Retaining the People Who Know Your Business Exploring Knowledge sharing as a tool to Improve Employee Retention in the Hotel Sector

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Retaining the People Who Know Your Business

Exploring knowledge sharing as a tool to improve employee retention in the hotel sector

Vincent McKenna D11123511

Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of

Master of Computer Science (Information and Knowledge Management)

DIT Kevin Street, Dublin, IRELAND

January 2013
DECLARATION

I certify that this dissertation submitted by me for examination for the award of MSc in Computing (Information and Knowledge Management), is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within my work.

This dissertation was prepared according to the regulations for postgraduate study of the Dublin Institute of Technology and has not been submitted in whole or part for an award in any other institute or University.

The work reported on in this dissertation conforms to the principles and requirements of Dublin Institute of Technology guidelines for ethics in research.

Signed: _________________

Vincent McKenna D11123511

Date: January 2013
ABSTRACT

The retention of core workers in the hotel/hospitality sector is a key challenge for human resource management, organisational strategies and operational effectiveness. The purpose of this research was to investigate and evaluate the impact of the introduction of knowledge sharing tools/techniques and change in work practice on the retention attitudes of knowledge workers in two context specific environments. Problems relating to the retention of knowledge workers are not confined to Ireland and are shown in this project to be a global phenomenon.

Traditionally, knowledge workers have been considered to work in professional fields such as computer programming, medicine, engineering and so forth, however, this paper argues that the tacit and explicit knowledge of knowledge workers within the hotel/hospitality industry are the core knowledge ‘assets’ of that industry, and therefore the term ‘knowledge worker’ and its traditional highbrow connotations may be outdated and need to be replaced with a more world view that recognises all worker types in all work environments as ‘knowledge assets’.

The importance and justification for this research project is clearly set out in the introduction and subsequent chapters; the importance of the subject area is established as key themes are outlined and critiqued. A comprehensive review of the literature relating to knowledge management is set out and leads to a discussion which asks if knowledge management is a consultancy creation or a natural evolutionary chapter in the management genre. The challenges facing knowledge management initiatives within the hotel industry are discussed. Key models from the literature relating to tools and techniques for a knowledge management initiative are presented.

This research project is based on a knowledge audit of core knowledge workers/assets in two context specific environments and that knowledge audit allowed for the construction of a work/training rotational matrix, a new concept developed by this author. The work/training rotational matrix in this project is simply used as a visualisation for the recommendations flowing from the knowledge audit.
The work/training rotational matrix is presented in this project as a paper based prototype, however, beyond the scope of this project it is expected that the work/training rotational matrix will be developed to a stand-alone IT system that will be dedicated to reducing the cost of human resource filtration within the hotel/hospitality sector and improve knowledge worker retention. One of the key aims of the project would be to leverage technology to assist in the implementation of the knowledge management initiative; technology usage will increase as the model matures.

The knowledge audit in this project is based on a unique collective set of 70 pre-tested questions relating to socio-metrics, knowledge sharing readiness, training audit, willingness to train, job rotation, team player, precarious work, motivation, job satisfaction, perception of management on career development, retention, loyalty, turnover intent, motivation and job design. The literature and previous research links all of these elements back to knowledge worker retention.

The project has also uncovered a number of interesting facts including the initial identification of the ‘new precariat’ and the replacement of the traditional model of worker ‘loyalty’ with a much more tenuous model described in this paper as ‘Velcro-attachment’.

This project takes issue with previous research which strongly argues that low paid workers fit-neatly into a clearly defined box labelled as the ‘precariat’.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to all of the staff and students with whom I have had contact on the MSc programme at DIT, Kevin Street, Dublin. I would like to pay particular tribute to all those lecturers who taught the modules that I studied and parted with their tacit and explicit knowledge so that I could gain the confidence to complete an MSc. I would also like to pay tribute to all of those students who worked with me during several hundred hours of Study Group sessions.

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Thanks also to the management of the two hotels that were subject to this research, and their fantastic staff for affording me the opportunity to carry out my project.
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of Project area

The initial inspiration for this project came from the researcher’s knowledge of the hotel/hospitality industry in Ireland, that knowledge was based on the researcher’s previous work as a foreman/health and safety officer on hotel construction sites, staying as a guest in numerous hotels, staying as a mystery guest and writing reports on hotels, and working in recent years in Digital marketing for hotels and guest houses. In all of the roles set out above, it was clear, that worker retention in the hotel/hospitality industry was a significant problem, and that hotel management needed to identify not only the reasons why staff leave, but also ask what might make them stay. While globally recognised brand names such as The Hilton Hotel Group have clearly defined human resource strategies and documented knowledge inventories such as staff training manuals (Knox and Walsh, 2005), the vast majority of small, medium and some large hotel enterprises fail to recognise the importance of human resource and knowledge management initiatives in relation to worker retention. The hotel/hospitality sector is heavily dependent on the tacit and explicit knowledge of its workers; this is a service industry that rarely engages with knowledge management initiatives and this lack of engagement may be directly related to the failure of the hotel/hospitality sector to recognise the value of, and retain, its core knowledge assets, its workers.

The term ‘knowledge worker’ is most often linked to those professionals working in areas of engineering, computer programming, medicine and so forth, however, without the tacit and explicit knowledge of all worker types in the hotel industry, the hotel industry could not function, and therefore, it will be argued in this project that traditionally invisible hotel worker types such as house-keeping and so forth should be elevated to the position of knowledge worker/asset for the purposes of this project and beyond.

The aim of this project is to introduce knowledge sharing tools/techniques and change in work practice into two medium sized hotels in Dublin in order to measure the impact of those tools and techniques on the retention attitude of a sample of knowledge workers/assets. Worker retention is important as the cost of hiring and training new staff is significant. There are also intangible costs related to staff turnover including lack of continuity in customer service, low staff morale and so forth.
1.2 Background

Perhaps two of the most dramatic, yet counter-veiling, evolutionary events in business over the past two decades have been the dawn of the new economy, which has mainly been driven by developments in IT, and secondly, the catastrophic consequences of the global economic downturn which took hold in or about 2006. Both of these evolutionary events have pushed companies to consolidate and reconcile their knowledge assets as a means to creating value that is sustainable over time, never before have extensive knowledge management efforts been needed in order to survive in what are contracting and uncertain global and domestic markets.

Organisation and knowledge worker competencies in the knowledge economy are often the key factors that offer competitive advantage to any enterprise, yet there appears to be an absence of an effective and systematic competency based approach to knowledge retention. Without such approaches organisations may be left without key elements to survive (Novak and Beckman, 2008).

Tourism in Ireland is a significant industry with a global customer base, generating considerable value in terms of exports, employment and tax revenues. Tourist numbers to Ireland in 2012 remain positive and are on an equal par with figures from 2011 and this can be attributed to a number of factors including the drop in value of the Euro against sterling and the US dollar. Tourist numbers to northern Europe are also positive with a growth of +6% in the first six months of 2012.

The growth in Hotel development during the economic boom years in Ireland was mainly driven by significant tax breaks offered to property speculators. During the boom year’s hotel staff from kitchen porter to hotel manager, were able to hop from hotel to hotel without showing any loyalty to their employer, and evidence in this dissertation will suggest that this lack of loyalty and investment was reciprocal. This rapid growth in hotel capacity was accompanied by a huge growth in the indebtedness of hotels. There were 26,802 new rooms added to the register in the period 1999-2008, with an estimated total investment of €5.2 billion and debt of €4.1 billion. This debt relates primarily to new hotels and in particular to hotels developed after 2004. According to a report compiled for the Irish Hotels Federation by economist Alan Ahearne those hotel debts may be as high as 6.7 Billion Euros (irishtimes.com, 2012).
In the post-boom period the Irish hotel sector employs tens of thousands of workers. It is not possible to accurately state how many people are employed in the tourism or hotel sector in Ireland, this is due to the employment of casual staff for events such as weddings, seasonal work and so forth, however, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) figures state that 119,600 people were employed in ‘accommodation and food service activities’ in the period April to June in 2009, a fall of 8.1% from 130,200 in the same period in 2007\(^1\). This figure accounted for 6.2% of the total employment in this period in 2009 (see, also, Appendix B).

Despite the numbers employed and continued positive tourist numbers, the heavy borrowings attached to many hotels have seen those hotels go into liquidation; receivership or the toxic debts attached to those hotels are now in the control of the National Assets Management Agency (NAMA). A sharp indication of the negative equity in the industry was highlighted on the 29\(^{th}\) of August 2012, when the Burlington hotel, Dublin, which was purchased in 2007 for 288 Million Euros was put on the market with a guide price of 55<65 Million Euros and sold in November 2012 for 68 Million Euros.

NAMA have endeavoured to keep the hotels now in their control running as going concerns in order to reduce the financial impact on the tax payer and to keep workers in those hotels employed. However, the Irish Hotels Federation (2010) states that:

\[
\textit{Failure to foreclose on insolvent hotels is damaging to the long term interests of the tourism and hotel sectors}^2.
\]

This financial pressure on the industry has led to uncertainty and is having a significant impact on workers in the industry, many knowledge workers/assets are choosing to leave their employment for other service sector industries. As an example of the fluid nature of hotel staff, even in the midst of a deepening recession in Ireland, on the 8\(^{th}\) of June 2012, Ireland’s leading online recruitment agency Jobs.ie was advertising over one-thousand jobs in the hotel and hospitality sector, this compared to three-hundred Information Technology jobs on the same day.

\(^{2}\)http://www.ihf.ie/press/10-03peterbacon.htm
With such high levels of worker turnover in the hotel/hospitality industry there is a significant negative impact on organisational efficiencies, morale, continuity in customer service and so forth. These core workers that are checking-out of their hotel jobs are the key knowledge repositories of those organisations, the tacit and explicit knowledge of all hotel worker types is the very oil that drives the day to day operations of each individual organisation and the industry in general. While many might dismiss the notion of a hotel receptionist being a knowledge worker when compared with the very technical knowledge of a nuclear physicist, the reality is that an experienced hotel receptionist is as important to their organisation as any specialist engineer is to their particular field.

It is against this background of financial uncertainty, low pay and poor terms and conditions of employment in the hotel/hospitality sector that this work is undertaken; this project aims to measure the retention attitude of knowledge workers/assets in two context specific environments. This project will try to establish what knowledge sharing tools/techniques and change in work practice can be introduced in order to positively improve knowledge worker retention in the industry.

1.3 Research problem

This research project is based on two medium sized hotels in Dublin, Ireland. The aim of the project is to introduce knowledge sharing tools/techniques and change in work practice into those hotels in order to measure the impact of such knowledge sharing tools/techniques and change in work practice on the retention attitude of a sample of hotel workers. The research is designed in order to try and extrapolate a tool-kit that may be applied to other hotel types in order to improve worker retention. This project proposes to assess support mechanisms to improve knowledge worker retention.

Traditionally, knowledge workers would be considered to be those engaged in highly technical work such as computer programming, chemistry, engineering and so forth. One would not traditionally consider a chamber assistant to be a knowledge worker, however, in the hotel/hospitality sector; the majority of knowledge relating to the day to day running of any business type is heavily dependent on the tacit and explicit knowledge of its workers. Hence this dissertation will elevate hotel/hospitality sector workers to the level of knowledge workers/assets in order to highlight the importance of such workers to the hotel/hospitality sector.
If a hotel cannot retain its core workers, then that hotel cannot maintain any level of efficiency, productivity or continuity in customer service. It may well be shown that the term ‘knowledge worker’ is out-dated and that it may be time to consider all workers in all work environments as knowledge assets. Existing research suggests that the retention of Knowledge Workers can be achieved by creating a knowledge sharing environment. The idea that learning involves a deepening process of participation in a community of practice has gained significant ground in recent years (Smith, 2003). Extensive research will be carried out, and an experiment will be undertaken. A specific area of interest therefore will be to investigate the impact of introducing knowledge sharing tools/techniques and change in work practice on the retention attitudes of knowledge workers in an industry with a high dependency on the tacit and explicit knowledge of knowledge workers.

The need for continuity and improvement in customer service within the hotel/hospitality industry was recently highlighted in comments by both the Irish Hotels Federation and the Minister for Employment. In particular the need to offer staff training and career development opportunities, as proposed in this project, is supported by the President of the Irish Hotels Federation, Mr Michael Vaughan, who said:

Specialist training could improve the abilities of porters and bar staff, chamber assistants and others, very often these people are the first points of contact with the Irish for the visitor (irishtimes.com, 2012).

A thorough literature review will be undertaken before initiation of the experiment. A knowledge audit in this project refers to an in-depth interview with individual knowledge workers based on pre-determined questions that are concerned with the acquisition and elicitation of the tacit knowledge of knowledge workers in two context specific environments. The knowledge audit is being driven in this project by the need to create knowledge inventories and identify knowledge gaps, in the hope that those knowledge gaps may be bridged by offering knowledge workers up-skilling, work rotation and knowledge sharing opportunities.

The project will aim to evolve the technology to support the overall knowledge management initiative. One of the key aims of the project is to leverage technology to assist in the implementation of the knowledge management initiative; technology usage will increase as the model matures.
Guided by the results of both the literature review and the knowledge audit an investigation will be undertaken in order to identify tools and techniques that can be engaged to tackle the knowledge worker retention problem. Light-weight tools and techniques will be assessed for suitability for both the problem in general and the test organisations in particular. The results from the experiment as well as the knowledge gained from the literature reviews will be used to implement a system that facilitates best practice in knowledge worker retention for two context specific environments, such retention is desirable in order to ensure competitive advantage, continuity in customer service, and cost savings in terms of hiring and training new staff.

The impact of the project on the retention attitude of knowledge workers will be assessed qualitatively, by engaging knowledge workers in a post-project questionnaire and comparing those responses with the responses to the pre-project knowledge audit, to establish whether the introduction of such knowledge sharing mechanisms and change in work culture has changed attitudes towards retention. The impact on the organisation will be less easy to establish in the short term, however, in the long term worker retention can be measured and compared with pre-project employee turnover rates.

1.4 Aims

The aims of this project include the drive towards developing a model for best practice in knowledge worker retention by providing a supporting and sharing environment through the introduction of knowledge sharing tools/techniques and change in work practice. The project will provide a number of recommendations from an extensive knowledge audit that will ensure the promotion of organisational hygiene. The experiment will show how the introduction of knowledge sharing tools/techniques and change in work practice will improve, inhibit or have a neutral impact on the work retention attitudes of knowledge workers. The experiment will be followed by an analysis of attitudinal change and that analysis will help create a foundation for future research and investigation. This project sets out to establish; what are the things an organisation can do today to improve the retention of knowledge workers/assets and promote organisational hygiene; this project will show how to attain knowledge worker retention. The key question is whether introducing a knowledge management initiative that focuses on the creation of a knowledge sharing environment will encourage knowledge workers to stay in their jobs. A key aim will be to try and extrapolate tools and techniques to create a framework and tool-kit to be applied to a range of hotel types to improve worker retention.
1.5 Project Objectives

The objective of this project is to measure the retention attitudes of knowledge workers within the two context specific environments, prior to commencing the project, knowledge workers would be subject to an extensive knowledge audit, the recommendations from this audit will be captured in the work/training rotational matrix. Following the introduction of knowledge sharing tools/techniques and change in work practice, worker attitudes will be measured by means of a questionnaire in order to gauge the negative/positive/neutral impact of the experiment on worker attitudes to retention.

A model for best practice in worker retention within the hotel industry:

1. Review of the Literature relating to knowledge management/sharing to establish best practice in the area with specific focus on communities of practice and change in work culture.

2. Review of the Literature to identify key challenges in the area of knowledge worker retention and leading approaches to retention improvement.

3. Conduct a knowledge audit of knowledge workers in two test organisations to identify attitudes towards retention and challenges to retention in two specific organisations in the hotel industry.

4. Assess the suitability of a range of tools and techniques for application to the problem of knowledge worker retention.

5. Identify a set of suitable metrics to assess the effectiveness of knowledge retention initiatives.

6. Develop knowledge sharing initiatives and supporting tool-kit to better support knowledge workers in two specific organisations in the hotel industry.

7. Assess and evaluate the effectiveness of introducing knowledge sharing initiatives and supporting tool-kit on attitudes to knowledge worker retention in two specific organisations in the hotel industry.

8. Examine the potential for extrapolating tools and techniques to create a framework and tool-kit to be applied to a range of hotel types.
1.6 Research Methodology

The project aims to evaluate the impact of the introduction of knowledge sharing tools/techniques and change in work practice on the retention attitudes of a representative sample of knowledge workers in two context specific environments. A thorough literature review will be undertaken before the initiation of the experiment in order to inquire whether, knowledge management is a powerful discipline focused on the effective application of knowledge to achieve organisational goals (Novak and Beckman, 2008). Prior to the commencement of the experiment a representative sample of knowledge workers/assets in two context specific environments will be subject to an extensive knowledge audit. Post-experiment, knowledge workers will be subject to a questionnaire. Acquisition and elicitation of knowledge from knowledge workers will be central to the experiment.

As a direct result of an analysis of the knowledge audit, a work/training rotational matrix will be created to present an easily understood visualisation of the recommendations from the audit; knowledge workers will be offered training, job-rotation and introduced to knowledge sharing tools/techniques in order that they may meet their desired potential. Understanding the knowledge, expertise, competencies, and career aspirations of the entire workforce are a crucial foundation to organisational improvement (Novak and Beckman, 2008). Due to the nature of the representative sample in this research, face-to-face interviews will be conducted, as many of the subject group, for example, house-keeping, would normally be invisible on a day to day basis. It is suggested that field observations may be especially important when accompanying surveys of populations that are hard to access or when researchers run the risk of misrepresenting “invisible” groups (Horgen-Friberg and Tyldum, 2007).

An investigation will be undertaken in order to identify tools and techniques that can be engaged to test the research question. Light-weight tools and techniques will be explored for implementation of the experiment. The results from the experiment as well as knowledge gained from the literature review will be used to implement a system that will facilitate knowledge worker retention. The tacit and explicit knowledge of knowledge workers or the intellectual capital of knowledge workers is central to the tourist industry and can have significant influence on the value of any enterprise within that industry (Kot, 2010). This utilisation of knowledge workers/assets and their competencies is described by Novak and Beckman (2008) as ‘competency logistics’, such an initiative will ensure that knowledge workers are provided with the correct competencies, so that the enterprise and its core units can achieve its short, medium and long-term objectives.
1.7 Scope and Limitations

The project aims to evaluate the impact of the introduction of knowledge sharing tools and change in work practice on the retention attitudes of knowledge workers in a two context specific environments. This project proposes to assess support mechanisms to improve knowledge worker retention. It is recognised that hotel receptionists are key knowledge workers/assets, and often function as a third tier of management, for this reason, the receptionist job type will be singled out for special attention in this project.

Existing research suggests that the retention of knowledge workers can be achieved by creating a knowledge sharing environment. Smith states that:

*The idea that learning involves a deepening process of participation in a community of practice has gained significant ground in recent years (Smith, 2003)*.

Extensive research will be carried out, and an experiment will be undertaken. A specific area of interest therefore will be to investigate the usefulness of introducing knowledge sharing tools/techniques and change in work practice in an industry with a significant dependency on the tacit and explicit knowledge of its knowledge workers/assets.

A thorough literature review will be undertaken before initiation of the experiment. A knowledge audit in this project refers to an in-depth interview with individual knowledge workers based on pre-determined questions that are concerned with the acquisition and elicitation of the tacit knowledge of knowledge workers in two context specific environments. The knowledge audit is being driven in this project by the need to establish knowledge inventories, knowledge gaps, in the hope that those knowledge gaps may be bridged by offering knowledge workers the opportunity to up-skill, rotate jobs and engage in new training opportunities.

The knowledge audit and its subsequent knowledge gap analysis can help establish the knowledge workers knowledge strengths and weaknesses. The knowledge audit will also provide information that should allow the knowledge worker and the organisation to exploit opportunities and threats. The recommendations gleamed from the knowledge audit will be utilised to create a work/training rotational matrix which will be used as a visualisation to present those recommendations; the work/training rotational matrix is a concept being developed by the author of this project to help support knowledge worker retention and therefore reduce the cost of human resource filtration.
Guided by the results of both the literature review and the knowledge audit an investigation will be undertaken in order to identify tools/techniques and change in work practice that can be engaged to tackle the knowledge worker retention problem. Light-weight tools and techniques will be assessed for suitability for both the problem in general and the test organisations in particular. The results from the experiment as well as the knowledge gained from the literature reviews will be used to implement a system that facilitates best practice in knowledge worker retention for two specific hotels; such retention is desirable in order to ensure cost savings in terms of hiring and training new staff.

The impact on the knowledge workers will be assessed qualitatively to establish whether the introduction of such knowledge sharing mechanisms and change in work practice has changed worker attitudes towards retention. The impact on the organisation will be less easy to establish in the short term, however, in the long term the company balance sheet may become the key metric for measuring the impact of knowledge worker/asset turnover. This project is based on a small sample of knowledge workers in two medium sized hotels in Dublin, Ireland, any results or findings will not be universally applicable to the hotel/hospitality sector. However, the sample of knowledge workers in this project accounts for 30.0% of the total work force in the two medium sized hotels that are the subject of the project, and therefore the results and findings of this project may have external validity for hotels of a similar size and knowledge worker/asset portfolio.

1.8 Intellectual challenges

The intellectual challenges in this project are follows:

- The Hotel sector as a whole, with few exceptions, has not looked at knowledge management as a challenge
- There is no accountability for high staff turnover in the hotel industry as a whole or within individual organisations
- The costs associated with worker turnover are both tangible and intangible and so are not clearly visible on the company balance sheet
- Being armed with a clear understanding of the Data Protection Acts 1988/2003 and in particular how sensitive data must be protected, prioritising the rights of the research subjects over any research need
- Clearly establishing the knowledge and communication flows within the two context specific environments under investigation without interrupting normal work practice.
1.9 Resources

The researcher had a number of important contacts in the hotel/hospitality industry, while these contacts would make access to management and staff easier, nothing could be taken for granted. The entire process from the outset had to be a kind of trade-off; senior management would buy into the research if they believed there was something in it for them. Senior management were told that certain tools, techniques and change in work practice would be introduced and that recommendations would be presented. There was always the possibility that something positive could come from the research and senior management were not going to miss such an opportunity.

Access to staff was always going to be tapered by certain considerations, it is no secret that many hotel/hospitality back of house staff work on a casual basis, and in this arrangement are paid cash-in-hand, they often are and wish to remain ‘invisible’. However, this project would not be intruding on the rights of any worker and anyone who did not wish to be interviewed would be respected for that decision. There was a great deal of mistrust initially with some workers making it very clear that they would not take part in the research. Making clear arrangements for the interview schedule was the key to conducting the knowledge audit, it was important to set preliminary timeframes and then allow subjects to fit in to the various time-slots. Table 1, sets out both the technical and non-technical resources used during the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical and Non-technical resources required for this project 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-technical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free versions of software such as iMindMaps were utilised in this project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Project technical and non-technical resources

1.10 Overview of Dissertation

The aims of this project include the drive towards developing a model for best practice in knowledge worker retention by providing a supporting and sharing environment through the introduction of knowledge sharing tools/techniques and change in work practice. To provide a number of recommendations that would ensure the promotion of organisational hygiene.
Chapter 2: Worker retention in the hotel sector: The project is set in two medium sized Dublin hotels and this chapter addresses key issues relating to worker retention issues in the hotel industry including an introduction to worker retention, cost associated with worker turnover, skills utilisation and worker flexibility.

Chapter 3: Knowledge management, evolution or creation: The literature review asks if knowledge management is a natural evolutionary chapter in the management genre or whether it is a consultancy creation. The literature review drills down into the principle of knowledge management, covering key areas of knowledge management.

Chapter 4: Knowledge Acquisition Design: This chapter offers a comprehensive walk through of the acquisition design and knowledge audit process in particular, from idea conception, question design and pilot questionnaires. It is shown that the knowledge audit does not have a universal template.

Chapter 5: Knowledge Acquisition, implementation, analysis and evaluation: This chapter sets out the knowledge audit questions, how those questions were piloted, and an analysis of the pilot questionnaire. The knowledge audit implementation, analysis and evaluation are clearly set out.

Chapter 6: Work/training rotational matrix: From the analysis of the knowledge audit a work/training rotational matrix was created in order to present an easily understood visualisation of the recommendations following from the knowledge audit.

Chapter 7: Communities of Practice: The online and face-to-face communities of practice would be used to support the recommendations flowing from the work/training rotational matrix, issues such as communication and knowledge sharing could be addressed.

Chapter 8: Post project evaluation: This chapter sets out the purpose, aims, objectives and design of the post-project questionnaire. The implementation of the post-project questionnaire is described. The findings and analysis of the post-project questionnaire is clearly set out.

