

10 Steps to Build an Internal Knowledge Sharing Culture

<https://www.lumapps.com/employee-experience/internal-knowledge-sharing-culture/>

Milton Herman
Content Marketing Manager - LumApps

6 minute read

The culture in the workplace is changing. It is becoming an environment that encourages employees to work together instead of pitting them against each other. That kind of rivalry does not produce the best results for your company. There is a better way and that is to introduce a kinder, gentler culture at work based on sharing ideas.

1. What is Knowledge Sharing Culture?
2. Why Create a Knowledge Sharing Culture?
3. How to Create a Knowledge Sharing Culture

What is Knowledge Sharing Culture?

All organizations have cultures. These are the rules and values that set the standards for their members or employees (in the case of an employer) and guide their behavior. **In a knowledge sharing culture, a collaboration between employees is routine.** The work environment is a positive one, and teammates are expected to help each other out. Employees are encouraged to get to know one another by working collaboratively and by having opportunities to interact casually during the workday. **In this environment where open communication is encouraged, knowledge is shared horizontally between team members, as well as vertically between executives and workers.** Employees are encouraged to provide feedback to the CEO and to ask questions about decisions the executives are making. Knowledge also flows between departments within the company and other industry players. Modern technology advancements makes it easy for people to collaborate and exchange information.

Why Create a Knowledge Sharing Culture?

As you probably noted in the knowledge sharing culture definition above, **one of the main advantages of adopting this approach is that employees work**

collaboratively. They see each other as colleagues, not competition. That type of work environment encourages employee engagement, develops group knowledge and helps to build a strong corporate culture. Some other advantages are:

1. **Employees Feel Psychologically Safe at Work** – According to Amy Hudson from Harvard Business School, a psychologically safe workplace is one where “people are not full of fear, and not trying to cover their tracks to avoid being embarrassed or pushed.” Once the employees feel confident they won’t face any negative consequences, they can also be open about what they don’t know. This allows their manager and coworkers to fill in gaps in their knowledge.
2. **Discourages Employees from Hoarding Knowledge** – If a key employee leaves, their knowledge base walks out the door with them. However, if there is a stable knowledge sharing culture, all the information will be already distributed through different channels in the company, allowing current and future employees to benefit from it, even after the departure of the individual.
3. **Overall Productivity Increases** – The main advantage of a knowledge sharing culture is that it makes the workplace more productive. Employees are working and sharing what they know freely. They are less likely to encounter delays in their work because they are thinking creatively. This can lead to new solutions to old challenges or new products, which keeps your company running successfully. It’s simply a way to work smarter.

How to Create a Knowledge Sharing Culture

Now that you know the advantages of creating a knowledge sharing culture, how do you create one?

Here are 10 steps to get you there.

1. Establish an Open Door Policy

A company won’t have open communication without an atmosphere of trust. Employees should be able to feel as though they can approach anyone in the company to ask questions or find out information at any time. The employee should feel free to do this without being judged for asking questions or saying that they don’t know something. This is an opportunity for someone else in the company to share their knowledge and educate, not humiliate, the person asking the question. When the questioner is offered support and understanding, they are more likely to share their knowledge when given the opportunity.

2. Install a Knowledge Sharing Platform

Do you and your employees lose a lot of time trying to find valuable information? Is it frustrating trying to find contacts or keep your electronic calendar in order? Do you have difficulty sharing content with your team?

Then you need to reconsider the knowledge management system you are using. The right program will be able to streamline the types of functions you use every day. **A cloud-based knowledge sharing platform improves the culture of sharing** and keeps your files, folders, e-mails and your calendar organized. It also makes collaborating with your team members about content and other projects easy whether they are working in the same office or remotely.

3. Actively Encourage Knowledge Sharing

The days when employees were expected to sit at their desks with their heads down all day long are finished. **Now the workplace runs on collaboration.** Not everyone feels equally comfortable with being open with their knowledge so you will need to have them start from where they are right now.

Make time for employees to collaborate face-to-face. Some employees enjoy jumping right in to share ideas so you'll want to encourage them to do this. Share content regularly with your employees. It's important to share content from the top-down so that workers can see that management is embracing the idea of collaboration and creating a knowledge sharing culture.

4. Reward Employees Who are Sharing Knowledge

Since you know that working in a culture of knowledge sharing does not come naturally to everyone, give your employees an incentive to speak up about what they know, or share relevant content they find online with their team.

Offer a reward to everyone who participates during a certain period. If you choose this option, then all participants would get a small gift, such as a gift card to a coffee shop. Another option is to put the names of all participants into a prize draw after a set time. The contest could last longer in this case (a month or two) to give employees more time to share (and more chances to win). To make this option fun, offer some work "swag" such as mugs, backpacks, and T-shirts, along with one bigger prize (a television or a barbecue).

5. Let Them Know Mistakes are OK

To create an environment where employees are sharing ideas freely and collaborating without holding back, they need to understand that making mistakes is normal. It is the way that people learn.

If the CEO and managers only spend time discussing the company practices that worked well, then employees may get the impression that there is no tolerance for someone making a mistake or falling short of the mark when reaching for a goal. Instead, share a variety of stories that include triumphs and things that did not work out

as anticipated. Focus on what the team and the company can learn from mistakes moving forward.

6. Give Each New Employee a Mentor

Attracting top talent is a priority for your business, but you can lose valuable time when the new hire is too nervous to share their knowledge and skills right away. You want them to feel comfortable and valuable to your organization from the start.

The mentor is someone the new hire can go to at any time with questions or concerns. This person is not your new employee's immediate supervisor, which takes away any reticence about being judged for being themselves and trying to fit in. **The mentor will set good examples and encourage your new hire to speak their mind and don't hesitate to start contributing right away.**

7. Allow New Hires to Shadow Employees

Find someone who is adept at collaborating with their fellow team members and sharing knowledge. Arrange for your new hire to shadow them for a couple of days.

When your new hires see how your more experienced employees handle sharing their opinions with other workers, he or she will feel more comfortable about adopting a similar work style. The goal is to encourage your new employees to share what they think while behaving respectfully with coworkers, suppliers, other company representatives, etc. Being vocal about one's opinions should never lead to trying to drown out someone else's ideas.

8. Ask Employees for Their Input Directly

The best way to find out what your employees or colleagues are thinking is to ask them directly. It would be a mistake to assume that they don't have any valuable knowledge or ideas simply because they are new to the company or don't have ten years of experience in the field. It's important to always have a couple of opinions and collect feedback from peers. Asking may feel uncomfortable at first, but as time goes asking or giving feedback will soon turn into a mutually beneficial collaborative network.

9. Schedule Some Social Events for Employees

All work and no play is not healthy for anyone. Schedule some activities that your employees can participate in after work or on the occasional weekend. It's a good way for your workers to spend time together under more casual circumstances. In this environment, they can get to know each other — especially if there is a rule that no one can talk about their work projects for the first hour!

When choosing activities, make sure it is something that everyone can enjoy. Avoid activities that require a lot of skill or athletic ability. A picnic in the park may be a better choice than trying to arrange a company football game.

10. Be Patient with your Employees

If you are creating a knowledge sharing culture as a new policy for your business, it will take time for your employees to adjust. They may have worked in other environments, where being aggressive and treating fellow employees as the competition was valued over working together toward common goals. People who have been used to a much more different way of working will need to adjust their thinking around how colleagues are “supposed” to interact with each other. The new method of sharing information and working together certainly seems much less stressful than seeing others working for the same employer as potential threats.

You have seen the benefits of knowledge sharing culture and read some steps to help you get started. This kinder, gentler culture in your company can be very effective at helping you reach your goals.