process calls faster and better.
- 2** Determine how users can leave a response to knowledge items.  
For instance: a rating with stars or thumbs, or enable them to leave comments.
- 3** Set up reports. The most important report: how many calls do you solve per month with a knowledge item? Do you have other important goals? Make reports of these too.

## Step 6: Train your team

You have a knowledge item template and you've set up your service management tool to support the KCS process. Great! Now it's time to get started with your team. Take a couple of hours or a day to prepare your team for the new way of working. How? With a training session. Here's how it works.

### What do you need?

- Flip chart
- Pens
- Post-its
- Computer or laptop for each team member



1

## Pinpoint obstacles and frustrations regarding knowledge management

Take three hours, take a flip chart and ask the team what problems they run into. Have them identify obstacles and frustrations. Chances are you'll hear the following: "nothing is ever up-to-date", and "the knowledge is scattered across the organization".

This assignment reveals what you and your team can improve. Nice work. This will make your team enthusiastic about a new way of working.



2

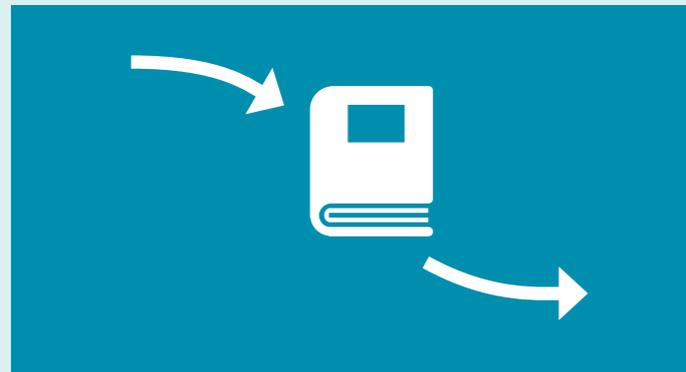
## Explain the concept of KCS

What is KCS, and where does KCS come from? Talk about what problems it solves and give practical examples from other organizations. Do you need help explaining KCS? Read our blog post about KCS or watch our ['What is KCS?' video](#).

3

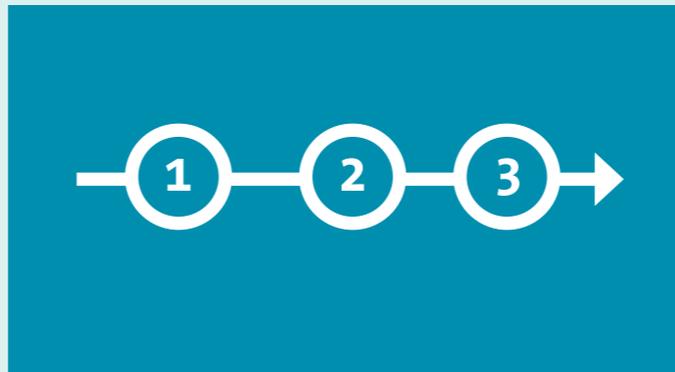
## Explain and get to work

In chapter 4 you determined your KCS process. Now it's time to start working with this KCS process.



### Step 1: Explain the method

Tell the team how you will work according to KCS. Show the process flow to make the KCS process even more transparent for the team.



### Step 2: Give a work instruction

A message comes in: what now? Go through the process step by step in your tool and your employees know what to do.



### Step 3: Getting started in the tool

Let the team get started in the tool. If your employees walk through the process themselves, they'll remember it better. How do you proceed?

1. Let everyone solve a few calls that often occur in your organization.
2. Have everyone pass on the call to their neighbor. If all goes well, the neighbor should be able to deal with the report more quickly, because the previous person has already recorded the necessary knowledge in the knowledge item.

## 4

## Set personal goals

The team can now get started in the tool with KCS. Let everyone in the team set a goal for themselves. For example: “I want to solve x percent of the calls with a knowledge item”, “I want my knowledge item to be viewed x times”, or “I want my knowledge item to be used x times to solve a call”. Everyone can get to work with their self-chosen goal.

You set up goals as an extra motivation. After about a month you check whether the personal goals have been achieved.



### Let's get started!

Is the training finished? Then the team can get to work! Starting with knowledge management is time-consuming. That's why it's not always realistic to start working on knowledge management immediately, 5 days a week. Start with 2 days a week. Is this going well? Then you can extend the number of days.

# Coach the team and monitor progress

Your team now works with KCS. How do you ensure that your team continues to work this way? Coach the team and monitor progress. In the beginning, for example, plan weekly KCS meetings. Once your teams are on the right track, switch to a meeting once a month.