Chapter 9: Evaluation and conclusions: This chapter offers an overall evaluation, draws conclusions and makes recommendations.
Chapter 2: WORKER RETENTION IN THE HOTEL SECTOR

2.1 Introduction

This project is based in two medium sized hotels in Dublin and therefore it is important to understand the issues relating to worker retention in the hotel sector, the cost associated with worker turnover, skills utilisation and worker flexibility. This chapter sets out to explain the current position of low-paid workers in the hotel industry with the key objective of understanding what can be done in order to improve organisational hygiene.

The condition of low paid workers has been deteriorated by the impact of the economic downturn in Ireland since 2006 with successive Governments targeting in the first instance the minimum wage, Joint Labour Committee (JLC) pay agreements, the low income tax regime for low paid workers and other social protection rights. It is estimated that one in five workers in Ireland are in low-paid jobs and while many of these workers are due the protection of Joint Labour Committee (JLC) agreements, upwards of 97% of such workers are not accorded those protections (Turner and O’Sullivan, 2012). The Central Statistics Office (2010) reported that in the first quarter of 2010 service sector workers were on an average wage of 360 Euros per week with 17% of low paid workers living below the poverty line.

The majority of workers in the hotel sector are low paid. In a special report ‘Decent Work? The Impact of the Recession on Low Paid Workers’ (Mandate, 2012), commissioned by the Trade Union Mandate, it is found that low paid workers are described as the ‘precariat’ as they are employed in what is described as precarious work which according to Mandate is, “uncertain, unpredictable and risky from the point of view of the worker”. The Mandate report finds that the wages of service sector workers are insufficient to meet with basic living standards.

2.1.1 Worker retention

Turner and O’Sullivan (2012) in their paper on Joint Labour Committees (JLC) workers, offer an insight into the ‘precariat’ when they state:

Women out-number men by two-to-one, they are four times more likely to be under twenty-five years old than older workers and they are twice as likely to be non-Irish nationals as Irish nationals. These workers are also four-times more likely to work in the hotel and restaurant sector.
All of these issues contribute to a high staff turnover in the hotel sector; this turnover is impacting negatively on the industry in terms of higher costs for hiring and training new staff, and less tangible costs such as low morale and inconsistency in customer service.

According to the OECD (2008) flexibility index, Ireland has one of the most flexible workforces in the industrialised world; however, that flexibility coupled with economic recession appears to allow employers to play roulette with the working lives of Irish workers. The OECD index measures the flexibility of legislation; the degree to which this legislation is enforced determines a country’s real level of flexibility (Mandate, 2012). The OECD (2008) shows that more than one-fifth of the Irish labour market earns less than two-thirds of the median wage. The majority of these workers are not unionised and so appear voiceless in the face of what appears to be a full-frontal attack on their terms and conditions of employment.

Evelyne Perrin (2007) stated that:

*Work insecurity is a major obstacle to unionisation. When you don’t know if your fixed-term contract or work cover arrangement will be renewed, you don’t take the risk of joining a union.*

This view of non-unionisation as a determinant of low paid work is supported by Gray (2004) when he argues that the lack of unionisation helps to sustain ‘bad jobs’. Underthun *et al* (2012) provide a unique insight to hotel worker unionisation in a comparative study based in Oslo and Akershus. Wright and Sissions (2012) suggest that the historically high level of marginal workers employed in the hospitality sector, including students and migrant workers, means they are less likely to have a platform to engage with employers.

The CSO (2009) found that the highest concentration of low-paid workers was in the accommodation and food services sectors. This group of workers had been subject to a reduction in their working hours of 6.8% in the period 2008-2010. While the EU Directive 97/81/EC, Clause 5.3 sets out very clear guidelines in relation to part-time work and those guidelines have been incorporated to some extent in Irish law with the Protection of Employees (Part-Time Work) Act, 2001, Section 13 in particular and S.I. No.8 of 2006 Industrial Relations Act 1990 (Code of Practice on Access to Part-Time Working) there is little evidence to suggest that these guidelines are being adhered to in the work place, and worker dissatisfaction may be reflected in the workload of the Employment Appeals Tribunal.
At the time of writing this dissertation, one of the most contemporary and comprehensive research projects relating to employee turnover was, The Contagion Effect: Understanding the Impact of Changes in Individual and Work-unit Satisfaction on Hospitality Industry Turnover, (Hinkin, et al, 2012). This research published in August 2012 is based on a two year study and involved the analyses of data collected from 5,270 employees in 175 businesses, and concluded that changes in a knowledge workers level of job satisfaction can affect the worker’s turnover decisions. More important, unit-level job satisfaction change and its dispersion jointly affect the individual’s satisfaction change and the overall turnover rate in a unit, in what can be termed a “contagion effect” (Hinkin, et al, 2012). This work concludes by suggesting that its findings emphasise the importance of tracking changes in employee satisfaction and the impact of changes in group attitudes on individual attitude and behaviour (Hinkin, et al, 2012).

The retention of knowledge workers/assets within the hotel/hospitality industry remains a core problem, the industry, which is highly dependent on the tacit and explicit knowledge of its knowledge workers, is plagued with high employee turnover. Problems relating to the retention of knowledge workers are not confined to Ireland and are shown in this project to be a global phenomenon. Recent research by the US Bureau of Labour Statistics (2012) shows that voluntary turnover in the accommodation and food service industry is 58.8% which is 24% higher than comparable industries and job types (Hinkin et al, 2012).

The failure of the hotel/hospitality industry to retain core workers is a significant problem affecting customer service, productivity and baseline profitability (Hinkin and Tracey, 2006, Lashley and Chaplain, 1999). Furthermore, as hotels fail to retain core staff, the quality of service will decline as it takes both time and effort to ‘back-fill’ vacated positions (Lynn, 2002). While many research projects have been conducted into worker retention in the hotel/hospitality industry and some of that literature will be discussed here, this project aims to approach worker retention from a different angle. This project will set out to measure worker retention attitude, and having measured that retention attitude, a number of knowledge sharing tools/techniques and change in work practice will be introduced in order to measure the impact of such tools/techniques and change in work practice on the retention attitude of the same hotel workers.
Manpower is one of the world’s leading management consultancy agencies and has this to say about worker retention:

In the past, employee retention was a way of life. If employees did a good job and the company could afford to pay them, they kept their jobs. Times have changed. The employer no longer holds all the cards. Employees are not as loyal as in the past. They know they have options and aren’t afraid to use them. It’s now up to employers to figure out how to keep good people.\(^3\)

However, it is not only shop floor staffs that are checking-out of hotels. In a ground breaking study, Irish researchers, Carbery et al (2003) investigated the turnover cognitions of 89 hotel managers, the research revealed that it is the more psychological, perceptual and affective variables that are most significant in explaining the turnover intentions of hotel managers. Knox and Walsh (2005) in an extensive investigation into worker retention in the hotel industry in Australia found that the turnover rate was 50.74% for operational employees and 39.19% for managerial employees.

Research focused on worker retention from all over the world tells the same story about the impact on business performance of high rates of worker turnover. Based on a major research project into hotel worker retention in New Zealand, Antony Brian (2004) concluded that:

Strategic human resource planning is only undertaken by 59% of hotels and the image of the hotel industry appears negative to the external labour market.

In their research based on a large-scale survey and interview data on the hotel industry in Australia, Knox and Walsh (2005) concluded:

While hotel workplaces in general continue to be associated with high levels of numerical and temporal flexibility and greater informality of human resource policies, it was apparent that larger luxury hotels were adopting more systematic employee management techniques and strengthening their internal labour markets through functional flexibility initiatives.

\(^3\)https://candidate.manpower.com/wps/wcm/connect/3a02da8042f852438901cf4f3871948a/Retention+Success_IE.pdf?MOD=AIPERES
Zhang et al (2010) in their paper, ‘Human resource issues facing the hotel and travel industry in China’, concludes that:

In China's hotel and tourism industry, the key issues are: the lack of qualified staff at both operational and managerial levels, high staff turnover rates, the unwillingness of university graduates to enter the industry, and the gap between what is taught in school and college and the realities of the industry itself.

2.2 Worker retention cost

According to the American Management Association the cost of hiring and training a new employee can vary from 25% to 200% of annual compensation. These costs do not simply impact on an employee in-out exchange, but impact on such areas as customer service disruption, emotional costs, loss of morale, burnout/absenteeism among remaining employees, loss of experience, continuity and corporate memory. In many instances cost of employee retention will be determined by location, for example, The Cornell University Hotels School (2012) found that it cost an average of $5,688.00 to replace a front desk employee in Miami and $11,609.00 to replace a frontline desk employee in New York City. The American Hotel and Motels Association found that the average cost of replacing any member of staff was $4,100.00 and this cost was broken down as $2,500 direct cost and $1,600 indirect turnover costs per departing employee.

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In Ireland as with most industrialised countries, labour costs are one of the most expensive aspects of running any business. Turnover adds to those costs. The CIPD’s (2008) recruitment, retention and turnover report stated that the average cost per employee was €6,469, rising to €22,308 for senior managers or directors. To calculate turnover on a monthly basis, take the number of employees leaving (voluntary and involuntary) during a month and divide by the number on the payroll. Multiply the result by 100. The answer is the monthly turnover rate. For example, the two hotels subject to this project lost 5 employees in September 2012, the combined total of staff in both hotels is 30, 5 divided by 30 = 0.16 multiplied by 100 = 16.6% turnover. The core turnover cost for September 2012 could be 30,500 Euros, with potential costs much higher. Both hotels have 35 rooms and with mid-week room rates in both hotels in September 2012 averaging 59 Euros, this turnover cost is the equivalent of sales for 506 mid-week rooms.

http://www.sashacorp.com/turnframe.html
www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/hrpract/turnover/empturnretent.htm
Table 2 contains figures relating to the core/potential cost of replacing each operational staff member in a hotel in Ireland in 2012, the researcher sought these figures in order to localise the cost of worker turnover.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Cost of Replacing each Operational Staff Member 2012</th>
<th>Cost in Euros</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost Type</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overtime for other staff in interim</td>
<td>2,400 (6wks*400)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of mistakes/down time in interim</td>
<td>500 &lt; 2000 (i.e. wrong room rate posted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency workers/temporary</td>
<td>00.00 (not used)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising for replacement</td>
<td>1,200 (Jobs.ie, Agency, Evening Herald)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management time interviewing + selecting</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Training</td>
<td>Basic 1,000 &lt; 5,000 including health + safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Core Cost</td>
<td>6,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential Cost</td>
<td>12,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Potential cost of replacing each operational staff member 2012, figures supplied by senior management and table created by author

In accounting terms, the service (hotel room) is sold to the customer for 59 Euros (Gross price including VAT) the VAT rate applied to hotel service is 9% and therefore 9% (5.31 Euros) of the Gross price belongs to the Government. The fixed costs (based on 100% occupancy) and variable costs (labour, ESB, clean linen) must also be considered. When all of these costs are taken into consideration, the actual cost of staff turnover must be extracted from the Pre-Tax/Trading Profit (before corporate tax has been deducted) which may be as little as 20 Euros (pre-tax/trading profit) per hotel room sold at 59 Euros, this means that 1,500 rooms would have to be sold at 59 Euros to exclusively account for staff turnover costs, however, the Government would still expect Corporate Taxation at 12.5% trading income. According to research conducted by Employment Review (2008), Employers are failing in their efforts to actively improve staff retention, despite the costs involved in losing valuable employees, the research based on a survey of 140 employers, with a combined workforce of more than 34,000 staff, concludes:

That 42.1% do not attempt to manage staff retention, even though findings from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development put the cost of replacing a worker in 2007 at £4,667, and £10,000 for a senior manager, responses to managing labour turnover also tend to be reactive, rather than strategic. The case studies also showed that the most successful way to manage staff retention and boost engagement involved a co-ordinated approach, where several initiatives were 'bundled' together6.

According to the CIPD’s (2008) recruitment, retention and turnover survey, the top factors affecting an employee’s decision to stay or leave are:

1. Quality of relationship with supervisor or manager
2. Attraction of a new job or opportunity, career change
3. Domestic reasons – relocation with spouse or partner
4. Lack of training and development opportunities

Werhane, W. (2010) Managing Director from Hay Group Insight states that:

*The workplace landscape has changed; workers who, last year, were grateful to hold on to employment are sticking their heads above the parapet and gauging what the recovery means for their career prospects. This could spell particularly bad news for those companies who have failed to take necessary steps to implement effective enablement and engagement programs during the tough times*.

It is also clear that there is a hierarchy of employee types within the hotel/hospitality sector, and this ranges from senior management ‘down’ to kitchen porter. It may well be that this hierarchical mind-set is a key contributor to the high rate of staff turnover in the hotel/hospitality industry as cultural firewalls are difficult to breach.

**2.3 Skills utilisation**

In order to proceed with a project that will examine the retention attitude of low paid workers, it is important to understand what, if any, skills such workers bring to the work place, and if such skills exist, how can those skills be utilised for the benefit of the company and the worker. If low paid workers have no skills, then the question of low-paid worker retention would be mute, and this project would have little justification. Wright and Sissons (2012) in their paper, ‘The Skills Dilemma, Skills Under-Utilisation and Low-Wage Work’, present a unique insight into the world of the ten-million workers on low pay in the UK. This research from the UK is important as the UK is Ireland’s closest neighbour and most significant trading partner.

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7 www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/hrpract/turnover/empturnretent.htm
Wright and Sissons (2012) focus on skills-underutilisation in the work place, and suggest that effective skills utilisation is about, confident, motivated and relatively skilled individuals who are aware of the skills they possess and know how to best use them in the workplace:

- Working-in: Workplaces that provide meaningful and appropriate encouragement, opportunity and support for employees to use their skills effectively;
- In order to: Increase performance and productivity, improve job satisfaction and employee well-being, and stimulate investment, enterprise and innovation (Wright and Sissons, 2012).

Initiatives relating to skills utilisation have been undertaken in a number of countries including Australia, New Zealand, Scandinavia and Scotland, with the Scotland example of skills strategy committed to:

*Improving the skills and employability of individuals and creating high skill, high productivity, healthy workplaces where this talent can be best used (Skills for Scotland, 2010).*

The Scottish Government Social Research Department conducted a literature review of international skills policy in 2008\(^9\) and established that they could single out a triangulation of approaches to addressing the problem of skills under-utilisation, namely, market driven, state driven and a holistic approach. In this research Ireland is described as having adopted a state driven approach by developing a policy framework to help organisations to maximise skills utilisation. Buchanan *et al* (2010) states that qualifications are only one measure of skills in the work place, a more comprehensive understanding takes into consideration the three logics of skill:

- Behavioural: ‘The personal qualities of the worker to deal with interpersonal relationships’;
- Cognitive: ‘Level and kind of education and training undertaken by the population to help it understand and act in the world’;
- Technical: ‘The capacity to undertake particular set tasks.’

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Brinkley et al in their research for The Work Foundation established that as many as 35% to 45% of workers felt that their skills were under-utilised. According to Keep et al (2006) the importance of work organisation and job design in improving job quality and enhancing productivity were recognised by the Irish Government and implemented in work/training related policy.

The work by Felstead et al (2007) in The UK Skills Survey also found that fifty-five percent of people working in the hotel and catering industry felt they were over-skilled for the job they were doing, furthermore, Felstead et al found that firms that were likely ‘to make better use of employee’s judgement and skill’, had fallen from 57% in 1992 to 43% in 2001, and remained at this level in 2006. Newton et al (2006) state that:

*Low-paid, low-skilled workplaces tend to have few development and progression opportunities, worse Human Resource practices and higher staff turnover.*

Wright and Sissons (2012) quote Keep (2000) to offer an alternative to driving down skills and working conditions:

*Instead of assuming that the key to the desired ‘skills revolution’ is the supply of more skills, concentrate on stimulating demand for higher levels of skill, through seeking to upgrade product market strategies, enhance product and service quality and specification, and redesign jobs and work organisation so as to minimise dead-end, low-skill jobs and maximise the opportunities for the entire workforce to both acquire and utilise higher levels of learning and skill.*

It is therefore suggested that development is probably the area where leaders can have the most effect on knowledge workers. Through close association with their employees, leaders can identify the unique development needs of the employees, and facilitate the achievement of development objectives for the employees (Novak and Beckman, 2008). A knowledge audit can help employers to document the competencies held by workers and also identify competencies needed to help improve job design and organisational efficiencies.

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At the time of writing this dissertation the most up to date and comprehensive research relating to employee turnover is presented by Hinkin \textit{et al} (2012) and it offers this warning to employers:

\begin{quote}
The effects of work unit satisfaction on individuals may explain why “happy” employees leave. In the face of a work unit full of negativity even those who are satisfied with their job may be ready to leave. For the employer this is doubly dangerous. First, you lose a satisfied worker, and, second, the more talented the individual, the easier it will be for that person to leave. Thus, the employer may well be left with unhappy, mediocre workers (Hinkin \textit{et al}, 2012).
\end{quote}

Newton \textit{et al} (2006) suggest that low paid workers are over represented in organisations that are competing on cost rather than on the quality of their product or service. It is further argued by Newton \textit{et al} (2006) that many low paid jobs are framed in Taylorist forms of job design and therefore workers are left with virtually no autonomy, discretion or flexibility. Wilson and Hogarth (2003) argue that the driving down of skills and wages can have much wider economic consequences than those felt by the low paid workers:

\begin{quote}
Products are poor because the workforce skills to produce better ones are often lacking, and skills are poor because existing product market strategies do not demand high levels of skill and because work has been organised, and jobs are designed to require low levels of skills and discretion, low wages can also result in a further reinforcing factor, limiting consumer demand for more highly specified products and services (Wilson and Hogarth, 2003).
\end{quote}

Florida (2010) argues that low paid service sector jobs remain the ‘last frontier of inefficiency’ and it is advocated that business organisations look to the ‘high-road’ by way of investing in the skills of workers to empower them to work to a higher standard. Wright and Sissons (2012) conclude that greater attention to skills deployment and usage may in turn help to reduce high turnover. Osterman (2008) suggests that the evidence from the USA is that when employers in the hospitality sector are supported by the state and provided with proper information, enterprise leaders have introduced new approaches to workforce organisation.
2.4 Worker flexibility

The hotel/hospitality/tourism sector are dependent on human intervention and while much automation has been introduced to these industries including on-line bookings and payments, the reality is that at some point both the employee and guest will come face to face. It is clear from the comments on TripAdvisor.com and other third party sites that the majority of guest complaints are not about ICT based customer service systems but rather focus on human customer service and product dissatisfaction. Failte Ireland (2005) sets out to describe best practice in this human intervention:

The story of successful tourism enterprises is one that is largely about people – how they are recruited, how they are managed, how they are trained and educated, how they are valued and rewarded, and how they are supported through a process of continuous learning and career development.

Lai et al (2008) in an analysis of previous research relating to flexible workers within the hotel sector in the UK found that some organisations had experienced adverse consequences due to their use of flexible workers, such as increase turnover and lower employee trust. Lai et al in their research into hotel staffing also found that both employment agency managers and hotel managers were reluctant to spend money on training flexible staff, as such workers would not intend to work for the foreseeable future. It is clear from the work of Lai et al that both the demand and supply side of flexible workers are unwilling to invest in the training of flexible, low paid workers. The reasons why hotels employ flexible workers are set out in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons in Priority Order</th>
<th>Mode Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost Effectiveness</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy dismissal</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting Difficulties</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality staff</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company policy</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outsourcing prevention</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Source: Lai et al (2008) adapted by this author
It appears that flexible workers are being maximised so that hotels can bring under control their labour intensive operating costs, and using flexible workers allows hotels to hire, fire and adjust wages to fit with their labour flexibility strategies. The nature of the hotel industry in Ireland is such that it often finds itself competing on competitive cost rather than on quality, and employers’ labour strategies could be argued to be based on exploiting a cheap and flexible labour market. Lai et al argue that employers are trying to reduce operating costs through numerical flexibility rather than functional flexibility and in so doing are exploiting low skilled and therefore cheap flexible labour. Geary (1999)\(^\text{11}\) suggests that employers are reluctant to invest in training for low paid flexible workers and in turn favouring narrow rather than broad skill-sets, and this lack of investment in training leads back to cost implications for the employer.

Lai et al (2008) suggest that the dark side of this relationship is that this group of flexible workers are rarely given the chance of promotion, the opportunity for appropriate training to develop their skills across a wide range of tasks. Hackman and Oldham (1975)\(^\text{12}\) suggest that from a theoretical view point job design and designing for job commitment must be made up from a combination of both scientific management and behavioural job design approaches so that the worker may fulfil their needs for self-esteem and personal development and the organisation can reach its overall business objectives. Lai et al propose that from the hotel guest point of view, the products and services he/she receives should be consistent, no matter who delivers it. Lai et al (2008) conclude their research by stating that while some hotels had taken steps to improve the status of their flexible workers, the hotels provided no evidence of a grounded human resource strategy, but rather compliance with labour laws in order to win over the commitment of flexible workers. The European Working Conditions Survey (2012) highlights the fact that poor working conditions is much more than a labour relations issue and can in fact impact on worker’s health and well-being when it states:

> Ethical or value conflicts at work and feelings of usefulness are important psychological factors. Not having a sense of work well done or feeling that one’s work is not useful has been shown to lead to personal distress, which can be associated with health problems (Dejours, 1998)\(^\text{13}\).  

\(^\text{12}\) http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=AD0779828  
\(^\text{13}\) http://www.revista.inf.br/psicologia07/pages/artigos/edic07-anov-art03.pdf
Isolation at work is another problem within the workplace and epidemiological studies have linked isolation at work with absenteeism and workplace accidents. According to The European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) (2012) workers are more likely to cope with workplace pressures when they feel at home in the organisation or when they feel they have good friends at work. The Survey also singles out the pace at which people do their work as a key element of work design and the constraints that can affect this including:

- ‘Automatic’ constraints linked to the operation of a machine or to the position in the production flow;
- ‘Norm based’ constraints relating to production or performance targets;
- ‘Hierarchical’ constraints linked to the direct control of a superior;
- ‘Market’ constraints linked to interaction with customers;
- ‘Horizontal’ constraints related to dependence on the work of colleagues (EWCS, 2012).

The greater the number of pace determinants, the higher is the strain on the workers (Burchell et al, 2009). The European Working Conditions Survey singles out Ireland and Greece as having a high rate of pace constraint in the workplace, and shows that working at high speed can be found frequently in the accommodation and other sectors. High speed in the hotel sector would normally refer to the number of rooms to be ‘guest ready’ in a short time-frame.

With increased globalisation of many industries including the hotel sector, hotel management have attempted to introduce new styles of management that offer a universal product or service and these new styles of management have been directed at trying to establish a flexible enterprise to meet with economies of scale, however, as far back as 1997 the European Commission had suggested that such a flexible model had serious drawbacks. Companies continue to pursue the flexible model of enterprise, one such approach to a more flexible model was the introduction of Task Rotation, which The European Working Conditions Survey (2012) found was available to 51% of EU workers in 27 countries. Timming (2010) found in his research of 31 countries that satisfaction with working conditions were similarly based around several determinants including managerial support, job security, work-life balance, opportunities to learn and grow, and satisfaction with pay.

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Task rotation as described by The European Working Conditions Survey (2012) may not be a perfect fit for the hotel industry; however, such workplace injuries as repetitive strain injury could be reduced with task rotation, as could the negative effects of repetitiveness and isolation. Yet such initiatives as task rotation are limited to less than 12% of accommodation services across Europe. The Working Conditions Survey (2012) found that in all the cases it studied, involvement in task rotation schemes were associated with a higher level of support by colleagues and managers. The European Working Conditions Survey (2012) states that:

*Workplace innovation practices and task rotation schemes where different skills can be used are positively related to a perception that the organisation motivates workers to give the best performance and a feeling of being at home in the organisation.*

The European Commission (2010) argues that developing sustainable quality of work and employment is the key to meeting the Europe 2020 objectives with regard to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. According to the Eurofound (2002)\(^{15}\) quality of work has four cornerstones:

- Ensuring career and employment security;
- Maintaining and promoting the health and wellbeing of workers;
- Developing skills and competences;
- Reconciling working and non-working life (Eurofound, 2002)

### 2.5 Conclusion

It is important for hoteliers and senior management to understand the issues relating to worker retention in the hotel sector, the cost associated with worker turnover, skills utilisation and worker flexibility. This chapter has set out to explain the current position of low-paid workers in the hotel/hospitality industry with the key objective of understanding what can be done in order to improve organisational hygiene. It is clear that hotel workers are flexible, skilled and more importantly, worker turnover is costing the hotel/hospitality industry both in tangible costs associated with hiring and training, as well as intangible costs such as low morale and lack of continuity in customer service. Worker turnover is impacting on the bottom line of the company balance sheet and so someone must take responsibility for worker retention.

