

FIFTEEN QUESTIONS IT
WOULD BE SENSIBLE TO
ASK TO ESTABLISH IF
YOUR BUSINESS IS AT
RISK OF KNOWLEDGE
LOSS

LOST KNOWLEDGE II

PETER EDGE

1. WHAT IS THE AGE PROFILE OF YOUR WORKFORCE?

IT MIGHT SEEM OBVIOUS, BUT AGE IS A PRETTY RELIABLE INDICATOR OF EXPERIENCE AND PREDICTOR OF RETIREMENT, ONE OF YOUR MOST PREDICTABLE KNOWLEDGE LOSS EVENTS.

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2. WHAT DOES THE GAP LOOK LIKE BETWEEN THE UPPER AGE OF YOUR WORKFORCE AND THEIR EXPECTED RETIREMENT AGE?

KNOWING HOW URGENT THE POTENTIAL RISK OF KNOWLEDGE LOSS IS, AND HOW MUCH TIME YOU MIGHT HAVE TO PUT CONTROL MEASURES IN PLACE, GIVES YOU A MUCH BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE OVERALL SITUATION, AND MAKES YOUR FORECASTING SO MUCH MORE ACCURATE AND MEANINGFUL.

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3.DO YOU HAVE POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN PLACE TO ALLOW OLDER, HIGHLY SKILLED EMPLOYEES TO BE AVAILABLE TO YOU BEYOND RETIREMENT?

IF RETIREMENT SIGNALS THE FINAL CESSATION OF SERVICE, YOUR OPTIONS FOR DEALING WITH THE CORRESPONDING KNOWLEDGE LOSS ARE SEVERELY LIMITED, AND LIKELY TO BE MUCH LESS EFFECTIVE.

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4. ARE HIGHLY SKILLED/SPECIALISED
AREAS OF WORK THE PROVINCE OF
INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEES OR TEAMS?

WHEN YOU LOSE THE ONE AND ONLY
INDIVIDUAL WHO HAS THE SKILLS TO DO THE
JOB, YOU LOSE EVERYTHING. THE PERSON,
THE KNOWLEDGE, THE JOB, THE
PRODUCT. EVERYTHING. YOU WOULDN'T PUT
ALL YOUR EGGS IN ONE BASKET, WOULD YOU?

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5. WHAT AREAS OF YOUR OPERATION
WOULD THREATEN THE SURVIVAL OF
YOUR BUSINESS WERE THEY TO
CEASE?

PROPERLY UNDERSTANDING THE 'VALUE' THAT
PARTICULAR AREAS OF THE BUSINESS BRING
WILL ALLOW YOU TO ASSESS THE
'CONSEQUENCES' ASPECT OF THE RISK
ASSESSMENT EQUATION. IF IT'S A KNOCKOUT
BLOW, YOU WON'T MAKE IT BACK TO YOUR
CORNER TO RECOVER.

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6. WHAT IS YOUR 'BENCH STRENGTH'
IN THE AREAS DESCRIBED ABOVE?

IN YOUR AREAS OF GREATEST RISK, YOU
NEED TO BUILD IN RESILIENCE WELL IN
ADVANCE OF ANY CATASTROPHIC CESSATION
OF SERVICE. PICK YOUR REPLACEMENTS AND
TRAIN THEM UP TO COME OFF THE BENCH
WITH IMPACT.

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7. WHAT IS THE 'LOYALTY PROFILE' OF YOUR WORKFORCE?

UNDERSTANDING HOW LONG, AND WHY YOUR
STAFF STAY WITH YOU (OR NOT) ACROSS THE
VARIOUS ROLES AND FUNCTIONS WITHIN YOUR
BUSINESS WILL BETTER INFORM YOUR
ASSESSMENT OF 'LIKELIHOOD' AND
'CONSEQUENCE', THE KEY COMPONENTS OF
'RISK'.

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8. DOES YOUR COMPETITION DO THE SAME THINGS AS YOU DO, USING SIMILAR SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE?

