

Research Working Group

Knowledge Transfer in a Digital World: Using New Media Across Generations and Geographies



It's not only *what* you know. It's also about connecting to accelerate the flow of knowledge.

An organization is defined by the knowledge its employees possess. An organization is defined by the knowledge its employees possess and how well they can tap the experience and insights of others. Yet, as the large baby boomer generation of executives and experts approaches retirement, businesses face an enormous loss of mission-critical experience and know-how, from technical to relational to leadership expertise.

Capturing and transferring boomers' firm-specific knowledge is not as easy as it sounds. A workforce of younger employees learns and communicates differently from its predecessors – a direct result of the younger generation's lifelong relationship with digital technology and social media. These employees want just-in-time knowledge that is quick, concise, and to-the-point, using collaborative Web 2.0 capabilities – not just written materials, passive databases, or face-to-face meetings. This challenge is complicated by companies creating global workforces that require personnel to work across traditional boundaries and continents, but with limited mobility due to the current recession.

Every company and institution is struggling with how to approach this “crew change.” Organizations that can leverage the hard-earned experience of boomers with the digital expertise of younger employees will not only outperform the competition, but also change the playing field.

So, what is the best way for businesses to achieve this goal?

They need a new knowledge transfer paradigm – one that focuses on employees learning mission-critical knowledge and that adapts current systems, tools, and methods to the younger generation and global workforce.

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Think Twitter Doesn't Matter? Think again.

The Research Working Group on Knowledge Transfer in a Digital World will help organizations develop ways to capture critical knowledge and ensure that employees of different generations can capitalize on it. Participants will evaluate which methods work best to:

- Connect and share knowledge across generations, geographies, and organizational boundaries
- Transfer local knowledge and expertise globally
- Retain knowledgeable employees through phased retirement programs and returning retiree assignments

Potential discussion topics include:

- Grasping the millennial generation's unique qualities
- Using wikis, blogs, and other connection methods commonly used by millennials to effectively transfer knowledge in your company
- Integrating the application of social media for knowledge transfer and working “across years and miles” – i.e. across generations and geographies
- Addressing the difficulties when shifting from private and controlled knowledge sharing environments to more open and transparent ones
- Developing reverse or cross-mentoring



Research Working Group Leaders

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Kent Greenes is founder and president of his own consulting firm and a globally recognized thought leader in the field of knowledge management. Previously, he served as head of knowledge management at BP, where he won the company its first Most Admired Knowledge Enterprise Award in 1998 – an award it has received ever since. He is on the faculty at California State University at Northridge and is executive in residence at George Washington University. Greenes is also program director for The Conference Board Learning & Knowledge Management Council.

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Diane Piktialis is program director at The Conference Board for issues related to the aging and multigenerational workforce. She has 35 years of experience in program and product development and product management in the private and public sectors, most recently as work-life product director and an expert in the multigenerational workforce at Ceridian Corp. Piktialis has published widely, including such journals as *Business and Health*, *Quality Review Bulletin*, *Journal of Aging and Social Policy*, *Benefits and Compensation Solutions*, *Compensation and Benefits Review*, and *HR Executive*.

Greenes and Piktialis conducted the first RWG on this topic – the Research Working Group on Multigenerational Knowledge Transfer – whose work was reported in The Conference Board research report *Bridging the Gaps*. This new research working group goes beyond that foundation to focus on the *application* of social media to enhance knowledge transfer across generations and geographies.

Who Should Join?

Executives responsible for knowledge and information management, as well as learning and organizational development who have a knowledge retention, knowledge transfer, or generational learning initiative underway or are about to start one. Companies active in several regions are invited to give this project global scope. Industries that will benefit from this RWG include professional service firms, aerospace, energy/power/utilities, manufacturing, health care, and government agencies.

To Join or for more information:

www.conference-board.org/wgknowledge2 or call +1 212 330 0491.

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Program Information

The **Research Working Group on Knowledge Transfer in a Digital World** is the first RWG at The Conference Board to use an entirely virtual format. It was designed in response to member companies' current travel and budget constraints. All work, communication, and meetings will take place via social media – conference calls, web exchanges and webcasts, and other online channels that will allow participants to “walk the talk.”

Deliverables

- This group will hold one or two virtual meetings (ranging from one to three hours each) every month, using a proven web meeting application to facilitate interaction between members. One monthly session will focus on building the group's knowledge base.
- During a second monthly session, the program directors will meet with each member separately (or in small groups as appropriate) to advise and support the application of knowledge transfer practices and techniques in members' specific business environments.
- Each web session will be recorded and summarized.
- Participants will receive a final report that contains RWG findings on applying social media to knowledge management, which organizations can implement.

Benefits

- In this highly interactive RWG, members can explore, test, and apply knowledge transfer practices and tools to enhance their organization's effectiveness.
- Members will assess their knowledge retention, knowledge transfer, or generational learning program(s) and learn from peers.

Launch date: Winter 2010

Participation fee: \$9,500

This fee covers participation by two members of an organization and includes administration, research, and technology costs.

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