\(^{15}\) [http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2002/05/study/tn0205101s.htm](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2002/05/study/tn0205101s.htm)
Chapter 3: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

3.1 Introduction

This dissertation is based on a knowledge management initiative and therefore to proceed with the dissertation without trying to comprehend the essence of knowledge management would be foolhardy. The debate about whether the principle of Knowledge Management is a consultancy creation or a natural evolutionary chapter in the management genre has raged for over two decades. Knowledge Management is flexible and elastic and can be found in a wide range of disciplines. Knowledge Management by its very versatility may have exposed itself to the accusation of being a Fad, its illusive definition, while offered as a weakness by its opponents, may well be its core strength. This literature review will drill down into the Knowledge Management literature and exhume its central focus on tacit knowledge that has been buried by a mere focus, by some, on simplistic definitions. This literature review presents an approach that is reflective, critical and searching in order to establish if Knowledge Management is a distinctive, important and practical body of management theory that can be used to frame a knowledge management initiative for this project.

Based on a literature review this project will begin with an investigation into whether Knowledge Management is a consultancy creation or a natural evolutionary chapter in the management genre. Knowledge Management systems have been the heartbeat of major corporations for over two decades, the collecting and consolidation of information has been a core component of many organisations work, yet Knowledge Management has been subject to much criticism.

3.1.1 Objectives

This literature review will examine a number of key areas within the Knowledge Management discipline in order to try and establish if criticism of that discipline is justified:

- Knowledge Management will be explained in terms of its development within a theoretical framework, and key theorists will be used to argue for and against the Knowledge Management discipline.
- Knowledge Management and Information Management will be compared and contrasted.
• The importance of Knowledge Management will be considered, the fact that it is suggested by some commentators that Knowledge Management peaked in 2001 will be analysed.
• The role of knowledge management within the hotel/hospitality industry will be discussed.
• The importance of people within Knowledge Management will be examined in terms of tacit and explicit knowledge.
• The role of technology in Knowledge Management will be investigated.
• Knowledge Management will be defined within the evidence presented
• The role of Communities of Practice as knowledge sharing initiatives will be set out
• Knowledge retention as a knowledge management initiative will be discussed

This literature review proposes to evaluate and critically examine the evidence presented in relation to the subject areas above. This literature review will set out a number of clearly designed sections and subsections dealing with many of the central issues and theoretical questions facing the Knowledge Management principle in the twenty-first century. The work of Knowledge Management commentators will be examined, summarised, critically analysed, opinion will be offered and conclusions drawn in terms of teasing out key theoretical questions for further in-depth research.

3.2 Overview of Knowledge Management

3.2.1 Origins of Knowledge Management

While Beckman (1999) suggests that Knowledge Management has been in existence since the mid-1980s, and was first described as such by Wiig in 1986, there is no doubt that by the mid-1990’s Knowledge Management was gaining momentum as the dominant managerial discipline; new technologies were developing at an unprecedented rate. Knowledge was no longer viewed as being the preserve of the individual or the filling cabinet, but was being seriously viewed as the essential company asset, an asset that could be realised on the company balance sheet or at least have a positive or negative effect on the balance sheet depending on how the organisation addressed the Knowledge Management aspect of its business model.
In the early 1990s terms such as ‘knowledge society’ (Drucker, 1992) had been introduced and it was argued that from that point onwards knowledge would be the primary resource for knowledge workers, society and the economy. Prusak (2001) in a scholarly article entitled, ‘Where did knowledge management come from?’ attempts to dismiss the business and academic whispers that Knowledge Management is simply another management consultancy fad. Prusak puts forward an argument that is heavily weighted in the believe that Knowledge Management is practitioner based and is a significant tool capable of addressing modern social, economic and technological advancements in business and society. Yet knowledge management is without the clothes of a universally accepted definition (Choy et al, 2004).

Wilson (2002), Professor Emeritus, University of Sheffield, UK in his work, ‘The nonsense of knowledge management’, dismisses Knowledge Management as nothing more than a product of a clear lineage of strategies developed by consultancy companies. Wilson cites Taylorism and Mayoism as examples of such consultancy inventions. Wilson appears to suggest that if practitioners can clearly distinguish between knowledge and information, then further research into the Knowledge Management discipline could be interesting. Wiig (1999) views the emergence of Knowledge Management in the 1980s as a natural evolution:

"It is the job of Knowledge Management to build and exploit intellectual capital effectively and gainfully" (Wiig, p.4).

In his paper, “Knowledge management as an ephemeral management fashion?” Hislop (2010) demonstrates in Figure 1 how Knowledge Management evolved between: 1994-2008, in order to test the claim that Knowledge Management was nothing more than a management fashion.
Hislop (2010) used the database that holds academic publications to establish the volume of academic interest in the Knowledge Management principle. Hislop also evaluated a significant number of corporation websites to establish what interest existed among Global consultants and professional services in the Knowledge Management principle. Hislop’s paper clearly demonstrates that Knowledge Management has sustained the interest of academics in the first decade of the twenty-first century; however, interest in Knowledge Management in relation to global consultancies and professional services firms appears to have declined.

It is clear that Knowledge Management has endured for over two decades, and in so doing has survived the boom and bust politics and economics of right wing administrations, it has survived and adapted to the greatest technological advancements since the industrial revolution, it has been brow beaten and criticised by many who may never have fully appreciated the core value that Knowledge Management attributes to the knowledge worker, and in so attributing, may well have displaced the central importance traditionally attributed to well salaried CEOs.

3.2.2 Knowledge Management Relevance

While it has been suggested that Knowledge Management peaked in 2001, in terms of publications and interest, and was then consigned to history as nothing more than a Fad (Ponzi and Koenig, 2002) the reality is somewhat different. In 2002 the US Department of Defence was running a course on communication and that course placed Knowledge Management at the heart of both its practical and theoretical discussions.

The Department of Defence quoted earlier research in the field of Knowledge Management to centralise their understanding of Knowledge Management, using McCampbell, Clare and Glitters (1999) to highlight the competitive advantage to be gained from Knowledge Management strategies:

Successful companies are those that consistently create new knowledge, disseminate it widely throughout the organisation, and quickly embody it in new technologies and products. (p.172)
The Department of Defence put forward the proposition by McCampbell et al that the business environment was radically changing and that change was on-going rather than static or predictable. In effect McCampbell et al were arguing that Knowledge Management would be as important if not more important in the 21st Century with the advance of new and revolutionary technologies. It is argued by McCampbell et al that the business environment must not only meet new changes, but rather be in a position to anticipate those changes by way of having in place a cycle of knowledge and action that would incorporate the new knowledge being created. Grant (1996) regards knowledge as the, “most strategically important resource”, that an organisation possesses.

In considering future implications for Knowledge Management the Department of Defence use (Grover and Davenport, 2001, p.10) to point to the fact that in 2002 businesses were looking beyond the here and the now in order to develop new technologies, especially although not exclusively artificial intelligence, to advance problem resolution, legal knowledge, and new concept development. The US Department of Defence spends billions of Dollars each and every year on research and development yet they find at their core the need to maintain and improve on their Knowledge Management systems.

It is fair to say that they do not organise and run communication courses for fun, the Department of Defence realises that Knowledge Management is not simply about machines and algorithms but equally about people and leadership. It is the core value of the tacit and explicit knowledge of knowledge workers that makes Knowledge Management attractive to such large organisations as the Department of Defence that has in its ranks hundreds of thousands of personnel from computer programmers to frontline combatants.

This argument in relation to the central importance attached to the Knowledge Management principle by American based corporations is advanced by the work of Bouthillier and Shearer (2002, p.2) when they state that in 1997 a survey (KPMG, 2000) of 200 large US firms showed that over 80% of those large corporations had Knowledge Management initiatives built into their corporate thinking. It is clear from the evidence presented here that Knowledge Management is not tainted by the corrosive elements of re-engineering, nor is Knowledge Management simply dressed in the clothes of information management.
3.2.3 Knowledge Management and Information Management

Information Management had been born in the 1970s but reached maturity and became a fashion with the introduction of new technologies which were becoming more and more complex. Information management became the managerial buzz phrase of the 1980s/90s; however, University Degrees in Information Management concerned themselves more with data collection, organisational behaviour, production techniques and motivational theory than they did with anything closely related to the discipline of Knowledge Management as we know it today. At its core Information Management was about the collection and management of information, that information or data was collected from one or more departments and distributed in the same fashion. Yet Information Management did not have the infrastructure capabilities and knowledge processes that are apparent within Knowledge Management and which positively influence organisational effectiveness (Gold et al., 2001).

In the 1980s/1990s The European Union pushed forward with Information Management driven initiatives and legislation that set about bringing greater commercial uniformity and conformity within the EU, including such initiatives as the ISO 9000, initiatives which focused on structures and procedures rather than on people or their tacit knowledge. Gold (2001) suggests that the quest to move beyond Information Management and into the realm of Knowledge Management is a complex undertaking involving the development of structures that allow the enterprise to recognise, create, transform and distribute knowledge. Central to Knowledge Management is the tacit and explicit knowledge of knowledge workers within any given industry.

However, Koenig (1997) states that much of the terminology and techniques used by the Knowledge Management discipline have been taken directly of the shelf of librarianship and Information Management. While it is clear that a number of terminologies and techniques commonly associated with Information Management are used within the Knowledge Management discipline, this is unsafe evidence on which to convict Knowledge Management as being nothing more than a Fad or consultancy invention. The Knowledge Management discipline, unlike Information Management, has the thread of tacit knowledge woven through its colourful and diverse tapestry. Nonaka (1994) defines knowledge as ‘justified true belief’ that increases an entity’s capacity for effective action.
By the mid-1980s and into the 1990s re-engineering, time and motion studies and downsizing became the rallying cries of the American and UK multi-national CEOs and this flawed leadership was driven and supported by an acquiescing right wing consensus lead by US President Ronald Regan and his British mirror image Margaret Thatcher. This reengineering and downsizing blindness was the anti-thesis of Knowledge Management, knowledge workers and their unique knowledge repository were simply driven out the door in the interest of short term profit margins and CEO bonuses. Business Process Reengineering initiatives of the 1990s were themselves described as Fads and accused of neglecting the human element (Novak and Beckman, 2008).

3.2.4 Knowledge Management and People

When people are referred to within the Knowledge Management discipline, it is generally the tacit knowledge of knowledge workers that is being referred to. Tacit knowledge is that knowledge which is within the brain of the knowledge worker and has yet to be transcribed to explicit knowledge. Polanyi (1966) argues that tacit and explicit knowledge are two different dimensions of knowledge. The importance of people in the Knowledge Management discipline is highlighted by Grover and Davenport (2001) when they say that Knowledge Management within a purely institutionalised context inhibits competition:

Institutionalised Knowledge often inhibits competition in a dynamic context, unless adoptability of people and processes (higher order learning) is built into the institutional mechanisms themselves (Grover and Davenport, 2001).

IT weighted Knowledge Management systems without consideration for the tacit knowledge of the organisation is a system that looks dangerously like the re-engineering initiatives that created so much devastation to industry in the 1980s and 1990s. McDermott (1999) insists that knowledge comes from experience, however, that experience can only gain currency if it is informed by theory. According to McDermott the act of knowing is a purely human act, however, information is something that is simply filed for future reference. It is this separation of knowledge from information that presents a platform for much of the debate relating to Knowledge Management.
Nonaka (1995) in his book, The Knowledge Creating Company, argues that there are two types of knowledge, explicit and tacit. Knowledge that is described as explicit is rational and objective and is expressed in writing, numbers, databases and so forth. Knowledge that is described as tacit is based on experience and viewed as being subjective; it is described as context specific and therefore does not lend itself to words or formulas. Tacit knowledge is associated with beliefs, intuition, craft and technical skills. Tacit knowledge is best described as knowhow. Nonaka expresses knowledge transfer as a spiral process, in Nonaka’s matrix shown in Figure 2, existing knowledge can be transferred in either its tacit or explicit forms. The central key to knowledge transfer is to transport either explicit or tacit knowledge, modes of transfer work differently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Experiential Knowledge Assets</strong></th>
<th><strong>Conceptual Knowledge Assets</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tacit knowledge shared through common experiences</td>
<td>Explicit knowledge articulated through images, symbols, and language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Skills and know-how of individuals</td>
<td>• Product concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Care, love, trust, and security</td>
<td>• Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Energy, passion, and tension</td>
<td>• Brand equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Routine Knowledge Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>Systemic Knowledge Assets</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacit knowledge routinised and embedded in actions and practices</td>
<td>Systemised and packaged explicit knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Know-how in daily operations</td>
<td>• Documents, specifications, manuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organisational routines</td>
<td>• Database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organisational culture</td>
<td>• Patents and licenses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2 Four Categories of Knowledge Assets (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995)* source Google Images

The primary purpose of knowledge workers is the creation, distribution or application of knowledge (Davenport, 2005). It is certain that if the knowledge of a sixteen year old apprentice carpenter were to be weighed against that of the knowledge of a sixty year old carpenter, the scales would tilt heavily in favour of the knowledge of the experienced carpenter. There can be no question that knowledge is generally derived from experience, and there can be little doubt that theory can underpin that knowledge. With experience, the apprentice will one day have the knowledge to construct a chair; however, without underpinning that knowledge with theory the apprentice may never know why such a lightweight construction as a chair can hold many times its own weight.
Figure 3 sets out the core competencies of both tacit and explicit knowledge.

![Two Types of Knowledge](image)

**Figure 3 Tacit and explicit knowledge, source Google Images**

### 3.2.5 Knowledge Management and Technology

Peter Drucker who died in 2005, was one of the great thinkers of management theory and practice in the 20th and 21st Centuries, Drucker used his own Knowledge to make some of the most profound predictions for business in the 20th and 21st Centuries such as privatisation and de-centralisation, the former being the birth-child of Thatcher\(^\text{16}\) and Regan\(^\text{17}\), the latter being a bug-bear for former and present coalition governments in the Irish Republic. In 1993 Drucker said of the business world:\(^\text{18}\)

> We are entering (or have entered) the knowledge society in which the basic economic resource...is knowledge...and where the knowledge worker will play a central role.

It appears from Drucker’s work that the Knowledge Society and its growth in terms of technological development is the very engine that will drive the Knowledge Management genre in the 20th and 21st Centuries, and the Knowledge worker will fuel the drive for captivating, storing and making explicit use of the Knowledge Management systems that will store, record and release that Knowledge for the benefit of business and society as a whole. This central importance of technological advancement in the Knowledge Management discipline is explicitly stated in a Literature Review for c-sand.org.uk (2002) when it is said that developments in computer technology in the mid-1980s were key to the development of the Knowledge Management discipline.

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\(^\text{16}\) [www.guardian.co](http://www.guardian.co)

\(^\text{17}\) [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

\(^\text{18}\) [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)
Knowledge Management has inspired a shift from a transaction to a distributed knowledge management (DKM) perspective on inter-organisational information processing, each player in the network acquires specific knowledge from other players for decision support (Pederson and Larson, 2001). This is developed further when Tapscott (1996) says that due to the technological advancements businesses were able to quickly capture, codify and disseminate vast volumes of information from around the world. Within this capturing, codifying and disseminating of information, it is possible to argue that the tacit and explicit knowledge of knowledge workers was simply taken for granted rather than being recognised as the very oil driving the engine of vast enterprises such as the Department of Defence and World Bank.

Kakabadse et al (2003) propose that technology is central to knowledge information yet intangible assets such as corporate brainpower and so forth are merely necessary for Knowledge Management. Yet it must be argued that it is the contextualisation of the Knowledge under consideration that will determine the relevance of technology in its management. To suggest, as does Kakabadse et al, that the knowledge worker is nothing more than an appendage to technology, when in fact the knowledge worker is the creator, master and keeper of technology is a nonsense. Technology is given birth and sustains life through the sustenance of the tacit and explicit knowledge of the knowledge worker.

3.2.6 KM a Practical body of Management Theory

It is clear from the literature that there is an on-going difficulty in trying to establish clear parameters for Knowledge Management as a discipline. Knowledge Management invades a number of important fields and in so doing it camouflages itself from easy identification. Wiig (1999) views Knowledge Management as a valuable tool for business, but also recognises the frustration of many who try to box Knowledge Management off as a clearly defined discipline:

*Whereas Knowledge Management has become a valuable business tool, its complexity is often vexing, and as a field, will still be under development for a long time to come (Wiig, 1999).*
However, other experts in the field suggest that there is no difficulty setting Knowledge Management out from other management principles as Knowledge Management is firmly based in theory, Baskerville and Dulipovici say:

*The linkage of Knowledge Management to its underlying theoretical foundations clearly illustrates how this field has been systematically raised into a distinctive, important and practical body of management theory (Baskerville and Dulipovici, 2006, p.83).*

Kakabadse *et al* (2003) state research by (Murray and Myers, 1997, p.29) to show that a total of 73% of 260 UK and European corporations voted for the business definition of Knowledge Management as the, "collection of processes that govern the creation, dissemination and utilisation of knowledge to fulfil organisational objectives".

This definition appears to present the collection of tacit knowledge as nothing more than a means of engineering effective and efficient systems, however, Knowledge Management must be more than a simple tooling mechanism if it is to be fully utilised.

Knowledge Management must take clear account of knowledge workers and how best to ensure that those workers remain within the company, not simply as vessels of knowledge already extracted, but as generators and innovators of future knowledge production. To simply extract tacit knowledge for greater effectiveness and efficiencies within the company without taking cognisance of the condition of the knowledge worker, would have the effect of dehumanising and demotivating such workers.

Knowledge Management is founded on clear and distinguishable theoretical principles, its corner stone is the central importance that it attaches to the tacit knowledge of the knowledge worker. Knowledge management has been adopted by many important disciplines and integrated into some of the world’s most important organisations. Knowledge Management has proven itself versatile and universally applicable and for this reason may not be easily corralled into definition or codification, however, this may be its strength rather than an identifiable weakness. Knowledge Management may not be clearly defined; it may not be easily codified, however, it is important and it is a practical body of management theory.
3.3 Knowledge Management Maturity Model (KMMM)

This project is framed within the Knowledge Management Maturity Model (KMMM)\(^{19}\) developed by Langen (2002). This project will map its research design to the core principles of the KMMM. The analysis model is used to identify all of the important areas of knowledge management within the company, including strategy and knowledge goals, and this process of analysis is conducted in order that existing systems can be improved upon. Dr Manfred Langen (2002) of the Competence Centre for Knowledge Management at Siemens AG states that KMMM is applied only by experienced knowledge management consultants.

While this researcher cannot claim to be an experienced knowledge management consultant, and this could be viewed as a weakness in relation to following the principles of the KMMM in this project, the researcher has extensive experience in industry and has undertaken 12 core MSc modules in Information and Knowledge Management before undertaking this project.

In line with the KMMM this project will engage with a number of tools and techniques, including interviews with management and individual knowledge workers, in order to minimise the bias from subjective representations. An analysis of the knowledge audit will establish the readiness of the organisations for a knowledge management initiative. The knowledge audit diagnostics in this project will allow for the planning of knowledge management initiatives in the two organisations being researched. Accurate proposals for the development of the knowledge management initiative can be mapped out following the knowledge audit analysis.

3.3.1 KMMM Analysis model

Throughout this project it will essential to establish what roles people play in their respective organisation, and what processes they engage with on a day to day basis. It is only when people and processes are understood that core competencies can be established and specific training needed to improve those competencies.

\(^{19}\) www.kmmm.org
The KMMM Analysis Model in Figure 4 identifies a number of key issues including environment partnerships and people competencies. The knowledge audit allows for the identification of environment partnerships, people competencies with a view to developing a collaborative culture across departments and organisations. The level of leadership support can also be identified.

![Figure 4 KMMM Analysis Model (kmmm.org)](image)

### 3.3.2 KMMM Development model

This project is based in two context specific organisations and it is fair to say that both of these organisations are from the outset of this project at the 'Initial' stage of the Maturity Level, as seen in Figure 5.

Both organisations are heavily dependent on the exchange and usage of knowledge for their day to day functioning, however, these knowledge processes are not consciously controlled and are often lost when knowledge workers simply walk out the door. There is no knowledge repositories in place and when knowledge workers walk out, their tacit and explicit knowledge walk out with them.

![Figure 5 KMMM Development Model (kmmm.org)](image)
It is hoped that this project will help the organisations under consideration to move to level-2 Maturity Level ‘repeatable’, at which point the organisations will have recognised the importance of knowledge management activities for their business goals and objectives. It is a core aim of this project to seed the organisations with knowledge management/sharing activities in the hope that further integrated knowledge management activities might grow and become rooted in the organisational structure and culture of both organisations.

Level-3 ‘defined’ of the KMMM development stage is achievable within the time frame of this project, the life cycle of this project may see practiced knowledge management activities come to life. It is hoped that knowledge sharing tools and techniques will become embedded in the day to day work activities of the organisations being researched and that knowledge management roles will have been defined and allocated.

While desirable, the Maturity Level-4 ‘managed’, is unlikely to be obtained within the time-scope of this project, Level-4 sees the development of a common strategy and standardised approach to the subject of knowledge management within the organisations. However, it is hoped that by the end of the project, knowledge management will be better understood organisation-wide by all management and knowledge workers, that knowledge management roles will have been identified and that light-weight socio-technical knowledge management tools and techniques will have been incorporated into the organisations day-to-day activities.

Maturity Level–5 ‘optimising’ is not within the time-scope of this project, but is obtainable by the organisations if they grasp the full value of knowledge utilisation as a core business competency which can lead to competitive advantage. At Level-5 the organisation has developed the ability to adopt flexibly in order to meet new requirements in knowledge management without dropping a maturity level (Langen, 2002).

3.3.3 KMMM Conclusion

This project is framed within the Knowledge Management Maturity Model (KMMM) developed by Langen (2002). The KMMM offers both a developmental and analytical road map for the project; this step by step model offers a solid theoretical foundation. This project will map its research design to the core principles of the KMMM. The analysis model is used to identify all of the important areas of knowledge management within the company, including strategy and knowledge goals, and this process of analysis is conducted in order that existing systems can be improved upon.
3.4 Knowledge sharing

Most knowledge management initiatives will have at their core knowledge sharing tools and techniques. Communities of Practice have been put forward as a unique means by which organisations can maximise knowledge sharing among their knowledge workers, if organisations provide and encourage the necessary culture and supports to ensure the success of Communities of Practice then it is suggested that companies can maximise their core business asset, that asset being the tacit and explicit knowledge of its knowledge workers. Knowledge represents the key concept to explain the increasing velocity of the transformation of social life in general and the way businesses and social institutions work in particular (Drucker, 1994). Bell (1973) suggested that:

*If knowledge is power, then knowledge shared is power squared.*

Communities of Practice as seen in Figure 6, have the potential to add value to organisations in several important ways including driving strategy, as has been the case at the World Bank where Knowledge Management strategy is driven by the coalface work of communities of practice. In the beginning, communities of practice within the World Bank were disbursed and disjointed; now they are funded and central to the World Bank’s cutting edge knowledge management systems (Wenger and Snyder, 2001). An organisation provides the frame to bring together people holding specialised knowledge to be jointly applied to accomplish a task (Drucker, 1994). Intelligent organisations have to provide a context supportive of knowledge workers and their needs in that they excel in the (constantly changing!) combination of individual expertise into organisational core competencies (Maier, 2002).

![Figure 6 Community of practice, Google Images.](image-url)
Knowledge is an abstract concept, yet, knowledge is often viewed as a physical thing, something that can be captured and stored, and this thinking has been to the fore of Knowledge Management thinking in the Western world these past decades, Knowledge Management theories are soaked in such thinking (Andriessen, 2006). The flip side of this, knowledge as stuff theory, is the neglect of the tacit and subjective aspects of knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Knowledge sharing is not simply a matter for knowledge workers; knowledge sharing must be supported by the values of an organisation.

Existing research suggests that the retention of Knowledge Workers can be achieved by creating a knowledge sharing environment. The literature further suggests that when knowledge workers in structurally diverse work units share knowledge external to their group, there will be improved performance (Cummings, 2004). Knowledge sharing can be tested across a range theoretical constructs such as social exchange theory, self-efficacy and theory reasoned action, and extensive research based on a field survey of 467 employees was undertaken by Bock and Kim (2002):

*Expected associations and contribution are the major determinants of the individual’s attitude toward knowledge sharing. Expected rewards, believed by many as the most important motivating factor for knowledge sharing, are not significantly related to the attitude toward knowledge sharing. As expected, positive attitude toward knowledge sharing is found to lead to positive intention to share knowledge and, finally, to actual knowledge sharing behaviours (Bock and Kim, 2002).*

A number of authors suggest that organisational knowledge resides in the interactions between individuals and therefore, forms the basis of competitive advantage (Argote and Ingram, 2000; Nonaka, 1991; Spender and Grant, 1996). However, implicit in these transactions is the assumption that individuals will share with and transfer their knowledge to others, which may or may not occur in circumstances where knowledge sharing is regarded as a voluntary action (Dougherty, 1999). Communities of Practice have been developed as a core tool for knowledge sharing by internationally recognised organisations such as the World Bank.
Knowledge sharing can be defined as the process of capturing knowledge, or moving knowledge from a source unit to a recipient unit (Birchham-Connolly et al, 2005). Communities of practice add value to organisations in several important ways including driving strategy (Wenger and Snyder, 2001), as has been the case at the World Bank where Knowledge Management strategy is driven by the coalface work of communities of practice. In the beginning, communities of practice within the World Bank were disbursed and disjointed; now they are funded and central to the World Bank’s cutting edge knowledge management systems. While other banking systems have imploded due to the world banking crisis, the World Bank has managed to remain stable.