## Analyse the knowledge base

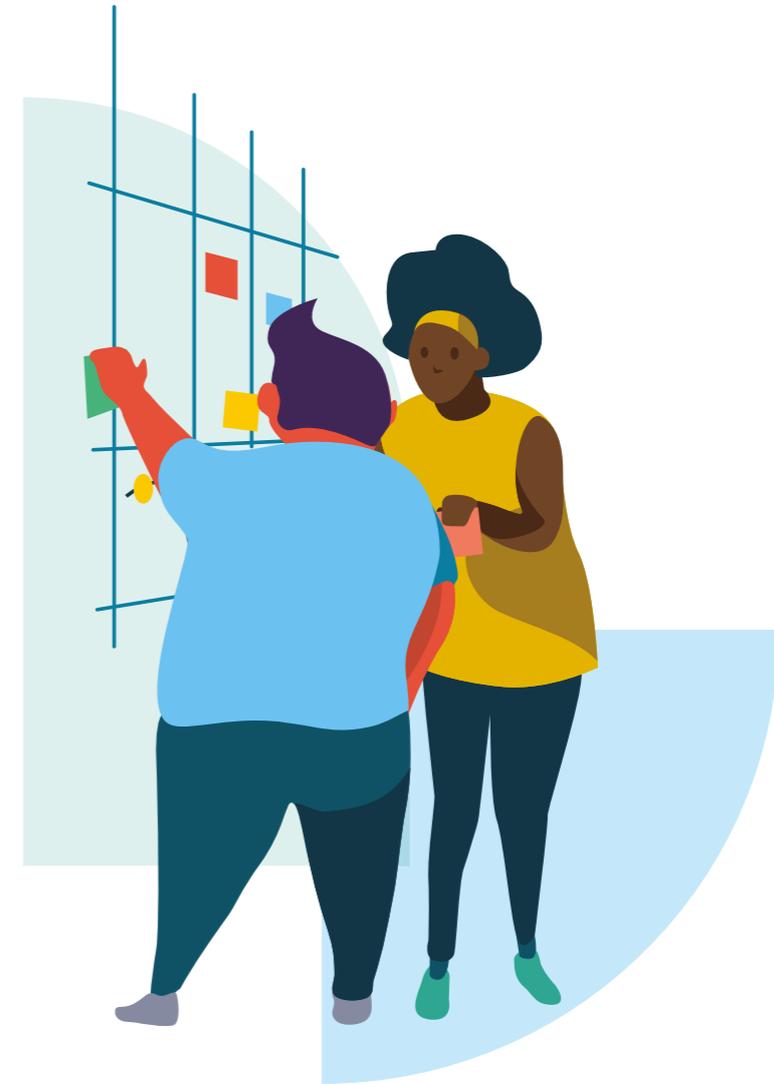
How do you monitor whether your knowledge base is used sufficiently and correctly? Together with the team, regularly look at the following:

- What percentage of calls are solved with a knowledge item? Check this for the entire team and per team member.
- Is the knowledge item template filled in correctly?
- Which knowledge items are most frequently used? And how often? These points are twofold. It lets you discover whether the team actually consults knowledge items. And it motivates your team members when they notice that their knowledge items are being used.
- Which team member has the most-consulted knowledge items? Check for each per team member whether their knowledge items are consulted frequently. It can happen that someone creates a lot of knowledge items that a lot of people look at. What can other team members learn from this person?
- Do you have a self-service portal? Check how often your knowledge items are viewed in the portal.

## Evaluate the process

How do you coach the team? Provide a flip chart or a stack of post-its and go through the following questions with your team:

- Do you like the new way of working?
- What are you running into? We often hear the following: “I can’t find the time to write knowledge items”, “I find it difficult to write a knowledge item”, “I’m afraid I don’t use the right words when I’m writing a knowledge item”.
- Have we achieved the common goals we set out in advance? See how things stand for each goal and compare it with the baseline measurement or the previous month.
- Have you achieved your personal goals?



# Want more inspiration?

Knowledge management helps you to support your customers even better. But there are more ways to do so! If you want to know how, subscribe to TOPdesk's blog, where we put our 25 years of service management experience into practical tips and best practices.

Go to [blog.topdesk.com](https://blog.topdesk.com)

If you have any questions or suggestions after reading this e-book, let us know!

Send an email to [j.lumbela@topdesk.com](mailto:j.lumbela@topdesk.com) or [j.wapenaar@topdesk.com](mailto:j.wapenaar@topdesk.com).

We'd love to hear from you!

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Joost Wapenaar