IF THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION IS 'YES', THEN THE DEMAND FOR THOSE SKILLS IS GREATER, AND THE POTENTIAL MOBILITY OF YOUR WORKFORCE WITH IT. THIS GOES TO THE QUESTION OF 'LIKELIHOOD' IN THE CONTEXT OF RISK ASSESSMENT, AND INFORMS PREVENTATIVE AND RECOVERY MEASURES.

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9. HOW DOES YOUR EMPLOYEE
BENEFITS AND REMUNERATION
PACKAGE COMPARE WITH YOUR
COMPETITION?

IF YOUR WORKFORCE IS DOING SIMILAR WORK
USING SIMILAR SKILLS TO YOUR
COMPETITION, THE EQUILIBRIUM BETWEEN
STAYING OR GOING IS LIKELY TO BE
DELICATE AND WILL NEED FULL
UNDERSTANDING AND CAREFUL MANAGEMENT.

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10. DOES YOUR ORGANISATIONAL
CULTURE SIGNAL A COMMITMENT TO
KNOWLEDGE RETENTION?

FROM THE TOP DOWN, CULTURES THAT
SUPPORT AND REWARD BEHAVIOURS RELATED
TO KNOWLEDGE RETENTION NEED REGULAR
ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICES TO DO SO.
INTEGRITY, RESPECT FOR THE INDIVIDUAL,
TEAM WORK AND HONEST AND MEANINGFUL
COMMUNICATION UNDERPIN SUCH A CULTURE.

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11. WHO DO YOU RELY ON?

EVERY BUSINESS, EVERY ORGANISATION HAS THEM. THE PEOPLE WHO OIL THE WHEELS, THE 'GO TO' PERSON IN A CRISIS, WITH THE CORPORATE MEMORY AND ALL THE CONTACTS. WHAT BETTER PLACE TO START IN ASSESSING YOUR VULNERABILITY THAN WITH THEM.

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12. WHY DO PEOPLE LEAVE YOUR ORGANISATION?

IF YOU DON'T PROPERLY AND HONESTLY ANALYSE WHY PEOPLE ARE LEAVING YOU, HOW ARE YOU EVER GOING TO PREDICT OR PREVENT IT IN THE FUTURE, AND THEREFORE COPE WITH THE LOSS OF KNOWLEDGE THAT GOES WITH IT?

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13.HOW IS THE HEALTH OF PEOPLE, IDENTIFIED AS CRUCIAL TO YOUR BUSINESS?

HEALTH (AND WITH IT ILLNESS) MAY BE A FAIRLY UNPREDICTABLE FACTOR BUT IS GENERALLY RECOGNISED AS MORE LIKELY TO DETERIORATE WITH AGE, AND MAY BE AN INDICATOR OF DISABILITY OR IMPENDING RETIREMENT.UNDERSTANDING THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUR KEY EMPLOYEES IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF UNDERSTANDING THE RISK OF LOSING THEM.

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14. WHAT ARE THE SOCIAL NETWORKS LIKE OF THOSE SAME PEOPLE?

UNDERSTANDING THE FAMILY, SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT OF YOUR PEOPLE, AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL, IS SIMILARLY IMPORTANT IN ASSESSING THE RISK OF LOSING THEM AND THEIR KNOWLEDGE. HOME OWNERSHIP, CHILDREN AND SCHOOLING ARE ALL LIKELY TO PLAY A SIGNIFICANT PART IN THE DECISION TO REMAIN WITH YOUR ORGANISATION.

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15. IS YOUR WORKFORCE
EMOTIONALLY INVESTED IN YOUR
ONGOING SUCCESS?

IF YOUR WORKFORCE IS ENGAGED, THE VALUE
OF THEIR CONTRIBUTION PROPERLY
RECOGNISED AND EVIDENT TO THEM, AND
THEY TAKE PRIDE IN THE SUCCESS OF THE
BUSINESS, THEY WILL WANT TO SEE THAT
SUCCESS CONTINUE, AND WILL BE MORE
LIKELY TO EMBRACE KNOWLEDGE RETENTION
ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT IT.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION,
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND
ASSOCIATED ARTICLES VISIT MY
LINKEDIN PROFILE.



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