It is clear from the literature that there are two schools of thought in relation to knowledge sharing, there is the traditional view of the master craftsman sharing his tacit knowledge with his apprentice, and there is the ‘knowledge society’ view where knowledge becomes codified through information systems. The traditional view can certainly hold some ground in very specific and specialised areas such as restoration of antiquities, however, less specialised knowledge can be committed to information systems for large scale re-use for enterprise. A hybrid of both approaches can be adopted with the knowledge workers engaging to some degree with information systems in order to share knowledge; this may be to facilitate conversations and the exchange of tacit knowledge. The strategy adopted by an enterprise will depend on the amount of tacit and explicit knowledge within that enterprise and the value attached to such knowledge.

Whatever, the knowledge management strategy adopted it is certain that tacit knowledge will be at the core of any such strategy, tacit knowledge provides the background necessary for the development and interpretation of explicit knowledge (Bray, 2007). However, the introduction of knowledge sharing programs are not a panacea to ineffective information flows within an organisation, such programmes can often introduce unforeseen obstacles to the work place and therefore putting unnecessary barriers between workers and their tasks. Knowledge embedded in the interactions of knowledge workers and tasks affords a competitive advantage in firms (Argote and Ingram, 2000).
3.5 Knowledge Retention

The core thrust of this dissertation will be to measure the impact on worker retention attitudes with the introduction of knowledge sharing tools and changes in work practice. Knowledge and knowledge worker retention must be core goals in any knowledge management initiative, yet such retention can be elusive for many organisations. The tacit knowledge of knowledge workers is not easily captured, tacit knowledge has both a cognitive and technical dimension, the former is the lens through which knowledge workers perceive the world and the latter is the ‘know how’ or the ‘knack’ (Deming, 1982). A knowledge audit is a tool that can be utilised to capture both the tacit and explicit knowledge of workers; it is this combination of the cognitive and technical aspects of tacit knowledge that can only be elicited with the cooperation of the knowledge workers.

Knowledge retention must be the cornerstone of any knowledge management initiative, yet within the scope of the literature review presented in this dissertation, systematic, competency based initiatives to achieve knowledge retention appear absent. Novak and Beckman (2008) suggest that without such approaches, enterprises are at risk of not being able to achieve either their daily work or their strategic objectives. In the 1990s the American government introduced new quality standards for US manufacturers in order to counter-act off-shore competition, these quality standards were named, The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, and the criteria for the awards would go as far as to assess an organisation’s Knowledge Management, highlighting the importance of organisational learning, individual learning and team learning to organisational success (Novak and Beckman, 2008).

Drucker and Bell (cited in Novak and Hammer, 2009) set out 15 different criteria to describe knowledge workers, for the context of this project six are deemed particularly relevant:

1. Educated, knowledge workers possess vast knowledge, acquired either through formal schooling or through self-study and on-the-job experience.
2. Empowered, they thrive on setting their own goals, schedules, and deadlines. They expect their managers to empower by providing the training, equipment, and facilities needed for them to achieve their goals.
3. Committed, they owe allegiance not to the old fellowships, race, sex, religion, ‘good old boy networks’, instead they are committed to what Bell calls ‘situces’, profession, organisation, community.
4. Agile, they are able to multi-task, and to shift rapidly in mid-stream from one objective to a new one, with little stress.

5. Focused on people, they understand that people, particularly employees, are the repositories of knowledge, the holders of power, and no longer merely, ‘assets’, ‘resources’, or ‘capital’.

6. Lifetime learners, they know that today’s knowledge has a very short lifespan, and will be obsolete tomorrow. They know that they must continually acquire new knowledge in order for themselves and their organisations to remain competitive (Novak and Hammer, 2009).

Whatever criteria is used to capture the dynamics of the knowledge worker, the tacit and explicit knowledge of the knowledge worker must be captured and retained.

3.6 Knowledge management in the hotel/hospitality industry

Hallin and Marnburg (2007) in their research, Knowledge management in the hospitality industry: A review of empirical research, state that:

Knowledge management (KM) has emerged over the last decade to become one of the most debated management concepts, but in the hospitality industry KM has not achieved the same scale of applications and empirical research as in other fields (Hallin and Marnburg, 2007).

Despite the popularity of knowledge management in other industries, hotel-specific concerns have thus been neglected in the literature and knowledge management has just rudimentarily been implemented in hotels. This is especially valid for hotel chains, which have to deliver an overall quality standard in geographically distributed hotels (Medlik, 1990).\(^\text{20}\)

While the hotel/hospitality industry has developed within the ‘new economy’ (mainly driven by developments in IT) since 2007 to become highly dependent on ICT, this development may not be paralleled with an adoption of knowledge management initiatives (Pyo et al, 2002). Kim and Zhang (2008) state that:

To date there has been relatively little research conducted into what strategic path options can facilitate small and medium-sized hotels’ knowledge management.

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\(\text{20 Focus on Eastern Europe, Tourism Management, Volume 11, Issue 2, June 1990, Pages 95–98}\)
The literature relating to Knowledge Management in the hotel/hospitality sector offers only a few examples of knowledge management initiatives (Kim and Zhang, 2008), and these initiatives appear to be based on multi-nationals such as the Hilton Hotel Group. Hallin and Marnburg (2007) state that this view is supported by Yun (2004) who has stated that the main reason why the hospitality and tourism industry adapts slowly to knowledge management strategies is due to the complexity of the concept.

The view offered by Yun (2004) may have some merit, particularly relating to ICT developments, and the need for specialist skills in data-mining, statistics and so forth. However, this view of knowledge management as nothing more than a tool for codification and standardisation may not be Knowledge Management in its truest sense.

If Knowledge Management is simply viewed as a tool for a ‘McDonaldisation’ of the hotel/hospitality industry then the true nature of knowledge management within the service industry has not been realised. Any adoption of knowledge management initiatives within the hotel/hospitality sector must have knowledge workers/assets at its core.

A knowledge management initiative that offers standardisation and codification without taking account of the innovation and creativity of its human assets is a knowledge management initiative doomed to failure within the hotel/hospitality industry. Standardisation such as a receptionist training manual must run parallel with a knowledge sharing environment that allows for the identification and development of all knowledge assets. Hoteliers and other industry leaders need to understand that the tacit knowledge of its key knowledge assets is continually evolving, that tacit knowledge needs to be captured so that it may contribute to the overall objectives of the industry or specific organisation.

Srivastava et al (2006) in their extensive research of knowledge sharing and team efficacy (effectiveness) in the hotel industry in America state the following:

*We surveyed management teams in 102 hotel properties in the United States to examine the intervening roles of knowledge sharing and team efficacy in the relationship between empowering leadership and team performance. Team performance was measured through a time-lagged market-based source. Results showed that empowering leadership was positively related to both knowledge sharing and team efficacy, which, in turn, were both positively related to performance (Srivastava et al, 2006).*
Yang and Wan (2004) research into 5 Star Hotels in Taiwan concluded that knowledge sharing and knowledge capturing were based on informal relationships and were not part of any formal policy or procedure. Yang and Wan (2004) and cited by Hallin and Marnburg (2007) conclude that there are many obstacles to knowledge sharing in the hotels that they studied and one of their key observations was the fact that supervisors were very fearful of sharing knowledge as they believed that their subordinates would get promoted faster than them, Yang and Wan also observed that reluctance to knowledge sharing occurred when shared ideas involved changing daily operations.

Engstrom et al (2003) in a study of intellectual capital in Radisson SAS Hotels and Resorts found that a relationship can be established between an organisation’s structural capital (tools and techniques used to support employee productivity) and some financial resources such as unit profitability. This research also demonstrates a valuable relationship twinned between human capital (intellectual capital) and structural capital, concluding that organisations with significant human and structural capital can expect greater profitability.

Hallin and Marnburg (2007) conclude that knowledge management is especially relevant for building up competitive advantage in the hotel industry. However, the hotel industry is far behind when it comes to existing efforts in knowledge management practices. This view of knowledge management providing competitive advantage in the hotel industry is supported by the work of Kim and Zhang (2008) in their research into small and medium sized hotels in Australia, when they state:

As arguably, knowledge management is both part of the cost of doing business and the most likely source of competitive advantage.

Kim and Zhang (2008) also highlight the fact that there are few knowledge management studies relating to small and medium sized hotels, however, they suggest that knowledge management initiatives can be taken from other small and medium sized industries and used as a benchmark for small and medium sized hotels.

The research by Kim and Zhang (2008) offers an interesting dimension to knowledge management within small and medium sized hotels. Kim and Zhang talk about the ‘path to knowledge management’ and that path is laid out depending on the hotel’s internal resources and capabilities in combination with external resources.
The path cross-roads to knowledge management set out by Kim and Zhang is based on practical and realistic approaches, the direction taken by the particular enterprise is directed by business intelligence and the strategic objectives of the business, it also considers the resources and capabilities of each business on a case-by-case base. The literature suggests that there has been much research focus on large hotel organisations such as The Hilton Hotel Group, yet the area of small and medium sized hotels has been to an extent neglected. Hence this study offers a reduction in the gap that exists into research relating to small and medium sized hotels.

3.7 Conclusion
This literature review has shown that Knowledge Management was first coined in 1986 by Wiig and by 1992 Drucker had already set out the stall for the evolving ‘knowledge society’ a society in which knowledge would be the currency of success. It has been shown that Knowledge Management gained momentum in the mid-1990s as technologies developed at an unprecedented rate and Knowledge Management would become the dominant managerial principle. Tacit Knowledge of the knowledge worker was now being presented as a company asset that could be realised on the company balance sheet.

Prusak and Wilson are pitted against each other as they try to box Knowledge Management into clearly defined parameters. It is argued that Knowledge Management is nothing more than a fad, yet the evidence to support such a proposition is weak. The evidence shows that Knowledge Management has survived and outlived right wing policies, it has integrated with and been integrated into new technologies, knowledge management has been hung drawn and quartered by some, however, the evidence presented here would suggest that Knowledge Management is versatile, flexible and adaptable.

This literature review has investigated whether Knowledge Management is a consultancy creation or a natural evolutionary chapter in the management genre. Knowledge Management and Information Management have been compared and contrasted. Key theorists have been used to argue for the proposition that Knowledge Management is nothing more than Information Management in new clothes, and the counter argument has been presented that Knowledge Management is distinguishable by its focus on tacit knowledge.
The evidence in this literature review shows that Information Management was concerned with the collection, storage and distribution of information, it has further been shown that the EU brought forward such standards as the ISO 9000 that were more concerned with conformity of procedures than they were with the tacit knowledge of knowledge workers/assets. The re-engineering theories of the 1980s are clearly the anti-thesis of Knowledge Management, and Information Management is clearly wedded to information management systems. It is clear that Knowledge Management has had the tacit knowledge of knowledge workers at its core from its birth as a managerial principle, and it is this core value that separates Knowledge Management from other managerial theories.

The importance of Knowledge Management has been considered, the fact that it is suggested by some commentators that Knowledge Management peaked in 2001, and this is the evidence presented to suggest that Knowledge Management is a fad, has been set against the reality that in 2002 and beyond the US Department of Defence and other important entities such as The World Bank continued to view Knowledge Management as a key and practical managerial principle. It has been shown that Knowledge Management offered a competitive edge when compared with other managerial theories that simply offered efficiencies in the management of information and data. It has been shown that Knowledge Management could be used as a predictive managerial model rather than simply managing and storing data.

The importance of people in Knowledge Management has been examined in terms of tacit and explicit knowledge; experts such as Polyanyi (1966) have been used to highlight the fact that Knowledge Management has had tacit knowledge as its corner stone since its birth as a managerial principle. The importance of people in terms of adaptability within an organisation has been discussed. The view that Knowledge Management without consideration for the tacit knowledge of knowledge workers is dangerously like the failed re-engineering managerial policies of the 1980s/90s has been explained.

The role of technology in Knowledge Management has been investigated; the work of Drucker has been used to explain the importance of the knowledge society, the significance of knowledge, and the central role of the knowledge worker. An industry based literature review has been used to suggest that technology developments were the driving force behind the development of Knowledge Management.
It has been shown that Knowledge Management has shifted inter-organisational processes from a transition model to a distributed knowledge management perspective. The evidence presented gives equal importance to the knowledge society, knowledge and the knowledge worker, however, it is the knowledge worker who must be centre stage, as it is the tacit knowledge of the knowledge worker who creates, maintains and feeds the knowledge society.

Knowledge Management has been defined within the evidence presented, using key theorists an argument has been advanced that Knowledge Management is a standalone managerial principle, and is an important and practical body of managerial theory. It has been shown that Knowledge Management crosses into a number of important disciplines, and in so doing may camouflage itself from easy identification.

However, it is the view of this author that Knowledge Management without the tacit knowledge of knowledge workers at its core is both dehumanising and demotivating for those who are subject to its advances. The goal of Knowledge Management must be to motivate and enrich the knowledge worker. It is the view of this writer and based on the evidence presented that the lack of definition or codification of Knowledge Management may well be its strength rather than its Achilles heel.

It has been suggested that a Community of Practice can help nurture knowledge sharing among knowledge workers; however, such knowledge sharing tools need to be supported in a supportive knowledge sharing environment. Such knowledge sharing programmes if not properly considered can put their own barriers between knowledge workers and their tasks. The core thrust of this dissertation will be to measure the impact on worker retention attitudes following the introduction of knowledge sharing tools and changes in work practice. The literature has shown that the majority of knowledge management focus has been on larger hotel organisations such as The Hilton Hotel Group, and that small and medium sized hotel types have been neglected, this project, based on two medium sized hotels, should help close the gap in the literature.

Within the limited confines of this literature review and in the absence of further in-depth research, it is the conclusion of this writer that Knowledge Management is an evolutionary chapter in the managerial genre and is not simply a consultancy creation. On the basis of the evidence presented here, it is clear that knowledge management offers a clear foundation upon which to build a knowledge management initiative, which is the basis of this research project.
Chapter 4: KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION DESIGN

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the design of the knowledge acquisition undertaken as part of the project. This process is central to the success of the project. The knowledge acquisition aims to identify attitudes towards worker retention, what knowledge is used, needed and considered missing in organisational flows, communication processes used and mechanisms to improve knowledge sharing and improve worker retention. This chapter will present the design of the knowledge audit, its plan for execution and evaluation. The informed development of the audit will be discussed identifying clearly the justification for the questions included, timing needed and evaluation planned.

This knowledge management initiative begins with a ground survey of the organisation, asking such questions that will elicit whether the organisation is ready for change, if there are any invisible barriers to change, such as cultural firewalls or can positive change indicators be elicited from the responses of workers and management to predetermined questions. Once the ground survey is complete and the knowledge management initiative has been designed, it is time to lay the foundation for the knowledge management initiative, and that foundation is the knowledge audit (Choy, 2004). The knowledge audit in this project will be broadly guided by Cheung’s et al (2007) systematic approach for knowledge auditing as set out in Figure 7.

4.2 Knowledge audit

![Figure 7 Cheung et al (2007) A systematic approach for knowledge auditing](image)
Cheung’s model is being used as a guide in this project as it sets out a clear process and steps to be followed. The two context specific environments for this project are two hotels based in Dublin; hotels are heavily dependent on the tacit and explicit knowledge of their knowledge workers, knowledge is understanding gained through experience, observation, or study and this definition is particularly true in the hotel industry. Hotels hold very small amounts of information or knowledge repositories; the majority of hotel commerce now takes place on the internet, from choosing, booking and paying for a hotel room or service, all are now completed online and normally by a third-party e-commerce site such as hoteldeal4u.com.

The majority of customer information (Data Protection Acts 1988/2003 and Retention of Data Act, 2011) must be removed within a short timeframe once all transactions have been satisfactorily completed. Staff recruitment is often based on personal recommendation or family connection and such basics as CVs do not exist. Staff wages are based on an automated banking process and wage calculations, payslips, P60 and so forth are normally prepared by third party companies. When all automated procedures are considered, the day to day running of a hotel, its products and services are conducted on the basis of the tacit and explicit knowledge of its knowledge workers.

4.2.1 Acquisition design

Throughout the literature it can be seen that a knowledge audit is the corner stone of a knowledge management initiative. The knowledge audit would be used in this project as it appeared to offer a greater opportunity to elicit knowledge than online surveys or simple questionnaires. It appeared that the knowledge audit could be designed to fit with the particular needs of the project. The knowledge audit would be utilised in order to establish knowledge inventories and present recommendations for training, work rotation and change in work practice.

In this project the knowledge audit refers to an in-depth interview with a representative sample of nine knowledge workers based on seventy unique pre-tested, pre-determined and open-ended questions that are concerned with the acquisition and elicitation of the tacit knowledge of knowledge workers in two context specific environments. The knowledge audit will help establish the retention attitude of knowledge workers in a pre-project setting.
Knowledge management is using knowledge to make decisions, solve problems, and improve performance. A knowledge management audit has two broad objectives:

(a) In the first stage to provide insights into the present situation concerning KM in the organisation, by means of a ‘snapshot’ of a number of crucial processes and preconditions.

(b) In the second stage, to provide strategies and tactics for the further development of KM in the organisation, by positioning the organisation along the KM development path (Hoof, 2003).

It can and has been argued that a knowledge audit is heavily anchored in the human element of an organisation and therefore only measures perception, however, ‘perception shapes reality’ (Biloslavo et al., 2007) as that reality, in knowledge management terms, relates to the human, cultural and organisational factors within an organisation and not simply related to ICT. The knowledge audit is the first ‘critical’ stage of introducing knowledge management into organisations (Liebowitz et al., 1999).

4.2.2 Acquisition justification

Buchanan et al (2010) states that qualifications are only one measure of skills in the workplace, a more comprehensive understanding takes into consideration the three logics of skill:

- Behavioural: ‘The personal qualities of the worker to deal with interpersonal relationships’;
- Cognitive: ‘Level and kind of education and training undertaken by the population to help it understand and act in the world’;
- Technical: ‘The capacity to undertake particular set tasks.’

In this project subjects will be interviewed in a face-to-face situation with the researcher, where if permission is granted the interviews will be recorded on a Sony Dictaphone, this approach is being adopted as enterprise knowledge is normally collected by means of a formal written format, such as self-assessment surveys, such formal methods leaves the subject more prone to withhold their knowledge as the retention of such knowledge is perceived to enhance their bargaining power.
The knowledge audit is being driven in this project by the need to measure the retention attitude of knowledge workers and identify any knowledge gaps that may exist. The knowledge audit is being conducted in the hope that positive retention attitudes may be supported by the scaffold of knowledge sharing tools/techniques and changes in work practice. It is further hoped that knowledge gaps may be bridged by offering knowledge workers the opportunity to up-skill, train and rotate jobs. According to Davenport (2005) knowledge workers find, create, package, distribute, and apply knowledge.

4.3. Knowledge Audit

4.3.1 Objectives of the Knowledge Audit

1. The knowledge audit will allow for the identification of knowledge worker retention attitude
2. The knowledge audit will help the organisation to identify what knowledge is needed to help both the knowledge workers and the organisation to achieve their strategic objectives.
3. The knowledge audit will identify knowledge gaps and identify improvements needed.
4. The knowledge audit will acquire and elicit tacit knowledge which will help explain how knowledge is used and understood within the organisation
5. The knowledge audit will provide the foundation for mapping communication flows
6. The knowledge audit will provide a unique knowledge management repository, making knowledge worker knowledge more visible, more measurable and more manageable

The knowledge audit in this project seeks to identify what knowledge the knowledge workers have, and what knowledge they will need in order to meet their own and the company’s objectives going forward. The knowledge audit in this project will help the organisation to develop future knowledge management strategies.

The analysis of the knowledge audit will help identify knowledge workers experience, skills and training to date, it will further identify competency needs and opportunities for training, development and work rotation. This knowledge will allow for the targeting of training and learning opportunities. Future job enrichment such as promotion and other potentials such as leadership may be realised.
4.3.2 Design of the Knowledge Audit

The representative samples in this project are drawn from two medium sized Dublin hotels each with approximately 35 rooms and with an in-house staff of 15 core employees. The employees can be broken down into four main categories, Management, Receptionist, Bar/kitchen staff and House-keeping. The representative sample for this project is made up of two managers, three receptionists, two bar/kitchen staff and two house-keeping staff and would therefore have significant external validity in relation to hotels with a similar room and staff portfolio.

This project can be described as both experimental and evaluative (Hart, 2005). The experimental aspect of the project will involve analysing the effects, on knowledge worker retention attitudes, following a number of key interventions, namely a knowledge audit, a face-to-face community of practice and an online community of practice. The effect of the interventions on knowledge worker retention attitudes will be measured by comparing the responses of knowledge workers to the pre-project knowledge audit and the post-project questionnaire. Analysis will try to determine if the interventions are the cause of the current state of the knowledge workers attitude to retention.

If this analysis shows that the independent variables have had an impact on the dependent variable then it can be said that a causal relationship exists. Leading directly from the literature a number of methods were employed to design the preliminary questionnaire for the Knowledge Audit, including the consultation of a number of key research texts (Creswell, 2003, Hart, 2005, Rudestam and Newton, 2007, Salkind, 2012, Armstrong and Baron, 1995).

Some previous research on worker retention and related issues had a heavily reliant psychological element; with questions relating to ‘Feeling depressed’, however, it was felt that such questions would not be appropriate or ethical for this project. The knowledge audit in this project would therefore be framed from a range of previous research that covered topics from socio-metrics to career aspirations.

All questions whether self-generated or variations of questions drawn from previous research would be subject to a PMI (De Bono, 1982) in order to eliminate any questions that failed to present an interesting dimension.
Open ended questions would be used as closed questions would assume that the researcher in this case has significant information in relation to the knowledge of the subjects; this would not be the case, particularly in relation to such job types as house-keeping. It has been established that a higher rate of ideas are shared by respondents when more response space is provided in mail surveys to questions that are open-ended. Bircham-Connolly et al (2005) concluded that their research supported earlier research by Bircham which concluded that:

*Question structure does matter; questions of a binary structure had a lower attitude measure than those questions for either an open-ended or directed structure.*

The next method employed was an extensive search of on-line recruitment agencies and expert sites, for job descriptions relating to hotel job types, interview techniques and questions employed for hotel job types, this search also included the recruitment site for the worldwide Hilton Hotel Group and The Cornell School of Hotel Management which was established in 1922. E-mails were sent to the Irish Hotels Federation (IHF), Failte Ireland and Tourism Ireland seeking relevant information relating to hotel job types.

An excellent paper by Spanish researchers Salanova and Agut (2005) and based on research in 58 hotels and 56 restaurants offered a unique insight to the mediating role of the service climate in the predication of employee performance and customer loyalty. In order to establish if hotel workers can be categorised as engaging in precarious work (Mandate, 2012) a number of questions were formulated on the basis of previous research conducted by (Mandate, 2012) and those questions would be used during the knowledge audit.

Two significant and internationally recognised questionnaire/questions/survey repositories were visited and a significant number of survey papers stored on these sites were read by this author.


4.4 Receptionist pilot questionnaire justification

Having been informed by the literature and other preliminary research, interesting phenomena was presented; it appeared that there were differences of opinion between various experts on what was expected of various hotel worker types. It was decided to produce a pilot receptionist questionnaire (see, Appendix C) relating only to hotel receptionists as it seems to be generally agreed that the receptionist is a key worker type and often acts as a third tier of management. In designing such a singularly focused questionnaire the intention was to examine a multiplicity of job descriptions/competencies relating to a hotel receptionist and establish any anomalies. Ideally it would have been desirable to conduct such focused research for each and every hotel job type, however, this was not practical within the scope of the project, and it was felt that one well designed questionnaire focused on one significant job type would reveal differences of opinion between a multiplicity of experts including the receptionist, senior management and recruitment agencies.

The questionnaire would be a significant element of the pre-audit preparation and would contribute to the in-audit process by helping to shape questions for that process. In the absence of a generic model for a knowledge management initiative, a three stage approach has been recommended for the knowledge audit, two of which are mentioned above with the third being a post-audit analysis, all three come together to frame a systematic approach to the knowledge audit (Edwin and Edward, 1996 and Ann, 2002). While the questionnaire added a new element to the research it was felt that as a result of this preliminary research the researcher was in a better position to construct and execute the knowledge audit.

4.4.1 Receptionist pilot questionnaire implementation phase 1

The questionnaire was initially administered to a hotel receptionist who has fifteen years’ experience in the hotel industry. The Likert Scale was employed in order to identify work elements ranging from lowest importance (1) to highest importance (5). An open ended question was included in order that the subject could add any additional information that she felt made a professional receptionist, this open question acted as an element of quality verification for the initial questionnaire. On the basis of the single questionnaire, one question was changed as it lacked clarity. A number of smaller cosmetic changes were made; however, these cosmetic changes could not be regarded as having the potential to have any significant impact on the questionnaire design or interviewee responses.
4.4.2 Receptionist pilot questionnaire implementation phase 2

When the questionnaire had been tested on a single receptionist, some adjustments were made and the new questionnaire (adapted) was now given to two members of senior hotel management to ascertain their views on what makes a professional hotel receptionist. The senior managers have a combined total, equally divided, experience of 30 years in the hotel/hospitality industry and presently manage a number of hotels in Dublin. A comparison of the responses from the hotel receptionist and two senior managers were made in conjunction with the literature and details from on-line recruitment agencies including the Hilton Hotel Group recruitment site and Cornell School of Hotel Management.

4.4.3 Receptionist pilot questionnaire results

Table 4 sets out the Likert Scale scores attributed to each question by the Receptionist (Rec), Senior Manager 1 (SnrM 1) and Senior Manager 2 (SnrM 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Rec</th>
<th>SnrM 1</th>
<th>SnrM 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How important is it for a hotel receptionist to know the following about the hotel?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel History</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel facilities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel layout</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The names of all staff</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important is it for the hotel receptionist to be?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite and courteous</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know his/her direct supervisor/manager</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have knowledge about the hotel location</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have knowledge of facilities close to the hotel</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have good English</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be multi-lingual</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know the nationality of guests</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know if guests have stayed before</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be prepared to take on new skills to improve the job</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be a team player</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have IT knowledge</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have telephony training</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet regularly with fellow workers to share knowledge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have communication training</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have basic numeracy and literacy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have third level education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be able to multi-task</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have access to a work dedicated knowledge sharing platform (Blog)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The question relating to the Blog had the lowest score with an average combined score of 1.6

Table 4 Receptionist Pilot Questionnaire Results

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4.4.4 Receptionist pilot questionnaire analysis

In answering the original 38 closed questions on the pilot questionnaire the hotel receptionist achieved a score of 140, however, the receptionist reported that she had misread the question relating to the importance of house-keeping staff and would probably have given a lesser score than the 5 she awarded that question.

While both senior managers had a combined and equally divided thirty-years of experience in the hotel industry they scored 164 (senior manager 1) and 131 (senior manager 2), however, an additional question had been added to the original questionnaire and the responses of the senior managers to this question added an extra 5 points to their respective scores compared to the receptionist score.

Both senior managers strongly agreed that a hotel receptionist should have knowledge of the hotel’s history, and this view is supported by many of the hotel worker recruitment sites, including the Hilton Hotel Group, yet the hotel receptionist felt that knowledge of the hotel history was of very low importance.

Senior managers agreed it was highly important for the hotel receptionist to know the names of all hotel workers, this is also agreed on the recruitment sites, however, the hotel receptionist felt that knowing all the names of fellow workers was of low importance.

There was general agreement between senior managers, recruitment agencies and the hotel receptionist that receptionists should be prepared to take on new skills to improve the job, senior managers and the receptionist generating an average score of 4.

There was general agreement between senior managers, recruitment agencies and the hotel receptionist that receptionists should be prepared to be a team player, senior managers and the receptionist generating an average score of 4.7. However, when taken in conjunction with the receptionist’s response to knowing the names of fellow workers, it appears that some team building training is needed to address this imbalance.

All parties agreed that a hotel receptionist should have IT skills, however, there is some disparity in relation to the importance of such IT skills, senior manager (1) scores IT skills at 4 while senior manager (2) scores IT skills with 2, and the receptionist scored IT skills 4, average score 3.3. There is general agreement with recruitment agencies that a hotel receptionist will have to be IT literate.
The receptionist, senior managers and recruitment agencies agree that hotel receptionists must be prepared to share knowledge with fellow workers and the average score awarded between senior managers and the receptionist was 3.3. This is an area that requires further investigation with a view to establishing more clearly defined knowledge sharing facilities for knowledge workers. Interpersonal skills are central to any knowledge management initiative.

The ability of a hotel receptionist to multi-task was a high priority for senior managers, the receptionist and the recruitment agencies, with an average score of 3.6 awarded between the senior managers and hotel receptionist. It should be noted that while multi-tasking is a prerequisite of the receptionist job type, multi-tasking may also demotivate knowledge workers if it is equally weighted with ‘pace-determinants’ (Burchell et al, 2009).

The importance of having access to a work dedicated knowledge e-sharing platform (Blog) received one of the lowest average scores from both senior managers and the receptionist and receives little mention on the hotel recruitment sites. Senior managers and the receptionist awarded a combined average score of 1.6. This low response rate may well be due to lack of knowledge of the potential benefits of an e-sharing platform.

In answer to the question, be prepared to do an evening course to improve skills, received a low average score from both senior managers and the receptionist, with an average combined score of 2.6, interestingly the receptionist gave a personal score of 4, which may mean that senior managers are not aware of the willingness of workers to do evening courses.

Philip O’Connell (2009) writing for the ESRI Research Bulletin states that:

There has been renewed interest in recent years in education and training as instruments for economic progress, fuller employment and social integration. This coincides with a new emphasis on the need for ‘life-long learning’; to respond to changes in the organisation and technology of production and service delivery and to counter the socially disruptive effects of increased labour market flexibility. In this context, the role of job-related training is of particular importance.
When asked if a receptionist should be prepared to share knowledge (help trainees) both senior managers and the receptionist scored high with a combined average score of 4.6. The recruitment sites including the Hilton Hotel Group refer to the receptionist coordinating house-keeping activities and this may be a reference to the anchor position held by the receptionist.

The question relating to rotating work (for example, running reception today and bar tomorrow) received an average score of 3.6 from the senior managers and receptionist, work rotation is also referred to as an element of receptionist work on the recruitment websites, the literature also describes work rotation as a key motivator.

Having specific receptionist training is scored very high by the senior managers and the receptionist, recruitment sites also state specific training qualifications for receptionists in the UK and The Irish Hotel Federation have informed this author that they are developing some training modules for hotel receptionists. These responses mean that a specific question about training will have to be included in the knowledge audit for all workers including the receptionists.

In response to the question about doing training for work rotation, both senior managers and the receptionist scored this fairly high with a combined average of 3.6, the recruitment sites talk about training for work rotation and the motivational benefits from such rotation. An important UK online recruitment agency (redgoldfish.co.uk, 2012) had this to say about training for hotel staff:

> Some employers have in-house training schemes, which you can combine with off-the-job training at college. You can work towards NVQs/SVQs on-the-job or on day or block release at college. NVQs/SVQs in Catering and Hospitality are available. There are also NVQ/SVQs in Reception at Levels 1 and 2, and Hospitality Supervision at Level 3.

The above information relating to qualifications for all hotel worker types in the UK and the lack of demand for such qualifications from both hotels and Irish recruitment agencies such as Jobs.ie may mean that Ireland is lagging behind in offering qualifications and perhaps licencing for such worker types.

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Be prepared to rotate job for the benefit of the company, scored high with an average combined score of 4 from senior managers and the receptionist, both the recruitment agencies and the literature refer to the importance of work rotation for worker motivation and so forth.

Being prepared to do an online training course to improve receptionist skills was well scored at 3.6 by the combined average score of senior managers and the receptionist, Hotelnewsnow.com reports that at the 6th Annual HR in Hospitality Conference and Exposition held on the 2nd March 2012 in the USA, hoteliers and HR professionals were agreed that:

*Online training modules attracted more participants who were more engaged and showed higher rates of retention*²².

Hartigan, J. (2012) has thirty-years-experience in the hotel/hospitality industry and is a senior executive with Hilton Hotels Worldwide had this to say about social media as a training tool:

*...that social media has the potential to be an ideal supplement to your training arsenal. The question is how can we use it in a training context?*²³

The open ended question at the end of each of the questionnaire was an opportunity for both the hotel receptionist and senior managers to add any additional information that they believed would be important attributes for a professional hotel receptionist, the responses to the open ended question were as follows:

**Senior Manager (1):** Some of the most important values a receptionist should have are to be bubbly, helpful and an enduring personality first. Skills can be bought, personality can’t.

**Senior Manager (2):** Needs to be able to work on own initiative, be very helpful, be able to see an opportunity and act on it.

**Receptionist (1):** Receptionist needs to know how to deal with complaints and unhappy guests, ensuring payment is correct/pre-paid booking and so forth.

²³ http://www.hotelnewsnow.com/Articles.aspx/8331/Social-media-tools-enhance-staff-training
It is worth remembering that the three respondents have a combined total of 45 years experience in the hotel/hospitality sector. A basic text analysis identifying keywords relating to a receptionist in the three statements above are set out in this simple visualisation in Figure 8.

![Figure 8 Keywords relating to professional receptionist (wordle.com)](image)

The overall finding in relation to the focused questionnaire was that consideration would have to be given in the knowledge audit questions to the fact that hotel workers may perceive their role differently from that of their managers, recruitment agencies and some of the literature. This information is important due to the fact that when employees don’t fully understand their role or their role is not fully appreciated by management this can be a de-motivator resulting in low organisational commitment, burnout and high turnover (Mak and Sockel, 2001). The questionnaire has highlighted a number of interesting issues that will have to be addressed in the knowledge audit in order to ensure that knowledge gaps can be filled with appropriate training, training that is provided on the basis of a global view of worker and organisation needs, rather than the narrow needs of management for production purposes only. Traditional job evaluation has focused on jobs rather than roles and in so doing have intentionally avoided considering the value of people (Armstrong and Baron, 1995).

The questionnaire has identified the fact that there are a variety of views to be considered when framing the questions for the knowledge audit, including the fact that what knowledge workers may perceive as important factors, may not be considered important by senior management. Competency acquisition implemented for the wrong reason can be costly for an enterprise as it may end up paying for something that it cannot use (Armstrong and Baron, 1995). For example, it is clear that senior management feel it is important for a hotel receptionist to have knowledge of the hotel’s history and this could be addressed very easily by placing that history on the hotel website and encourage receptionists to read that history.
4.4.5 Knowledge Audit questions

The selection of the 70 questions (see, Disc 1) for the knowledge audit was central to the project. In order to obtain a high level of reliability, a number of checkpoints were set up in the knowledge audit. The survey would include a combination of very specific job type questions, retention attitude related questions and organisational questions in order to help subjects focus on their responses. The key factors relating to motivation/retention/burnout were mapped from the work of Mak and Sockel (2001).

4.4.6 The knowledge audit presented

The 70 questions were now broken down into several sections in order to ensure that a global view of the knowledge workers could be established. When developing a competency based factor plan for job evaluation purposes the initial move is to identify the factors (Armstrong and Baron, 1995). All questions generated for the knowledge audit were tested for quality and duplication before they were integrated into one set of questions. This integrated set of 70 questions was randomly mixed in order that the various themes would not be apparent to the subjects as set out in Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge Audit Question Type and Question Number Related to Type 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question Type</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precarious work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation factors/Job satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of management on career development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover intent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-metrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge sharing readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to train</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job rotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team player</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Knowledge Audit question type and question number related to type 2012
4.4.7 Knowledge Audit pilot questionnaire execution

The 70 Knowledge Audit questions were piloted (see, Disc 1) on a single receptionist. The 70 questions took a total of 31 minutes to administer and this was viewed as reasonable by the receptionist. Interview protocol could also be conducted at this stage in order to test the suitability of the question types, if the questions were understood by the interviewees; initial timing estimates could be established.

With the consent of the receptionist, the interview was recorded for authenticity and verification (see, Disc 1). Throughout the interview process the researcher had to make additional inputs in terms of prompts and explanation, however, the researcher felt that the issues arising were from the context of the interview rather than question design, and the lack of familiarity with the interviewing process by the subject. It was clear that some repetition in the questions was an irritation for the subject; however, it was felt that this limited repetition was necessary in order to elicit the most verifiable responses to the questions.

The questionnaire for the knowledge audit and the 70 responses will not be fully analysed here, however, they are included in the main knowledge audit. A brief-analysis of the receptionist responses to some question types are set out here in order to contextualise the knowledge audit. In order to establish if the receptionist can be described as engaging in precarious work, 5 key questions, which can be mapped back to the research by Mandate (2012) were included. Each section of the knowledge audit, for example, precarious work, would be allocated a scoring metric of 100%\(^{24}\), therefore each factor/question would be equally weighted, so there are five factors/questions relating to precarious work and so each factor would be awarded 20%+ or 20-. If the subject scored 60%+ in favour of precarious work factors then the subject would be indicating that they were most likely engaging in precarious work. The project is primarily based on qualitative research and so dependent on the degree of responses from two small representative samples of knowledge workers.

Mandate (2012) and other literature contained in this paper suggest that a key determinant of precarious work is the fact that the workers hours are flexible and such flexibility interferes with both social and family life, however, the receptionist in the pilot study suggested that the flexible hours suited her life style. The receptionist stated that she had no formal training to be a receptionist and while she had worked in 5 hotels in her 15 year career she had never been asked for a professional qualification specifically relating to being a hotel receptionist.

\(^{24}\) Student Research Experience Questionnaire (2005-2010)
4.4.8 Findings

The receptionist reported that she was aware of a hotel management course being delivered by DIT. In relation to DIT hospitality programmes, Dr Dominic Dillane, head of the school of hospitality management and tourism at DIT, had the following to say when announcing a new tourism initiative in China:

*The initiative is a strong endorsement of the quality of our programmes, but equally importantly it recognises the high quality of the Irish tourism product which has been developed and delivered by our graduates (irishtimes.com 24/7/2012).*

Hotel management and other hospitality qualifications are offered in most European countries, however, the literature points to America as the leading light in hotel and hospitality training, with such prestigious institutions as The Cornell School of Hotel Management describing its research department thus:

*The Centre for Hospitality Research (CHR) is the leading source for quality research on and for the hospitality industry. It creates new knowledge – and shares that knowledge to power hospitality forward. At roundtables and other meetings, Hotel School faculty, corporate partners, and other industry leaders collaborate to frame timely issues and understand important topics*\(^\text{25}\).

The receptionist reported that it was easy to be hired and fired in the hotel industry and that there was a “big turnover”, this is a key determinant of precarious work according to Mandate (2012) and other research set out in this dissertation. Possibly the most interesting response from the receptionist in the pilot questionnaire/knowledge audit related to ‘social security protections’, the receptionist seemed totally unaware of the JLC Agreements that related to the hotel industry, although the receptionist has worked in the hotel industry for 15 years. This finding would concur with other research set out in this dissertation that suggests that up to 97% of hotel and low paid workers never benefited from the JLC agreements (Turner and O’Sullivan, 2012). The receptionist also said that her wages had been reduced due to the inclusion of low paid workers in various new tax bands/levies introduced in Ireland these past years. While the receptionist acknowledged that such levies and taxes were universal and did not simply apply to low paid workers, the fact was that due to the low pay rates in the hotel sector the majority of workers had previously been excluded from some taxation and levies.

\(^\text{25}\) http://www.hoteleschool.cornell.edu/
While Mandate (2012) strongly suggest that the majority of low paid workers are employed on a part-time or flexible basis, the receptionist stated that she was employed on a full-time basis and had been employed as such for a 15 year period. The receptionist did not offer any indications of job insecurity. In relation to the 5 questions/factors relating to ‘precarious work’ the receptionist offered a variety of responses, some of which did not fit easily with Mandate’s (2012) ‘generic’ definition of precarious work. While the receptionist reported having flexible hours, this flexibility did not appear to cause any frustration, and possibly suited the lifestyle choices of the receptionist. While the receptionist had no formal training for the position of receptionist it was clear that she had pursued some training in IT and in her view had progressed in her job as her experience grew. However, there appeared to be no relationship between progression/experience and reward, the latter would be tested in the Knowledge Audit.

4.4.9 Pilot knowledge audit questionnaire analysis

The most interesting response was that which related to ‘social security protection’ and the fact that the receptionist had no knowledge of and had never benefited from JLC agreements which relate directly to low paid workers. The receptionist reported working on a full-time basis and offered no issues with regard to job security.

4.4.10 Conclusion

In conclusion, while this pilot questionnaire/pre-knowledge audit was only tested on one hotel worker type, that subject has a total of 15 years-experience in the hotel sector and that career has spanned 5 different hotels, and therefore the responses have strong validity in a context specific environment. The subject clearly identified 4 out of 5 of the precarious work factors (Mandate, 2012) applying to her work type, while the receptionist did not take issue with some of these factors including flexible hours and social security protections, the views of each knowledge worker will be context specific, and it can be concluded that the receptionist, based on her responses, is very likely engaged in precarious work, however, that precarious work may not be as detrimental to the worker as suggested by Mandate (2012) and others.
Chapter 5: KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION, IMPLEMENTATION, ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the steps taken in the implementation of the knowledge acquisition, including analysis, evaluation and conclusions drawn from the evidence. Meetings with key stakeholders such as senior management were essential if the project was to be seen to be supported from the top down. Having gained the confidence of key stakeholders the process of introduction to knowledge workers was made much easier; however, it was essential to build trust with all stakeholders. The execution of the knowledge audit is explained and some of the concerns that where felt by the researcher are set out. A full set of results are shown and analysis offered with conclusions drawn based on the evidence from the acquisition.

5.2 Implementation

The researcher met with two senior hotel managers. Key issues were discussed, both in terms of the knowledge audit, work/training rotational matrix, face-to-face community of practice and online community of practice. The researcher used this meeting to map information/knowledge/communication flows within the organisation. Other matters were discussed including the possible production of work type training manuals, for example, a training manual for receptionists. Both senior managers stated that no such manuals existed in the hotels known to them, the possibility of in-house training events were also discussed. A number of communication/information flow issues were raised.

In a significant piece of research into corporate culture within the hotel sector and published in the Cornell School of Hotel Management quarterly magazine in July 2012 it was found that:

\[
\text{The tradition-bound Hierarchical culture actually cost hotels in terms of financial performance.}
\]

It is clear from the researcher’s own observations, interviews with experts and research findings in the literature review that when it comes to knowledge re-use repositories, such as manuals, it is unlikely that knowledge producers in the hotel industry have the resources or the incentives necessary to perform well at repurposing knowledge (Markus, 2001).
Senior management introduced the researcher to the hotel staff (26/6/2012) and the knowledge audit was explained in simple terms. The confidentiality and anonymity of the interviewees were guaranteed. Both in-house hotel managers provided their mobile phone numbers to the researcher in order that any changes to interview scheduling could be changed.

5.3 Knowledge Audit execution

The knowledge audit began (27/6/2012); Table 6 shows socio-metrics for the 9 knowledge audit subjects and the original 3 pilot interviewees. The table represents a breakdown of job type, gender, level of education, skills, time in hotel sector and time in current job.

The interview subjects had work experience in the hotel/hospitality ranging from 15yrs > 2mths

Index: CS = Customer Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Job Type</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Educat.</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Time in sector</th>
<th>Time in c-job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Senior. Mgt.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3rd L</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>15yrs</td>
<td>10yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Senior. Mgt.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3rd L</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>15yrs</td>
<td>10yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Receptionist Pilot/Rec.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>L/C</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>15yrs</td>
<td>6yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Receptionist Pilot/KA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>L/C</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>15yrs</td>
<td>6yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Reception 1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>L/C</td>
<td>IT/CS</td>
<td>9mths</td>
<td>9mths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reception 2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>L/C</td>
<td>IT/CS</td>
<td>2mths</td>
<td>2mths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Reception Mgt. 1</td>
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<td>L/C</td>
<td>IT</td>
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<td>9mths</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Bar-kit 1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>L/C</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>2yrs</td>
<td>6mths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>House K. 1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Prim</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>5yrs</td>
<td>9mths</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>House K. 2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>L/C</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>10yrs</td>
<td>5mths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Reception Mgt. 2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3rd L</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>15yrs</td>
<td>14mths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Bar-kit 2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>L/C</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>6yrs</td>
<td>15mths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>F75/M25%</td>
<td>P&lt;3rd L</td>
<td>IT/CS</td>
<td>103.8yr</td>
<td>37.9yr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For full interview transcripts (see, Disc 1), those transcripts will not be set out in detail here, however, to contextualise the knowledge audit process one of the interviews is set out here. The first interview was with Receptionist (1), who did not want the interview recorded and this request was respected.
The second interview was with Receptionist (2) who came on duty at 3pm and following the handover with Receptionist (1) the researcher began the recorded interview as receptionist (2) continued with her work, the researcher decided to proceed in this way as it offered an opportunity to observer the receptionist in action and as the 4pm interview had been cancelled the researcher could allocate more time to the receptionist (2) interview. While there was some interruption, such interruption had little impact on the interview and offered an interesting insight into receptionist multi-tasking (see, Disc 1) which had been referred to so often by experts.

The researcher intentionally allowed this interview to run its own course in order to establish if any additional information could be elicited when compared with a more tightly managed interview as had been the case with receptionists 0 and 1. The observable results of this method were interesting, the researcher observed that at the outset of the interview process, the receptionist sat up straight in her chair and almost psyched herself into the interview. The receptionist demonstrated what the researcher would describe as ‘Positive Resistance to Penetration’ or fire-walling, this is where the interviewee was very positive about her job and the organisation, however, midway into the 70 questions the interviewee began to slump down into her chair and became outwardly very relaxed or tired, appearing at times to forget that the interview was being recorded and her answers began to portray more negative views of her job, colleagues and organisation.

It appeared to the researcher that in a short interview this more honest exposure to worker attitude to job type and organisation would not be realised, and so the decision to run with 70 questions was justified. However, that justification may carry a caveat in relation to ethical issues, could an extensive audit that causes a subject to become tired and ‘negative’ be considered ‘unethical’.

It is clear to the researcher that ‘Positive Resistance to Penetration’ or fire-walling can only be broken down by means of a longitudinal knowledge audit. It was very clear from both of the initial interviews in terms of responses and body language that cultural firewalls exist in the organisation, there was a clear feeling of ‘them and us’, with comments like:

The four of us here on reception are Irish and that’s great (see, Disc 1).
5.4 Knowledge audit results and analysis

Table 7 sets out the knowledge audit results matrix. (See also, Appendix D: Knowledge audit worksheet breakdown matrix: Question type, Job type, Responses, totals)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Rec 1</th>
<th>Rec 2</th>
<th>Rec 3</th>
<th>Rec 4</th>
<th>Rec 5</th>
<th>Rec 6</th>
<th>Rec 7</th>
<th>Rec 8</th>
<th>Rec 9</th>
<th>Totals 1</th>
<th>Totals 2</th>
<th>Totals 3</th>
<th>Totals 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KS</td>
<td>66.6+</td>
<td>33.3+</td>
<td>100+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100+</td>
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<td>100+</td>
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<td>100+</td>
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<td>100+</td>
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<tr>
<td>TA</td>
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<td>27.1+</td>
<td>42.9+</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
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<td>55.6+</td>
<td>44.5+</td>
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<td>22.2+</td>
<td>55.6+</td>
<td>44.5+</td>
<td>55.6+</td>
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<td>50+</td>
<td>33.3+</td>
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<td>50+</td>
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<td>23.9+</td>
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<td>37.1+</td>
<td>75.6+</td>
<td>24.3+</td>
<td>76.0+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 Knowledge audit results matrix, question type, worker type, individual and total average category scores, individual retention score (green) + , overall project retention score (red)

Collectively the 9 core knowledge audit subjects including 3 receptionists, 2 reception managers, 2 bar-kit and 2 housekeeping have 58.8yrs experience in the hotel hospitality sector, with individual experience ranging from 15yrs>2mths. Collectively the 9 subjects have 11.9yrs experience in their current positions ranging from 6yrs>2mths. In terms of educational obtainment, one of the subjects left school after her primary education, 7 of the 9 subjects have Leaving Certificate (grades not disclosed), and one has a third level Diploma in Hotel management.

Interestingly one of the subjects is a qualified electrician and another has previously worked in a management position in a different sector with a major company in Dublin, both were made redundant and are now working well below par to pay the bills, and would be described by this writer as the ‘new precariat’. The 9 subjects expressed an aspiration to make some progress in their current employment, these aspirations ranged from improved job design, to training for a management or other job type.

The individual tables and analysis for each of the nine subjects is housed in (Disc 1) it is enough here to highlight a number of interesting points about the individual scores presented in Disc 1.
Table 8 represents the total scores provided by House-keeping (1), this subject scores 100+ in relation to precarious work. Total worker retention score (rs) is achieved by adding the 13 category scores (cs) together and divide by 13, (13cs ÷ 13 = rs).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>House-keeping 1</th>
<th>% +</th>
<th>% -</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual worker type scores</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge sharing readiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Audit</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to train</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Rotation</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Player</td>
<td></td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precarious work</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation factors/Job satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of management on career development</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td></td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover intent</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job design</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>83.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total worker retention score</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 Individual score table for housekeeping 1 (HK1)

The knowledge audit results have been captured in a number of tables:

1. An overall result matrix setting out question types, job types, responses and collective totals has been set out (see, Appendix D).
2. An individual table has been created for each of the nine subjects and an analysis of each individual table has been provided (see, Disc 1).
3. A table entitled Knowledge Audit Individual and Total Scores % has been set out (see, Table 7).

The statistical analysis by Mak and Sockel (2001) is not appropriate for this project as the project is primarily based on qualitative research and so dependent on the degree of responses from two small representative samples of knowledge workers, the literature does not offer any overt weighting to any particular question type.
In this project a simple measure was applied informed by statistical analysis approaches, each question category, for example, precarious work, was allocated 100% and each factor within that category was allocated a percentage based on the number of factors, for example, precarious work has 5 questions/factors attached and each question was allocated 20%, if subjects offered support for three questions that supported the idea of precarious work then precarious work would be awarded 60%+ and 40%, this suggests that based on Mandate’s determination of precarious work, the subject is most likely working in precarious work with a factor of 60+ > 40%.

In relation to the Training Audit, house-keeping and Bar/kitchen staff scored low with an average combined score of 17.85+, while both receptionists and reception managers in any combination scored an average of 57.1+ in relation to the Training Audit. This result may suggest that house-keeping and bar/kitchen staff require low skill-sets for their job type. These results may also mean that certain worker types are simply not given training as they are viewed as very transient/disposable and not worth the investment, the latter being consistent with previous research. These findings relating to under-skilled workers are at odds with the conclusions of Felstead et al (2007) which found that over 55% of hotel workers in the UK were over-skilled for their job type.

When the questions relating specifically to Retention are analysed, it is clear that all worker types score positively with a combined average score of 58+, however, when this score is cross referenced with responses relating to Turnover Intent 37+ there is a significant disparity between both sets of combined responses. It is difficult to offer an explanation for this disparity; however, while all the questions were randomly placed on the questionnaire, the majority of the questions relating to Turnover Intent are to the end of the questionnaire and this was observed by this researcher to be a time when subjects appeared to be offering more negative/honest responses.

Both reception managers (who may also be described as general managers) offer some interesting responses. Both managers are very resistant to Job Rotation, both express possessive tendencies towards their respective positions in the two hotels. These possessive tendencies may relate to job insecurity, familiarity with the job type or the need for stability in an uncertain industry.

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26 Student Research Experience Questionnaire (2005-2010)
Work rotation could play a key role in removing possessive tendencies and increasing motivation. The two reception managers offer significantly different responses in relation to Perception of Management on Career Development, manager (1) 80+ and manager (2) 25+, however, it must be repeated here that manager (1) is a close relative of one of the senior managers and this may distort his response.

The most interesting responses from both managers related to job design, both scoring Job Design 33.3+, this is interesting when we remember that one of the managers is a close relative of one of the senior managers. Job Design is very much an issue according to all worker types, including those who have been extremely positive in their responses. Another interesting outcome from the individual score sheet totals when we apply the formula (13cs ÷ 13 = rs) as set out above was the fact that three of the knowledge workers scored significantly higher than the other six knowledge workers interviewed. This finding would be reflected by the researcher’s own observations, in terms of interpersonal skills, multi-tasking, good communication and overall job commitment.

Table 9 shows the results from the audit.

| Categories   | Rec.0 | Rec.1 | Rec.2 | Rec.3 | Rec.4 | Rec.5 | Rec.6 | Rec.7 | Rec.8 | Rec.9 | Rec.10 | Rec.11 | Rec.12 | Rec.13 | Rec.14 | Rec.15 | Rec.16 | Rec.17 | Rec.18 | Rec.19 | Rec.20 | Rec.21 | Rec.22 | Rec.23 | Rec.24 | Rec.25 | Rec.26 |
|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| KS           | 60.6+ | 33.3+ | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    |
| TA           | 57.1+ | 42.9+ | 57.1+ | 42.9+ | 57.1+ | 42.9+ | 42.9+ | 9+    | 100+  | 62.9+ | 42.9+ | 57.1+ | 42.9+ | 57.1+ | 14.3+ | 53.8+ | 42.9+ | 57.1+ | 42.9+ | 57.1+ | 14.3+ | 53.8+ | 42.9+ | 57.1+ | 14.3+ |
| WTT          | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    |
| JR           | 65.4+ | 21.3+ | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    |
| TP           | 66.6+ | 21.3+ | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    | 100+  | 0+    |
| PAV          | 80+   | 20+   | 80+   | 20+   | 80+   | 20+   | 80+   | 20+   | 100+  | 0+    | 80+   | 20+   | 100+  | 0+    | 80+   | 20+   | 100+  | 0+    | 80+   | 20+   | 100+  | 0+    | 80+   | 20+   | 100+  | 0+    | 80+   | 20+   |
| MHS          | 75+   | 25+   | 50+   | 25+   | 75+   | 25+   | 75+   | 25+   | 75+   | 25+   | 75+   | 25+   | 75+   | 25+   | 75+   | 25+   | 75+   | 25+   | 75+   | 25+   | 75+   | 25+   | 75+   | 25+   | 75+   | 25+   |
| SMCD         | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   |
| R            | 100+  | 0+    | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   |
| L            | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   | 50+   |
| Motivation   | 55.6+ | 44.5+ | 55.6+ | 44.5+ | 55.6+ | 44.5+ | 55.6+ | 44.5+ | 55.6+ | 44.5+ | 55.6+ | 44.5+ | 55.6+ | 44.5+ | 55.6+ | 44.5+ | 55.6+ | 44.5+ | 55.6+ | 44.5+ | 55.6+ | 44.5+ | 55.6+ | 44.5+ | 55.6+ |
| JO           | 33.3+ | 66.6+ | 50+   | 50+   | 33.3+ | 66.6+ | 50+   | 50+   | 33.3+ | 66.6+ | 50+   | 50+   | 33.3+ | 66.6+ | 50+   | 50+   | 33.3+ | 66.6+ | 50+   | 50+   | 33.3+ | 66.6+ | 50+   | 50+   | 33.3+ |
| Retention    | 62.5+ | 37.5+ | 62.5+ | 37.5+ | 62.5+ | 37.5+ | 62.5+ | 37.5+ | 62.5+ | 37.5+ | 62.5+ | 37.5+ | 62.5+ | 37.5+ | 62.5+ | 37.5+ | 62.5+ | 37.5+ | 62.5+ | 37.5+ | 62.5+ | 37.5+ | 62.5+ | 37.5+ | 62.5+ |

Table 9 Knowledge audit result matrix

5.5 Key Findings from the knowledge audit

The knowledge elicited from the knowledge audit was organised into knowledge inventories for identifying where the various knowledge is located in the organisation, including Who, What and Where factors being itemised (See, Appendix D) and the overall project being set out on a concept map (see, Appendix A and Disc 1). The knowledge audit has been utilised in order to clearly demonstrate the knowledge exchange paths and social network analysis which is crucial to any knowledge management initiative either now or in the future.
**Knowledge sharing readiness:** The total combined score of respondents for knowledge sharing readiness is 96%+ in support of knowledge sharing. This score combined with the support of senior management suggests that the organisation is ready for a knowledge management/sharing initiative.

**Training audit:** The training audit has identified significant gaps in relation to training required by knowledge workers both in terms of basic training in health and safety as well as more job focused training such as IT/hotel systems. Respondents scored 38%+ in relation to the training audit questions, which leaves a short fall of 62%- in terms of training needs.

**Willingness to train:** Respondents scored 94%+ in relation to willingness to train, this provides an opportunity to provide workers with training programmes. Training programmes will have to be identified and recommendations put forward so that knowledge workers can reach their personal gaols and be better able to help their respective companies to meet their business objectives.

**Job rotation:** Job rotation is a somewhat vexed issue, it is clear with a combined score of 74%+ that the workforce is prepared to rotate jobs, however, it is equally clear that some workers do not want to rotate in all job types. House-keeping appears to be a job type from which one rotates from rather than to. Both managers could benefit from job/location rotation as they appear fixed and this can be a de-motivator according to the literature.

**Team player:** Respondents scored a combined total of 81%+ in relation to being team players, however, when other responses are considered, such as meeting with co-workers, knowing the names of co-workers or having good friends in work suggest that there are cultural firewalls within the organisations, these cultural firewalls will have to be addressed by means of targeted training initiatives.

**Precarious work:** Scores high when the combined total of knowledge workers responses are considered, 84%+, yet there are many contradictions with the definition of precarious work set out by Mandate (2012) including the need to consider the ‘new precariat’ as so defined by this author, further Mandate determinations in relation to part-time work, flexible hours and so forth are not so black and white, with workers stating that such factors suit their life style choices, although this is not universal in this research.
Motivation factors and Job Satisfaction: These questions relate to motivation due to job satisfaction and are different from questions relating directly to motivation. Motivation factors/job satisfaction score high at 67%+ and this suggests that workers have a high degree of job satisfaction from which they derive job related motivation, however, the 33% margin suggests that there is work to do in relation to job satisfaction, also see job design below. Other considerations may be that people are simply happy to have any job in the economic downturn.

Perception of management on career development: Presents a real challenge for management as the combined score by respondents was 34%+, meaning that management are failing by 66% to assist knowledge workers to develop their careers. A number of reasons for low investment in training have been advanced in this paper. However, this project is based on the idea of introducing knowledge sharing tools/techniques and change in work practice, and therefore it is hoped that this project can help bring about change management.

Retention: Has a combined score of 58%+, however, a number of key factors must to be considered in this regard, for example, uncertainty in the industry, economic pressures, lack of opportunity and so forth. It is highly unlikely that the knowledge workers who were subject to this research would turn down any reasonable offer from another company, and as this research has shown, that reasonable offer does not necessarily have to relate directly to monetary reward. Monetary incentives and good working conditions are less important to the individual than the need to belong to a group (Mayo, 1933).

Loyalty: Loyalty has been described by this author as a term that may no longer apply in real terms to the hotel sector, and such a term may be replaced with ‘Velcro-attachment’, as such a term best describes this author’s observations and analysis of responses in the knowledge audit.

Turnover intent: Has a combined positive score of 37%+, however, some responses waived on Yes/No responses, the 63%- negative score indicates that workers will leave their present job if certain opportunities are presented, and it is likely that the true potential for turnover is much higher. A number of key reasons for high turnover intent have been identified in the knowledge audit, including lack of autonomy and career progression.
Motivation: Knowledge workers scored 57%+ on motivation responses, however, other responses would suggest that motivation is not this high within the organisations that were subject to this research. This high motivation may relate to the fact that someone has actually taken an interest in their work, a question relating to this aspect will be on the post-project questionnaire.

Job design: This was the lowest combined score for any knowledge audit category, providing a combined total of 30%+, which suggests that workers are not happy with the design of their job type or work environment. Good job design is a key motivator according to the literature. Job design issues may be addressed in the work/training rotational matrix and both the online and in-house face-to-face community of practice.

The overall retention score achieved in the knowledge audit will be addressed in conjunction with the results of the post-project questionnaire.

5.6 Conclusion

While it can be concluded that the overall project has had a positive effect on knowledge worker attitude to retention, this project was based on a small industry sample in two context specific environments and does not labour its findings beyond that scope, it was exploratory rather than definitive. However, it may be suggested that a similar experiment in a similar context may yield positive results and impact on worker retention. The tool-kit utilised may be extrapolated for application to other hotel types. It is clear that an extensive knowledge audit can help create knowledge inventories, and identify knowledge gaps, and it is unlikely that the depth of knowledge elicited in this project could have been achieved with short questionnaires or the absence of face-to-face interviewing.

While loyalty continues to be utilised in the literature as a factor in knowledge worker commitment to the work place, the research conducted in this project would suggest that loyalty is not applicable in the context specific environments investigated. This research has discovered what can be described as Velcro-attachment, Velcro-attachment being the knowledge worker’s attachment to the work place by a number of key factors, none of which weld him/her to the job in the traditional sense, but rather attach them with various levels of influence.
The 70 questions contained in the knowledge audit in this project could represent the stickiness of the Velcro-attachment model. If all the boxes are ticked positively on the Velcro-attachment, then the Velcro is firmed into place, however, the Velcro-attachment may be detached at any time due to a change in circumstance, this change may be internal (change of management) or external (pick-up in the economy), whether micro or macro, whether internal or external, the Velcro-attachment has little in common with what has traditionally been described as worker loyalty.

Two of the nine knowledge workers who participated in the knowledge audit presented an interesting finding. Both have previously held jobs with much greater status, autonomy and remuneration, yet both of them were made redundant and now find themselves in a job type that offers few prospects for career advancement and most certainly does not offer the autonomy they would have enjoyed in their previous employment. While this project is based on a small representative sample of nine knowledge workers/assets in two context specific environments, the two workers identified as the ‘new precariat’ do make up 22.2% of the total workers interviewed and 6.66% of the total workers in the two hotels. This initial identification of the ‘new precariat’ would present an interesting research subject for further investigation.
Chapter 6: WORK/TRAINING ROTATIONAL MATRIX

6.1 Introduction
This chapter explains why the work/training rotational matrix is being proposed, where the idea for the matrix has come from, how it is being developed and how it will be used both in this project and beyond the scope of this project. The hotel industry is in a critical condition, hotels are being farmed out by official receivers to anyone who offers themselves as a hotel consultant, these hotel consultants are then tasked with the day to day running of multi-million Euro enterprises. The day to day running of these multi-million Euro enterprises is almost wholly dependent on the tacit and explicit knowledge of their knowledge workers/assets, it is essential that new tools and techniques are developed in order to capture that tacit and explicit knowledge so that worker retention may be improved.

The work/training rotational matrix is being proposed as it offers a simple solution to a complex problem. There is an unprecedented need to capture the tacit and explicit knowledge of knowledge workers/assets within the hotel industry so that both individual enterprises and the industry as a whole may be stabilised.

Official receivers are taking control of multi-million Euro enterprises that hold little or no information about the day to day operation of those enterprises, in situations where hotels have closed for a pro-longed period, they are being re-opened by management consultants who have to start with a blank canvas as the hotel’s knowledge has walked out the door with the knowledge workers/assets. The most valuable asset of any hotel is the knowledge of its workers, that knowledge needs to be captured, stored and be ready for re-use.

6.2 Justification
The work/training rotational matrix in this project is used to present a simple visualisation of recommendations flowing from the knowledge audit, the reason that the matrix is being used as a visualisation in this project is in order that the recommendations for training, job rotation and other changes to work practice may be implemented swiftly in order that worker retention may be improved. Based on the researcher’s knowledge of the senior management involved, it is certain that if complex spread-sheets were to be presented the recommendations would not be acted upon or would be acted upon at a much slower pace.
However, the work/training rotational matrix as presented in this project is the foundation for future research and development of a fully operational IT human resource filtration system, its scale is infinite, the work/training rotational matrix would be the key output of the project.

The work/training rotational matrix can be applied to any industry or work place. An extensive knowledge audit clearly identifies each job type, those job type competencies are set out on the work/training rotational matrix. As well as identifying the job type competencies the work/training rotational matrix contains key organisational competencies or departmental competencies. From the organisational and job type competencies set out in the work/training rotational matrix a job type application-form/questionnaire is developed, this job type questionnaire is the window presented publicly to job applicants. The work/training rotational matrix acts as a filtration algorithm ensuring that only those applicants who best fit the competencies of the organisation and job type are short listed for interview. The work/training rotational matrix reduces HR costs by short listing the best people for the job and organisation and in the long term improving worker retention.

Many online job recruitment agencies are simply matching CV keywords/phrases with job type descriptions, and this usually means that ‘square pegs’ are being put into round holes. This means that people are securing jobs, but there are many gaps in the match between the applicant CV and the true requirements of the job/organisation. Figure 9 below was created by this author in Inkscape.com and is used here to demonstrate the problem with many online recruitment agencies, the square represents the applicant CV and job type match, however, the areas outside the square represents gaps in the relationship between the CV and job type match, where such competencies as organisational culture are absent from the CV and job type match. The work/training rotational matrix software programme will generate more precise matches between job applicant, job type and organisational culture.

![Figure 9 Simple visualisation CV/Job type match created in Inkscape.com by this author](image-url)
6.3 Recommendations from the work/training rotational matrix

From the analysis of the knowledge audit a work/training rotational matrix was constructed in order to present a visualisation relating to any skills, training, knowledge gaps identified in the knowledge audit. All organisations must understand the importance of developing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of its employees. A number of tools/techniques and change in work practice such as an online and face-to-face community of practice would be introduced to support a number of the recommendations visualised in the work/training rotational matrix.

Such tools/techniques and change in work practice would help address issues relating to communication, knowledge sharing, problem solving and so forth. The key recommendations were presented to the senior management of both organisations. On the basis of these recommendations, a process began on Friday 17/8/2012 with Health and Safety training. It was further recommended that four core staff be offered the opportunity to participate in the following courses delivered by DIT:

1. Reception Manager 1: Strategic Human Resource Management: TFGM 3002, Available 3 times per week – either - Tue/Wed/Thursday
2. Reception Manager 2: Revenue Management for the Industry: TFHM 3004, Available 3 times per week – either Tue/Wed/Thursday
3. Receptionist 2: Communication and Customer Care Management: TFCM 1004, Available 3 times per week – either - Tue/Wed/Thursday
4. A further recommendation was made for one knowledge worker to undertake a degree in hotel management at DIT; the said worker began her degree in September 2012.

It was also recommended that the face-to-face community of practice be launched with a one day training/learning event, which would incorporate an embryotic training manual for receptionists. It was recommended that other in-house training events be organised for other worker types in the months going forward and that a specific training manual for each worker type be developed.

It is recommended that when workers are up-skilled they should rotate into other job types as identified in the knowledge audit and set out in the work/training rotational matrix.
6.4 Work/training rotational matrix explained

The prototype for the work/training rotational matrix is made up of four sections, see Figure 10, however, its scale is infinite, the visualisation was created and colour coded in Inkscape.com which is free downloadable software.

- The core which has four segments is the most important as it is based on core training needs of all worker types, including first aid, health and safety, fire safety and manual handling. These competencies relate to the safety of staff, guests and visitors and are therefore priority to meet several statutory requirements relating to work place and public safety.

- The first inner circle of the matrix is made up of knowledge worker rotation-training needs as identified in the knowledge audit, including management training, IT training both basic and specific systems, communication and so forth. Issues such as customer service would be addressed under human resources and data protection would be addressed under basic IT.

- The second inner circle identifies the worker types that will benefit from each training type, for example, reception managers 1 and 2 (Rec M 1 & 2). These worker types will change regularly and as they do they will be rotated on the matrix to fit with their training needs for career progression.

- When the training has been undertaken by each worker type, the workers will rotate into different job types, the new roles can be captured in the outer circle of the matrix. The outer circle of the matrix will capture fully trained, fully skilled workers, who will be able to rotate to any job in the enterprise.
6.5 Conclusions

The work/training rotational matrix has proven to be a useful tool for setting out the recommendations flowing from the knowledge audit. Using the work/training rotational matrix visualisation it was easy to explain the process to senior management and this allowed for the swift implementation of a number of the recommendations that were set out in the matrix. If the knowledge audit analysis and recommendations had been presented in spreadsheets it was believed that the process of implementation would not have been as easily understood and acted upon.

It is hoped that as the work/training rotational matrix matures it will evolve into a fully operational IT system that will reduce the cost of human resource filtration and improve worker retention within the hotel/hospitality sector and other industries. This project has clearly demonstrated the cost associated with worker retention in the hotel/hospitality sector, and if the work/training rotational matrix can make any impact on that retention cost then jobs may not only be sustained but created due to cost savings.

The work/training rotational matrix is the key output from this project, however, its true value will only be fully realised when it is developed into a stand-alone IT programme. The work/training rotational matrix as presented in this project is the foundation for future research and development of a fully operational IT human resource filtration system, its scale is infinite. The work/training rotational matrix can be applied to any industry or work place, the work/training rotation matrix has been discussed with experts and it is hoped that beyond the scope of this project it will be fully developed.
Chapter 7: COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

7.1 Introduction
Throughout the acquisition, both with senior managers and knowledge workers, communication was highlighted as a key concern; this concern was flagged many times in the literature. Communication is highlighted in the work/training rotational matrix and is shown as a ‘general’ concern for all worker types. Drawing conclusions from the literature and the acquisition it was clear that a Community of Practice was desirable to assist with communication flow and in particular knowledge sharing. Both an online and face-to-face community of practice would be introduced to support the recommendations set out in the work/training rotational matrix, and it is suggested by the literature that a combination of knowledge sharing tools/techniques produce better results than a singular focus (Employment Review, 2008).

7.1.1 Online Community of Practice Theory
During meetings with senior management a number of communication flow issues were raised and these are set out in Figure 11 and are based on pencil sketches drawn by the researcher during his meeting with senior management. Figure 11 represents both the old and the proposed new communication/information flow system for the organisation.

Figure 11 Communication Flow old and proposed new (iMindMaps.com)

Senior management based in central office felt that they were not getting a global picture of operations on the shop floor as the hotel manager/s were the gatekeepers to all information from the hotels. It was proposed that the introduction of a face-to-face Community of Practice could help overcome this problem as senior management could meet on a regular basis with shop floor staff and get direct feedback in relation to any issues arising.
An online community of practice would be facilitated by means of a Blog. The particular online tool was selected based on the level of IT ability expressed by knowledge workers in the knowledge audit (Some IT skills > No IT skills). Ware (2011) when addressing online collaboration says:

*Use appropriate technologies. That is, be sure you have access to high-quality collaboration tools that support the way you are working. But don’t go overboard, either; keep it simple. One of the worst things that can happen during any remote collaboration activity is to have participants be overwhelmed by, or incapable of using, the technologies that are supposed to make life easier (Ware, 2011).*

Learning communities are commonly formed in an interactive online environment when a group of learners form to expand its’ collective knowledge and skills. The online community of practice would be established on the basis of research by Salmon (2001) and would follow Salmon’s Five-step model.

Salmon’s original Five-step model would have to be adapted for the particular context of this community of practice and this is specifically encouraged by Salmon (2001, p.25). Initially Salmon’s model set out to help face-to-face educators to become online teachers, however, Salmon expanded her model to cover online activity.

Salmon highlights the need to ensure individual access to and the ability of participants to use the online platform as prerequisites to establishing an online community of practice. Stage two of Salmon’s Five-stage model involves individuals establishing their online identity and then interacting with others, it was hoped that the blog could provide easy access to socialisation activity.

As confidence grows among the individual knowledge workers and the community as a whole, it is suggested by Salmon that knowledge workers would share work relevant information, this would fulfil stage three of Salmon’s Five-step model. According to step four of Salmon’s Five-step model knowledge workers would engage in worthwhile discussions and their interaction would become more collaborative as they settle into the community of practice.
Salmon suggests that by the time knowledge workers reach stage five of the Five-stage model, as shown in Figure 12, they would seek out more benefits from the system and reflect on the learning process. Salmon’s model sets out a clear line of development for the Five-stage model both in terms of knowledge workers grasping certain technical skills, e-moderators developing their skillset and also an ‘interactivity bar’ which acts as a barometer of interactivity intensity.

Figure 12 Salmon's Five-step Model, source Google Images

It was clear from the responses to the knowledge audit that the IT skills of the group would have to be considered when choosing the appropriate e-sharing platform, novices would have to be supported and authentic activity encouraged. Salmon (2001) argues that the secret to success with any community of practice is to engage people in activity.

In the finale of a series ‘ReCivilization’ of lectures by Don Tapscott, Tapscott takes us into the public square, to look at how governments must re-engage with citizens, he points to the World Wide Web as a powerful instrument for change, and he states:

*People especially the young are using the net to make change*27

Salmon (2004) states that there are three types of novices that will normally be encountered in an online community of practice:

(a) The swimmers; are those who dive in early, generally they have some online experience, while they are willing to help others, they can become disruptive or uninterested if they think forum facilities are not demanding enough.

27 http://www.cbc.ca/recivilization/
(b) The wavers; are those, who may need individual help to get online and need encouragement to attend, they usually arrive after the main group and constantly feel that there is little time to do everything.

(c) The drowners; are those, who find it difficult to log-on; they are reluctant to ask for help, they have little motivation to succeed and appear to find communicating and socialising online difficult.

While Salmon’s Five-step model is utilised in this project, it must be noted that Salmon is not without her critics, Palm Moule (2007) suggests that Salmon’s model may not be the panacea it appears in terms of addressing the needs of online learning/sharing/training activities. Moule contrasts Salmon’s model with her own conceptual model the ‘e-learning ladder’. Moule’s conceptual model contrasts with Salmon’s model as it views the learner as a more passive actor when compared with Salmon’s ‘learning by activity’ learner and framed in a constructivist pedagogic theory.

Moule’s conceptual model as set out in Figure 13, supports learning that is instructivist leading to constructivist learning approaches, all of which is learner focused and subscribes to the construction of learning on previous experience and learning. The online teacher is vital to ensuring that online interaction occurs (Moule, 2007).

Figure 13 Moule's e-Learning Ladder, source Google Images

Moule’s approach goes beyond e-learning and can be applied to other online activity that may not be facilitated by an e-moderator and may not be community based. Moule continues by accusing Salmon of ignoring a range of learning theories and neglecting a body of e-learning approaches. Moule makes a valid point in relation to the fact that not all e-learning is group or community based and tools such as the CD-ROM are often utilised for e-learning.
Moule also suggests that Salmon’s model fails to recognise the benefits of an integrated approach to e-learning where face-to-face meetings make up part of the e-learning package. Moule argues that Salmon’s model is presented as a ‘one size fits all’, and this exaggerated elasticity obstructs opportunities to develop flexibility and reflexivity are lost (Moule, 2007).

Moule’s model views the learner as starting from an isolated position, and then the learner is given a leg-up on higher ‘rungs’ with instructivist, constructivist and interactive learning approaches awaiting. Interestingly, at the top of Moule’s conceptual model ‘e-learning ladder’ learner’s form communities of practice, where interaction among learners is vital to the development of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire (Moule, 2007).

While Moule continues by suggesting that there is the potential for support to increase as the student climbs the ‘ladder’, the level of support is not set out, and it seems that unless this is a step-ladder where learners can sit comfortably on its top table and surrounded by a full toolkit collected on the ascent, the degree of support needs to be explained. Moule’s ladder appears to be very tall, and if one is sitting at the top of a tall ladder this is when it is most dangerous, and when one needs someone standing at its base, this can stabilise the base of the ladder as well as give the climber the added security of a spotter.

Moule (2007) offers some valid arguments in relation to Salmon’s Five-step model, however, for this writer Moule falls short when not clearly setting out the role of the e-moderator or other supports for the learner who has reached the top of the conceptual ladder, if a ladder is to be used as a metaphor for a conceptual model, that ladder must be afforded clearly defined supports so that its users don’t find themselves precariously perched at the top of the ladder and calling out to a spotter who may no longer be available or unsure of his/her role (Monteith and Smith, 2001).

The online community of practice in this project would lend itself to knowledge sharing and some soft learning/training activities, such activities would relate to problem solving, comparing and evaluating arguments, presenting facts and negotiating goals (Beetham, 2007). Whatever the aspirations of the researcher the reality is that any knowledge sharing environment will be fully dependent on the willingness of knowledge workers to participate and share their knowledge, experience or ideas.
Figure 14 is the Learning Model developed by Helen Beetham and is based on a structuralist learning approach and would help map the learning activity and its components in the proposed community of practice sharing/learning environment, the design process would be guided by this model. Beetham states that her model is designed for:

* A specific interaction of learners with other people, using specific tools and resources, oriented toward specific outcomes (Beetham, 2007).*

Interaction is the dialogue of an online community of practice, however, for interaction to be achieved participants must engage in both discussion and activities. Lave and Wenger (1991) framed their community of practice theory in social constructivist principles, and arguing that, a sense of community is reached through the sharing of resources, knowledge and experience.

The core building blocks of an online learning community are collaboration, communication and cooperation (Beetham, 2007). Collaboration is a work activity in which two or more individuals (or groups) work together interactively, sharing knowledge to create value well beyond what any of them could have produced alone (Ware, 2011).

**7.1.2 Online Community of Practice design**

Drawing conclusions from the literature and the acquisition it was clear that a Community of Practice was desirable to assist with communication flow, and based on these findings, on Friday 6th July 2012 the researcher created a g-mail account in order to construct a Blog, for the purpose of knowledge sharing and soft training among knowledge workers.
The Blog, as seen in Figure 15, was named kildarestjobshare.blogspot.com and access was restricted to invited contributors only, which would mean that the Blog would act as an in-house online community of practice/knowledge sharing/soft training platform and contributors could feel confident that their contributions would remain within certain parameters. The researcher also added a gadget called feedburner.google.com which would allow contributors to register for e-mail alerts when new posts were added to the Blog.

It was hoped that pedagogies such as reflection, dialogue learning and collaboration would be realised with the technologies chosen. Social media such as the blog can be used to foster communication and collaboration. Collaboration can be defined as value-adding interactions that enable employees, customers, suppliers and partners to achieve business objectives make good decisions, resolve issues and share knowledge effectively and efficiently (Ware, 2011).

Knowledge workers were not immediately invited to the Blog as work was continuing on the knowledge audit analysis and the researcher wanted to ensure that the Blog was well set-up before extending invites, this meant adding a header, links, and initial seeding posts that would offer some basic training (video) in relation to Dublin attractions, upcoming events and leadership skills all of which had been issues flagged in the knowledge audit by some subjects.

The Blog was created in order to establish a single point of contact for both sets of knowledge workers/assets from the two hotels being researched. The researcher would act as a facilitator/e-moderator. The Blog would be used for knowledge sharing among workers and also a soft training platform, where videos could be used to inform workers about attractions and events in Dublin and so forth.
Initial seeding was by way of three posts added by the e-moderator/facilitator, these posts related to non-threatening information on such matters as tourist activity to facilitate engagement; such matters had been raised during the knowledge audit. It was thought that some videos relating to leadership skills might inspire those knowledge workers who showed an interest in management and leadership positions. A post relating to the UCD Leadership series was added.

Two links were added to the Blog that linked to the ‘Our Tour’ sections of the two hotel websites. Again this was done in order to familiarise workers with facilities close to their place of employment so that they may be able to inform guests, and grow in confidence in their own ability. A news feed for usatoday.com was added to offer knowledge workers some relevant news updates relating to a significant guest type, American tourists. An e-mail gadget was added, this gadget allows workers to have blog updates notified to their e-mail addresses so that they don’t have to keep checking if anything new has been added. While this researcher acted as the e-moderator/facilitator providing initial posts, it was hoped that soon there would be e-moderating by silence (Salmon, 2001).

Initially 6 knowledge workers were invited to the blog and would be made administrators once they accepted the link to join the blog, 15 > 6 is the recommended number of participants for any community of practice (Salmon, 2001); further knowledge workers would be added as the blog became fully operational.

7.1.3 Online Community of Practice engagement

Due to the various levels of IT knowledge held by the knowledge workers in this project and disclosed during the knowledge audit (Some IT skills > No IT skills), the blog was chosen over the Wiki as navigation of the Wiki can be an issue for novices, the e-sharing platform had to be inclusive not exclusive and pages cannot be protected on the free Wiki, this is an issue as participants were already nervous about security.

Salmon highlights the need to ensure individual access to and the ability of participants to use the e-sharing platform as prerequisites to establishing an online community of practice, this would be stage one on Salmon’s Five-step model. As knowledge workers settle into the community of practice it was anticipated, according to step four of Salmon’s Five-step model that knowledge workers would engage in worthwhile discussions and their interaction would become more collaborative.
Initially two knowledge workers: Receptionist (0) and Receptionist Manager (1) accepted the link invitation to join the blog; however, no contributions were initially made. This ‘lurk’ or ‘browse’ (Salmon, 2001) activity at this early stage of the experiment may be explained by lack of confidence in the platform or in the workers themselves, or ‘you go first syndrome’.

The e-moderator/facilitator decided to e-mail the knowledge workers to encourage them to use the Blog, a confidential e-mail was also provided in case workers wanted to raise an issue in confidence. Salmon and other experts argue that communities of practice work best when there is interaction and activity and so the facilitator in this project used various tools and techniques to try and encourage that interaction and activity. The e-mail was forwarded on the 24/7/2012 and by the 25/7/2012 at lunch time no e-mail response had been received from the knowledge workers, nor had there been any activity on the blog. Interestingly Moule (2007) highlights a number of issues that may be reflected upon at this stage of the development of the online community of practice. Moule suggests that issues relating to access, trust development, the need for technical skills and support, facilitation issues, group working and the effects of longevity of participation, all of these issues would be used as ‘supports’ for the ‘rungs’ of Moule’s ‘e-learning ladder’ (Moule, 2007).

The literature suggests that workers can be encouraged to participate in online communities of practice by providing information on the online community of practice that cannot be accessed anywhere else. The researcher decided to develop a training manual for professional receptionists (see, Disc 1), senior management had suggested that such manuals were absent in the hotels with which they were familiar. The decision was taken by the researcher to send an e-mail to those knowledge workers attached to the online community of practice and ask for their help with the development of the receptionist manual, workers were told that their contribution would be recognised in the credits of the finished manual, it was hoped that this collaborative effort would help knowledge workers to buy into the knowledge management initiative. This e-mail was sent 6/8/2012.

On the 8/8/2012 the researcher visited both sets of knowledge workers to make a casual inquiry as to why they were not contributing to the blog, a number of issues were highlighted including the fact that a number of staff were either off sick or on holidays, leaving the remaining staff to make up the hours of absent staff. The knowledge workers committed to making an effort over the coming days and apologised for not making use of the opportunity.
Workers also said that they would be happy for senior management to join the blog as worker’s contributions would be seen by management. Following the researcher’s visit to the knowledge workers/assets sign up to the online community of practice remained low, two members of staff made contributions relating to their daily routine, one such post is shown in Figure 16, however, such contributions were followed by long periods of inactivity.

On Saturday 18/8/2012 the facilitator decided to invite two senior managers to the blog, this was agreed with knowledge workers. The e-moderator also posted an Ergonomics and Safety instruction picture (Google Images) on the blog, Figure 17, and this followed on from health and safety training (delivered by a professional company) with knowledge workers 17/8/2012, which had followed on from the findings of the knowledge audit and presented in the work/training rotational matrix.

Periods of inactivity on the blog were punctuated with short posts commenting on posts or pictures placed on the blog by the facilitator, it was clear that a couple of workers were trying to engage in the online community of practice, however, possibly due to lack of engagement by fellow workers, stagnation set in.
A couple of interesting pieces of information were e-mailed to the facilitator; this suggested to the facilitator that workers may have been more comfortable sharing information in private rather than public. Some workers posted on the blog about being busy in the hotel; however, this may have had more to do with reaching out to senior management than actually engaging in the online community of practice. Knowledge workers also posted some positive comments on the Blog, Figure 18, in the days following a one-day training event, that event was used to launch the face-to-face community of practice and which is addressed later in this chapter. Knowledge workers were reporting that they were being refused access to the blog as they were using e-mail accounts other than g-mail, the e-moderator/facilitator created a Hotmail account to test access, access to the blog using a Hotmail account was denied. The e-moderator e-mailed the knowledge workers and advised them to establish g-mail accounts for the blog and new links would be sent to them.

![Training Event](image)

**Figure 18 Screen Shot: Positive comments from two Receptionists following training event**

### 7.1.4 Online Community of Practice findings

The blog activity would be analysed by contribution and by employing Google analytics as seen in Figure 19, for such metrics as blog visits, post views, post comments and so forth. The stats below were captured in a screen shot from Google analytics on the Blog on the 25th September 2012, and they are disappointing.

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<th>Metrics</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Pageviews yesterday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pageviews last month</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pageviews all time history</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 19 Google analytics from Blog**
The failure of workers to engage with the online community of practice cannot simply be put down to the fact that during the knowledge audit subjects expressed IT competency ranging (No IT < Some IT), as this researcher has also administered the MSc Discussion Blog for a twelve-month period and many MSc students were reluctant to post comments or engage with the blog. What may be interesting to some extent is the fact that both the knowledge workers in this project and MSc students related to the MSc Discussion blog often sent e-mails by IPhone to the e-moderator/facilitator; it may be the case that a sharing platform with a focus on mobile technology may yield greater knowledge sharing. It could also be the case that while during the acquisition, workers expressed a positive interest in sharing their knowledge that they may feel that sharing their knowledge in a repository such as a blog may remove their competitive advantage (Argote and Ingram, 2000; Nonaka, 1991; Spender and Grant, 1996).

The post-project questionnaire contained two questions relating to the online community of practice. Has the blog been helpful for training? Which scored 22 out of a possible 45, and, what has been most useful, the online community of practice? Scored 19 out of a possible 45, while most knowledge workers stated in the knowledge audit that they would engage with an online community of practice these results suggest that there is some underlying reason why most workers did not engage with the online community of practice, for example, the perceived loss of competitive advantage.

It is also worth noting that Yang and Wan (2004) and cited by Hallin and Marnburg (2007) conclude that there are many obstacles to knowledge sharing in the hotels that they studied and one of their key observations was the fact that supervisors were very fearful of sharing knowledge as they believed that their subordinates would get promoted faster than them, Yang and Wan also observed that reluctance to knowledge sharing occurred when shared ideas involved changing daily operations.

The observations of Yang and Wan may well hold a key to why workers in this project were reluctant to share their knowledge in an online community of practice, the hotel industry in Ireland is particularly volatile at the time this research is being conducted, and certain knowledge may be the only difference between being employed and unemployed.
7.1.5 Conclusion

While a number of the knowledge workers had indicated a willingness to engage with an online community of practice, it is fair to say that this was the most disappointing aspect of the project. The assumption was that when knowledge workers were introduced to the Blog they would see its value in terms of sharing knowledge, sharing problems and soft learning tools such as video. However, such assumptions by the researcher may have been skewed by his own positive view of blogging as a knowledge sharing and soft training tool. It could be said that people and processes have worked well in this project; and that technology has been slow to evolve. However, this may not be the case, it may well be that no matter what technology was offered in this project, its value as a knowledge sharing tool may have been skewed by the fear of workers to share what little knowledge they have in what is a very volatile labour market.

7.2 On-site face-to-face community of practice

7.2.1 Introduction

It was also clear from the acquisition and as set out in the work/training rotational matrix that in-house training and the production of work training manuals could assist with the establishment of a knowledge sharing environment. It was clear from the literature that a one-day training/learning event with key stakeholders was a good launch pad for a face-to-face community of practice. The creation of a high quality tourism product is dependent on all employees and contractors working in harmony and cooperating to achieve the operational objective of the particular enterprise (Kot, 2010). This would be the key objective of the training event.

7.2.2 one-day training/learning event design

The one-day training/learning event is supported in the literature by Speel et al (1999) and it was hoped that such an event could help create a knowledge sharing environment. From the outset of the one-day training event team building and networking would be a key focus. Team building and networking were highlighted by Gavin Duffy (leading business person) and Hillary O’Meara (Senior Executive with Accenture) as key to worker motivation and productivity, at the Springboard Road Show 2012 and attended by this writer.
Hillary O’Meara said:

*Companies are looking for smart people – who can problem solve – team work – communicate – think outside the box, these are core assets with your normal qualifications and experience.*

Moule’s e-learning ladder can be applied to face-to-face learning activities as well as online learning activities. The face-to-face community of practice would act as much more than a piece in an academic puzzle, it would act as a communication enabler, as issues with communication flows had been flagged by senior management and other knowledge workers/assets during the knowledge audit process and is set out in the work/training rotational matrix.

The one-day training/learning event is supported in the literature by Speel *et al* (1999) and was designed to be a one-day interactive event that would allow for activities around such topics as networking (tea/coffee) as problem solving (PMI), group work (interaction/fun), thinking outside the box (6 thinking hats), networking (tea/coffee/finger food), team building and networking (interactive exercises), knowledge sharing and group ownership (training manual/brain-storming/feedback), peer reviewing (feedback forms).

The one day training event was designed by this researcher and expert participation in the one-day training event would be led by this programme.

The researcher felt that the training/learning day would be important in terms of supporting the overall knowledge management initiative (Speel *et al*, 1999) as there was very little knowledge within the organisations in relation to knowledge management initiatives. Knowledge workers could take ownership of the receptionist training manual and therefore encourage them to buy-in to the concept of knowledge management.

The event would also allow knowledge workers/assets an opportunity for knowledge sharing and clarification of issues surrounding the project in general. The face to face community of practice would be dependent on the participation of the knowledge workers and other industry stakeholders who had been invited to the event.
7.2.3 one-day training/learning event execution

The training event was named, ‘Turning Service into Loyalty, An Event for Career Receptionists, 5th September 2012’, Figure 20 is a picture of the training event in action.

There were 27 people in attendance, these people ranged from key industry stakeholders such as Hoteliers, Hotel consultants to frontline staff. The 27 also included the guest speaker Mr Damian Gordon and the researcher. All of the knowledge workers who had been subject to the knowledge audit in this project also participated. Some participants had to leave early, to go on shift, before the closing feedback sheets were distributed, however, the knowledge workers who were subject to the knowledge audit remained until the end and provided feedback sheets.

The lunch module continued with the tone set with module 1 with key industry stakeholders and frontline staff being introduced to each. There was clear engagement between people from different hotels, when people were asked to take their seats people who had never met before but would have talked on the phone choose to sit beside each other. The creation of a high quality tourism product is dependent on all employees and contractors working in harmony and cooperating to achieve the operational objective of the particular enterprise (Kot, 2010).

Following lunch participants were introduced to the Six Thinking Hats by Damian Gordon, it is fair to say that participants looked tired after lunch and perhaps the Six Thinking Hats was not the best module to have straight after lunch, participants probably needed something to wake them up a bit, perhaps an interactive ice-breaker.
Introducing the new receptionist training manual yielded some results, however, it is fair to say that participants were tired, they would not have participated in such an event previously, and while participants agreed that the event was enjoyable it had taken its toll on them. The feedback forms were anonymous in order that people, especially employees, could feel comfortable that their responses would not be attributed to them.

However, those 9 workers who had been subject to the knowledge audit were quietly informed by the researcher that their responses (ka) would be collected by the researcher and noted for the research findings, no objection was offered.

### 7.3 One-day training/learning event findings

The 20 returned feedback forms accounted for 80% of participants. Participants were asked to score each module and the 9 questions on the Likert Scale from 1 (very poor) to 5 excellent. The results are set out in Table 10.

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<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 Training event feedback score matrix for 20 participants (8 modules and 9 questions)
Module 1: Tea/coffee which was geared towards networking and ice-breaking had the potential to gain a total combined score of 100 if all 20 participants scored the module the maximum 5 points, the module scored 99. The positive nature of this module is reflected in some of the comments below:

This was a great opportunity to get to meet people that I have ever only spoken to on the phone.

I have already begun to think of myself as being part of a bigger team, I have been able to network with people and hopefully we can work together in the future.

Module 2: The introduction by senior management was used to set the tone for the day and also to show the participants that this was an event supported by senior management. This module scored 92 out of 100; the short introduction was motivational, inclusive, focused and short. Module 3: The PMI was about introducing people to a new way of thinking about problems, the participants would not have been exposed to this type of thinking before and they clearly engaged in the process, which presented as fun and interactive. The total score attributed to the PMI module was 91, one participant commented that:

It might have been even more interesting if the scenario had been based on the hotel sector

However, the general feeling was that people enjoyed the module. Comments by participants support the view that this was a positive experience:

I have started to think differently about a problem I was facing at work, I think I can deal with it better now.

Module 4: The group work module was about getting participants to think about effective communication and then working together as a team in the pub quiz element, sharing their knowledge to get a result. This was certainly an interactive module and it certainly got participants laughing and talking. The module scored 97 out of 100, however, as highlighted above the module had some short comings; it would appear that participants enjoyed the exercise so much that they were happy to overlook its short comings. Module 5: Lunch was again about networking and knowledge sharing, it was clear that people continued to talk, move around and engage with other people during lunch.
Module 6: Because there had been a time over-run in the first session, The Six Thinking Hats module did not get a fair share of the time allocated and so it was difficult to present anything more than an overview of the topic, this may have sold the module short in the eyes of some participants, it may also be the case that some participants found it difficult to engage with such a new topic. However, the module scored 97 out of a possible 100.

Module 7: The team building module that focused on effective communication was squeezed for time and while the participants did appear to sit up for the subject and take notes, there was a sense that the event was getting squeezed for time and the researcher was determined to finish for the scheduled 3.30pm as some participants had to go on shift. This module scored 89 out of 100.

Module 8: While this module, which focused on the receptionist training manual, scored 90 out of 100, it was not as successful as the researcher had hoped, it is possible that people were tired and were starting to watch the clock, while there was some good feedback on the feedback forms for the receptionist training manual, it was not the volume of knowledge sharing hoped for. That said there was a good deal of interaction between participants; it simply did not find its way onto paper.

The feedback form had an additional 9 questions relating to the perceived effect of the day on participants and again participants were asked to score the questions on a Likert Scale of 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent).

Has the training event:

1. Made you feel that you are part of a team (91)
2. That you have meet people with whom you can share knowledge (91)
3. You have meet people who you would like to stay in contact with (91)
4. You would like to have regular meetings (94)
5. You would like to have a platform to share knowledge (blog) (87)
6. You are able to think differently about problems (90)
7. You have ownership of the training manual (88)
8. You are more motivated to generate ideas for your organisation (94)
9. You are prepared to take on new challenges (96)
The questions had the potential to achieve a combined maximum score of 100 if participants gave the maximum 5 points. Question 1 related to one of the core goals of the day’s event, team building, a score of 91 was achieved which suggests that people felt there was a relationship between the event and their feeling of belonging to a team. Other key themes such as knowledge sharing and networking also scored positive. Again the question relating to technology scored low at 87, providing the lowest score of the 9 questions, which suggests one of two things, participants do not realise the potential value of IT based knowledge sharing platforms or they simply view them as unimportant in their particular job type.

Question 7 received a score of 88 the second lowest score of the 9 questions, this low score was expected by the researcher as observation suggested that this module had been delivered too late in the day. Question 9 this question related to being prepared to take on new challenges, this scored 96 and was contrary to assumptions that had been made by the researcher, as the majority of participants would be in job types that have very little autonomy, this result is encouraging.

7.3.1 one-day training event analysis

Across all 17 questions the 20 participants had total individual scores ranging from 61<85 with 85 being the maximum total score. The lower scores for individual items are highlighted in Table 10. The nine participants who had previously been subjected to the knowledge audit scored total individual scores of 81<85 while all other participants scored 61<84 with a significant number scoring in the low 60s. This is not easily explained, although it could be suggested that the knowledge audit subjects had already been exposed to some training and had been subject to the knowledge audit and were starting to buy-in to the training genre. From an observation point of view the researcher felt that it was very clear during the event that those who had been subject to the knowledge audit were very attentive and engaging in a positive way in the various modules, often being the first to volunteer information and putting themselves forward for activities such as the miming exercise.

In total across the 8 module scores and 9 question scores, the potential existed for a maximum combined score of 17x5x20 = 1700 the actual maximum combined score achieved was 1561, which is 92% of the possible maximum score, suggesting that this event had a very positive impact on participants.
It was clear from both verbal and feedback comments on the feedback forms that participants engaged with the event and found it helpful, this was a seeding event, which was as much aimed at hoteliers, consultants and management as it was at frontline knowledge workers. One successful hotelier said:

*I have been talking about setting up an event like this for years, but simply did not know how to go about it, thanks.*

### 7.3.2 One-day training event conclusion

The one-day training event to launch the face-to-face community of practice offered industry stakeholders an opportunity to engage and share knowledge. It was clear to the researcher both from observation and participant feedback that this event was a success in terms of knowledge sharing, networking, team building, communication and so forth. These were all matters highlighted throughout the acquisition and visualised in the work/training matrix. The success of this event when compared with the poor result from the online community of practice justified the researcher's decision to run with a combination of knowledge sharing tools rather than to have a singular focus (Employment Review, 2008).

It is clear both from knowledge worker feedback and the observations of the researcher that those aspects of the project that had the most positive impact on knowledge workers were aspects that allowed for face-to-face contact, this included the knowledge audit and the face-to-face community of practice. The researcher also found that a number of minor issues were presented throughout the one-day training event, such as poor time management and some short comings in terms of knowing the audience. These short comings could have been overcome with better preparation in terms of knowing exactly who would be in attendance and making sure that each module was not allowed to run over its time slot. Overall it can be said that the one-day training event had a positive impact on the key stakeholders who attended the event and that further events and meetings were organised as a direct result of the success of the seeding event.

All participants provided their e-mail address and as well as preparing this report on the event for the dissertation, a short industry report was also prepared (see, Disc 1) and sent (10/9/2012) to all the participants in order to maintain contact and circulate e-mail details.
Chapter 8: POST PROJECT EVALUATION

8.1 Introduction
The evaluation aspect of the project would set out to establish if the retention attitude of the nine knowledge workers/assets that had been subject to the research had changed. This chapter sets out the purpose, aims and objectives of the evaluation process. This chapter will offer a complete overview of the evaluation process including execution, post-project questionnaire findings, results matrix and conclusions.

8.2 Purpose, Aims and objectives
In order to test the retention attitudes of knowledge workers in a post-project context a questionnaire was designed that could be mapped back to many of the original questions in the knowledge audit. Some question types (socio-metrics and so forth) from the original audit were removed as they offered no opportunity of eliciting new or interesting information, for example: How long have you worked here? Within some of the knowledge audit categories of questions that would be used in the post-project questionnaire, some questions were adjusted as the original question did not allow for new information, these changes were kept to a minimum in order not to impact too much on the compare and contrast between the knowledge audit questions and the post-project questionnaire questions. Choosing the categories of questions, and question type for the post-project questionnaire was not an easy task, in the end and after applying PMI, categories and questions were chosen. It was decided that the respondents would be told that while they could simply offer Yes/No answers, these were open ended questions and they could offer any information they wished.

In order to capture an overall view of key aspects of the project, knowledge workers were asked to score an additional eight questions relating directly to the usefulness of the project. The questions were to be scored using the Likert Scale from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent).

The post-project questionnaire would be focused on the retention attitude of knowledge workers and based on such factors as training audit, job rotation, motivation/job satisfaction, perception of management on career development, retention, loyalty, turnover intent, motivation, job design and would be mapped back to the original knowledge audit, the literature and previous research as already set out. An open ended question was also placed at the end of the post-project questionnaire.
The responses in the post-project questionnaire would be compared with the responses to the corresponding questions in the pre-project knowledge audit to establish if the project and its component parts, namely, the work/training rotational matrix, face-to-face community of practice and the online community of practice/e-sharing platform, had impacted in any way on the retention attitudes of knowledge workers.

8.3 Execution

Following the introduction of the face-to-face community of practice, with the one-day training/learning event, it was decided to administer the post-project questionnaires on the weekend of the All-Ireland GAA hurling final as all worker types would be on duty and it was expected that each questionnaire would take no more than 15<20 minutes to administer and the questionnaires would be administered face-to-face. Many of the questions had been asked in the knowledge audit and so responses to the post-project questionnaire were expected to be short and to the point. The responses could be compared to the responses in the knowledge audit.

A significant trust had now been established between the researcher and the knowledge workers/assets and the interviewing process was expected to be much easier post-project. During the pre-project knowledge audit there was often a sense that knowledge workers were very suspect about the process. It is assumed that as knowledge workers realised that there had been no adverse consequences due to their participation in the knowledge audit their confidence in the process grew. It is also the case that many of the workers had now been offered and received new training opportunities.

It was also assumed that the one-day training/learning event had a very positive effect on the way in which the knowledge workers engaged with the project, this was supported by the positive feedback from the knowledge workers following the training event. Rather than knowledge workers, working in isolation, they had now had access to senior management, industry experts and had been treated to a fun day with free food and drink. Throughout the project there was always a need to speak with knowledge workers/assets on a personal basis, making sure that workers understood that the research was concerned with establishing what tools, techniques and change in work practice that could be introduced to improve their job design and generally improve their career opportunities.
Table 11 sets out the Post-project questionnaire interview schedule 2012, which was essential to ensure that the Post-project interviews were administered effectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worker Type</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Cancelled</th>
<th>Rescheduled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reception 0</td>
<td>7/9/2012</td>
<td>2pm</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception 1</td>
<td>8/9/2012</td>
<td>2.30pm</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception 2</td>
<td>9/9/2012</td>
<td>3.30pm</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7/9/2012</td>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception Mgt. 2</td>
<td>8/9/2012</td>
<td>4pm</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House-K 1</td>
<td>7/9/2012</td>
<td>4pm</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House-K 2</td>
<td>9/9/2012</td>
<td>4.30pm</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar-kit 1</td>
<td>7/9/2012</td>
<td>5pm</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar-kit 2</td>
<td>9/9/2012</td>
<td>5.30pm</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Post-project questionnaire: Interview Schedule 2012

8.4 Post-project questionnaire findings

Table 12 shows a full set of results for the post-project questionnaire with red (xxxx) showing the excluded areas from the original knowledge audit. The green totals represent the total retention score for each individual and the two red totals 68.7+ and 31.1- represent the total combined retention score for all individuals over all categories for the entire project.
Table 13 represents the original knowledge audit with the figures in red, KS, WTT, TP and PW representing those original categories that would not be included in the post-project questionnaire as explained above. The totals in green represent the individual retention scores for each individual in the original knowledge audit. The two green totals 62+ and 37.9- represent the total project retention score for all individuals over all categories for the entire project. However, when we exclude those categories that were not included in the post-project questionnaire the total retention scores for the project are 50.2+ and 49.7-. The bottom line Retention S. represents the individual retention scores, excluding the four categories not included in the post-project questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Rec 0</th>
<th>Rec 1</th>
<th>Rec 2</th>
<th>Rec 1</th>
<th>Rec 2</th>
<th>Rec 1</th>
<th>Rec 2</th>
<th>Retention S.</th>
<th>Total %</th>
<th>Total %</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>KS</td>
<td>66.4+</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>66.4+</td>
<td>66.4+</td>
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<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>57.1+</td>
<td>42.9-</td>
<td>57.1+</td>
<td>42.9-</td>
<td>57.1+</td>
<td>42.9-</td>
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<td>42.9-</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>100+</td>
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<td>55.4+</td>
<td>44.5-</td>
<td>55.4+</td>
<td>44.5-</td>
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<tr>
<td>JO</td>
<td>83.3+</td>
<td>16.7-</td>
<td>66.7+</td>
<td>33.3-</td>
<td>66.7+</td>
<td>33.3-</td>
<td>66.7+</td>
<td>33.3-</td>
<td>83.3+</td>
<td>83.3+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 Knowledge audit results matrix the Red bottom-line represents the Retention Score, excluding the four categories not included in the post-project questionnaire.

In order to capture an overall view of key aspects of the project knowledge workers were asked to score eight questions relating to the usefulness of the project. The questions were to be scored using the Likert Scale from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent).

It is interesting that respondents gave a combined total score of 35 out of a possible 45 to the question relating to someone taking an interest in their work. It is also worth noting that in the open ended question at the end of the post project questionnaire a number of comments were made that related to someone taking an interest in their work:

The fact that someone showed some interest in what I do, and the training confirmed that interest (Rec 1).
Table 14 presents the results matrix for the 9 additional questions that were added to the post-project questionnaire. These questions were asked in order to elicit a general overview of the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Worker Type</th>
<th>Rec 0</th>
<th>Rec 1</th>
<th>Rec 2</th>
<th>RM 1</th>
<th>RM 2</th>
<th>HK 1</th>
<th>HK 2</th>
<th>Bar 1</th>
<th>Bar 2</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Someone taking an interest in your work</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The face-to-face community of practice</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>The online community of practice</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has communication improved due to the project</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you more at home in your work as a result of the project?</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>The one-day training event</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>The receptionist training manual</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Actual individual totals</td>
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<td>27</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>405</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td></td>
<td>11-</td>
<td>13-</td>
<td>18-</td>
<td>14-</td>
<td>19-</td>
<td>19-</td>
<td>20-</td>
<td>22-</td>
<td>21-</td>
<td>157-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 Nine additional questions results matrix

Figure 21 represents the Retention + (plus) Score for each of the 9 knowledge workers and while it can be seen that 7 of the 9 knowledge workers have a significant improvement in their Retention+ Score, for example, Rec 0 has improved from 54.1+ < 73.5+, two of the knowledge workers have not shown such positive results. Rec 2 has achieved only a minor increase in positive retention attitude from 67.0+ < 67.7+, this particular worker reached a shared top retention+ score in the knowledge audit. However, she did not as promised; engage with the online community of practice. This worker has also been described within this project as the ‘new precariat’.

8.5 Analysis
The most negative result was achieved by H-K 2 whose positive retention attitude score reduced $65.8^+ > 58.7^+$ and this is particularly disappointing. This particular worker had scored high on the knowledge audit in relation to willingness to train, share knowledge and so forth. This worker also participated fully in the one-day training event; however, she never engaged with the blog and offered little in relation to ideas for the receptionist training manual. This worker has ten-years of experience in the hotel industry and while offering outward signs of loyalty, wanting to train and rotate jobs, she may be too set in her ways to take on new challenges. This worker scored 100+ for loyalty in the knowledge audit, yet scored 0+ for turnover intent in the knowledge audit, suggesting that loyalty may be very context specific in terms of time and place, for example, I have a job today so I am loyal to it, but if a better offer comes tomorrow I am away.

Figure 22 represents the Retention – (minus) Score for each of the 9 knowledge workers and while it can be seen that 7 of the 9 knowledge workers have a significant reduction in their Minus- Retention Score, for example, Rec 0 has improved from $45.8^- > 26.4^-$, two of the knowledge workers have not shown such positive results. Rec 2 has achieved a minor decrease in minus- retention attitude from $32.9^- > 32.2^-$, this particular worker reached a shared top score in the knowledge audit, however, while this particular worker offered enthusiasm for the project during the knowledge audit, she did not as promised, engage with the online community of practice. This worker has also been described within this project as the 'new precariat'.

![Figure 22 Pre (blue) and Post (red) Project Individual Retention Scores % -](image-url)
The most negative result was achieved by H-K 2, going from a minus score 34.0- < 41.1- and again this is particularly disappointing. This particular worker had scored high on the knowledge audit in relation to willingness to train, share knowledge and so forth. This worker also participated fully in the one-day training event; however, she never engaged with the blog and offered little in relation to ideas for the receptionist training manual.

This worker has ten-years of experience in the hotel industry and while offering outward signs of loyalty, wanting to train and rotate jobs, she may be too set in her ways to take on new challenges. It is also worth noting that this worker felt that her job design was very poor, and it may well be that she has not seen an improvement in her job type on a day to day basis although her positive+ score for job design has improved 33.3+ < 60+ in the post project questionnaire.

Figure 23 represents the overall Retention+ Score for the entire project, the blue represents the positive+ retention score in the knowledge audit (excluding categories that would not appear in the post-project questionnaire) and the red represents the positive+ retention score in the post-project questionnaire. There has been an improvement on the overall positive+ retention score of 18.5%.

![Figure 23 Pre-project (blue) audit and post-project questionnaire total project retention score % +](image-url)
Figure 24 represents the overall minus- Retention Score for the entire project, the blue represents the minus- retention score in the knowledge audit (excluding those categories that would not be included in the post-project questionnaire) and the red represents the minus-retention score in the post-project questionnaire. There has been an improvement on the overall minus- retention score of 18.6%.

![Graph showing Pre-project knowledge audit and post-project questionnaire total project retention score %]

**8.6 Conclusion**

It is clear to the researcher that ‘Positive Resistance to Penetration’ or fire-walling can only be broken down by means of a longitudinal knowledge audit rather than a short questionnaire, although it would be interesting to see if a project with more subjects and less questions would achieve similar findings. It can be said that while this is a small sample of knowledge workers in two medium sized hotels in Dublin and does not offer a universal application to the industry, the results do present a potential for extrapolating tools and techniques to create a framework and tool-kit to be applied to a range of hotel types.

As the knowledge workers in this project represented a significant percentage of workers in the two hotels subject to this research, it can be said that this project type could be applied to hotels with a similar sized worker type and room portfolio. This project was a simple and cost effective means of establishing the retention attitudes of knowledge workers, and certain elements of the project have had a positive effect on the retention attitude of the majority of the knowledge workers under consideration.
Chapter 9: EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

The project was always going to have three dimensions, people, processes and evolving technology to support a knowledge management initiative. The methodology was clearly described in order that the project would be both systematic, comprehensive and offer the reader a walk through from start to finish. However, the research had a number of possible weaknesses, while the knowledge audit yielded extensive information, it was clear that subjects often presented tired half way through the audit questions, and this tiredness seemed to draw out more negative views of the organisation, work colleagues and the various job types. It may well be that such depth of investigation is not justified, and a research project based on less questions and more subjects may yield equally valid results.

The work/training rotational matrix presented an easily understood visualisation that was used to offer recommendations to senior management for training and work rotation of knowledge workers/assets. Many of these recommendations have been implemented prior to the conclusion of the project. A key weakness of this project may have been the failure of the researcher to focus exclusively on the development of the work/training rotational matrix in order to bring it closer to being a fully operational IT system. This failure may have come about due to the researcher’s lack of confidence in his own ability to grasp the nettle of IT development.

The communities of practice were established using clear theoretical frameworks such as Salmon, Moule and Beetham. The case study approach offered an interesting insight to the design and execution of such knowledge sharing tools. While the level of sign-up and activity for the blog was disappointing, this was simply one of a number of tools and techniques employed throughout the project, the face-to-face community of practice proved to be more successful. One of the stated aims of the project was to introduce tools and techniques, it was never suggested that any one tool would be a panacea to worker retention issues. While this project was based on a small representative sample and a number of small hurdles were encountered, the project has offered a comprehensive and unique insight into day to day activities of knowledge workers in the hotel/hospitality industry. It has highlighted the challenges both financial and human resource being faced by the industry.
9.2 Research definition and research overview

This research project has shown that the hotel industry in particular is in serious economic difficulty with debts as high as 6.7 Billion, while NAMA and official receivers have endeavoured to keep many insolvent enterprises operational, such a policy may be doomed to failure. While there may be an intention to sustain jobs and hope for a better day, that better day may be more effectively achieved by cutting losses and making the industry more sustainable by reducing the industry over-supply of beds. Those parts of the industry that are self-sustaining and self-financing should be encouraged to improve worker retention and improve career opportunities by investing in up-skilling, training and work rotation, the money for which would come from a more stream-lined and buoyant industry. The hotel industry has long term sustainable jobs; however, without a focused effort by all industry stake-holders including hoteliers, government departments and training providers, potentially good jobs may remain ‘bad’.

Knowledge management has a key role to play in the development and growth of the hotel industry both in terms of understanding what the industry knows and what it needs to know, knowledge gaps can be bridged by solid government initiatives developed in conjunction with key stake holders such as the IHF and hoteliers. The Irish tax payer cannot be expected to keep picking up the bill for those workers who are checking-out of insolvent hotels as they see the industry crumble on a daily basis as nobody seems to care.

9.3 Contributions to the body of knowledge

This project was based in the real world day to day operations of two commercial enterprises, that empirical study was supported by an in-depth investigation of the literature. The project conducted a good deal of preliminary research, such as the receptionist pilot questionnaire in order that the researcher could fully understand the dynamics at work in the industry under consideration. This project contributes to the body of knowledge because it took no short-cuts, a range of tools and techniques were used so that this project could dig deep in order to understand the condition of knowledge workers/assets in the hotel industry who are more often ignored than noticed. This project asserts time and again that hotel workers are as entitled to be viewed as knowledge workers, as are engineers and architects, hotels don’t function without people, and those people use their tacit and explicit knowledge on a daily basis to facilitate the comfort and safety of millions of people.
Hotel workers are as important to their industry as are psychologists to theirs. In the economic downturn in Ireland many companies have seen how investing in materialism rather than in people during the ‘boom years’ has left them with nothing only a burden of debt that may take three generations to repay. A lasting and sustainable economy can only be built in a world were all workers are treated equally, were investment is in people and not merely in profit, workers should be given every opportunity to reach their goals by providing training and career advancement.

The work/training rotational matrix has been introduced in this project and continues to be developed by this author. It is hoped that the work/training rotational matrix will become a stand-alone IT human resource filtration system; this project has helped create a prototype for the matrix. The project has shown how the matrix can be used to capture complex information and present that information in an easily understood visualisation, this simplicity is essential so that recommendations flowing from the matrix can be acted upon and the matrix can be regularly updated.

The matrix captures the human resource knowledge of the particular enterprise, answering questions such as what is the job, who is needed to do the job and what is needed to improve the job design. The matrix captures the essence of the job, the worker and the enterprise in the hope of matching people with jobs and places. This ‘perfect’ match will help improve enterprise efficiency and worker retention.

Knowledge sharing is an interesting concept, in this project it has been shown that intelligent and able people have told the researcher that they would engage with an online Community of Practice, yet those people failed to engage with an online Community of Practice. The researcher used the literature and previous research to try and understand this phenomena, yet with all the tools and techniques applied, people failed to engage with the online Community of Practice.

This failure to share is not easily explained, a number of possibilities have been put forward, the over-arching conclusion is that people fear sharing what little knowledge they have as it may be the only bargaining power they have. Workers did engage fully with the face to face Community of Practice, this effort may relate to the fact that these workers are in a people based industry and that verbal sharing left no visible trace when compared with an online repository such as a Blog.
A number of interesting findings have been drawn from this project and contribute to the body of knowledge. It is clear that an extensive knowledge audit based on pre-defined questions can help elicit valuable knowledge from knowledge workers, and that knowledge can be mapped and set out in knowledge inventories. This project has introduced the work/training rotational matrix, a new concept with infinite possibilities when developed into a fully operational IT system. The project has also identified the ‘new precariat’, and a new definition for worker ‘loyalty’.

9.4 Experimentation, Evaluation and limitation
The project was based primarily on an experiment that would introduce knowledge sharing tools/techniques and change in work practice and to measure those changes in relation to the retention attitude of knowledge workers. The evaluation of the various aspects of the experiment were such as to establish if any positive/negative/neutral consequence could be established from the introduction of the knowledge sharing tools/techniques and changes in work practice. The evaluation showed some interesting findings.

The limitations of the project are to be found in the limited subject group and the limited scope of the project. However, it may be said that the project and its findings have external validity in relation to organisations of a similar size and worker portfolio. A tool-kit may be extrapolated from this project for application in other hotel types.

9.5 Future work and research
It has been argued in this project that there should be a universal view of all workers, including manual workers, as knowledge workers/assets. If an enterprise is heavily dependent on the tacit and explicit knowledge of its workers for its day to day operation then those workers whether they are hotel receptionists or NASA scientists are equally important to their respective enterprises. It would be interesting to take this view of all workers as knowledge workers/assets to the next level by testing the idea across a number of industries. The highbrow connotations traditionally associated with knowledge workers/assets does not fit in an economy that is mainly driven by manual workers, this is particularly true of the service, agricultural and manufacturing industries. Segregating intellectual labour from manual labour may be comforting for some and may even bring economic benefit to elites, however, a universal view of all workers as knowledge assets may be more in keeping with a world in which equality, and parity and individual freedom are so often uttered.
This project has shown that a simple and cost effective knowledge management initiative can impact on the retention attitude of knowledge workers/assets, future work and research could look at extrapolating tools/techniques and change in work practice from this project and apply them to other industries that are equally as dependent on the tacit and explicit knowledge of its knowledge workers/assets. Such research may help improve industry efficiencies, improve and sustain jobs. This project has identified a number of key areas for future work and research, the work/training rotational matrix which is a concept being developed by this author has an infinite potential and may be evolved to a stand-alone IT programme. The potential development of the work/training rotational matrix has been set out in chapter 6 and experts have been consulted with a view to taking the process forward.

The initial identification of the ‘new-precariat’ offers an interesting research area for future work and research, such research would need to be extensive and offer greater scope than this project. While it can be suggested that the ‘new-precariat’ are a product of the economic downturn, further research may yield structures and mechanisms that could be put in place for such workers in future economic downturns. Rather than fire-managing inevitable economic dips, state agencies could have contingencies in place that would provide a seamless transition for workers from those industries known to decline in recession to those that appear buoyant or at least able to survive.

This project has suggested that ‘loyalty’ no longer applies to the hotel/hospitality industry and that such ‘loyalty’ can now be replaced with a more tenuous model of ‘loyalty’ described in this project as ‘velcro-attachment’. If employers begin to understand the true value of the knowledge assets in their organisation, loyalty may once again become an organic process that is built from mutual respect and understanding. Loyalty appears eroded by exploitation and mistrust.

It was also interesting that workers gave a high score to the fact that someone actually took an interest in their work, while such phenomena has previously been documented by Mayo and other theorists, further investigation of such phenomena in a modern context would make an interesting research project. It may well be that the introduction of simple knowledge sharing concepts such as Pizza Friday could help improve motivation, productivity and worker retention.
9.6 Conclusions

In conclusion it can be said that this project has shown that the introduction of knowledge sharing tools/techniques and change in work practice can have an impact on the retention attitude of knowledge workers. At the time that this project was being conducted, Ireland is continuing to struggle with the negative impact of a global recession, this project was so closely related to the effects of that recession that senior managers in both organisations being researched, supported the project and implemented many of the projects recommendations, in order to try and survive in a difficult market place.

It may also be drawn from the project that the term ‘knowledge workers’ with its elitist connotations may be out-dated and it may be time to recognise all workers across all work environments as ‘knowledge assets’.

This project has highlighted the importance of a knowledge management initiative for helping to establish what organisations know and what they don’t know, when this information is established it is possible to draw conclusions and make recommendations to help support knowledge workers in their respective organisations. This project was context specific; its findings can have external validity for similar sized organisations, however, its main conclusion would be that trying something is always a better option than doing nothing.

The researcher has highlighted a number of possible weaknesses in the project, this included the fact that the extensive knowledge audit may have been too ‘heavy’ for the subjects under consideration and that a project with more subjects and less questions may be more suited to the industry. The researcher has also suggested that the project may have yielded better results relating to the online community of practice if mobile technology had been exploited. The researcher also acknowledges that a single focus on the development of the work/training rotational matrix to a standalone IT system may have resulted in a more comprehensive and unique artefact.

The literature has shown that the majority of knowledge management focus has been on larger hotel organisations such as The Hilton Hotel Group, and that small and medium sized hotel types have been neglected, this project, based on two medium sized hotels, should help close the gap in the literature.
9.7 Recommendations

1. The knowledge audit instrument may have strategic application. This project has shown; certain tools and techniques may be employed to impact on the retention attitudes of knowledge workers.

2. The work/training rotational matrix should be taken to the next stage where it becomes a standalone IT based HR filtration system.

3. The knowledge audit and the work/training rotational matrix must be operationalised on an on-going basis in order to maximise the effectiveness of the knowledge management initiative.

4. A face-to-face Community of Practice has proved to be effective in the project and must be supported going forward.

5. It can be said that while this is a small sample of knowledge workers in two medium sized hotels in Dublin and does not offer a universal application to the industry, the results do present a potential for extrapolating tools and techniques to create a framework and tool-kit to be applied to a range of hotel types.

6. Online, in-house and expert training must be utilised to facilitate staff efficiencies.

7. The concept of an e-sharing platform must continue to be supported in order that knowledge and information can be shared, mobile technology should be investigated.

8. House-keeping should be supplied with an electronic note pad/mobile technology so that they have a direct and in-time link with front of house management so that guests can be informed of any potential delay or early check-in potential.

9. Staff should be rotated in order that they have an all-round view of the business.

10. The question set developed for the knowledge audit could be useful to other researchers who would like to develop the instrument for a knowledge audit in a similar organisation.

11. The data could be compared with the results from similar research in the future.

12. The knowledge audit instrument could provide an overall measure of the retention attitude of knowledge workers in similar organisations.

13. Senior Managers may use the instrument to determine gaps between the optimum and the organisations actual knowledge management effectiveness.

14. The instrument may be used to identify discrepancies between what senior managers and shop floor knowledge workers/assets perception of job roles and knowledge management effectiveness.
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Appendix

Appendix A

MindMaps

This is a Screen shot of the Concept Map for this Dissertation; the full interactive Concept Map can be accessed on Disc 1. The iMindMap software has been downloaded onto the Disc 1 for ease to view the interactive map; iMindMap can be downloaded FREE @ http://www.thinkbuzan.com/intl/. This concept map was created by this author and offers a global view of the research project.
Appendix B

Failte Ireland Statistics

Further research in the sector by Fáilte Ireland whom employed a more detailed definition of the tourism sector provided an estimate suggesting that 199,450 people were employed in the tourism industry in 2007\textsuperscript{28}. This was reduced from 209,538 in 2005\textsuperscript{29}, further analysis of the figures showed that about one-third of workers were non-Irish. Rural areas outside Dublin accounted for 72% of total employment in the sector and estimates of 20% of the worker total were seasonal workers. In the UK 2.4 million workers are employed in the hospitality sector\textsuperscript{30}.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourism Employment Estimates 2010-2011</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>% change 2010/11</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>177,935</td>
<td>180,454</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels</td>
<td>48,464</td>
<td>50,960</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guesthouses</td>
<td>1,812</td>
<td>1,667</td>
<td>-8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;Bs</td>
<td>3,937</td>
<td>3,645</td>
<td>-7.4%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Hostels/SC</td>
<td>2,426</td>
<td>2,456</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed Restaurant</td>
<td>38,657</td>
<td>34,496</td>
<td>-10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Licensed Restaurants**</td>
<td>14,336</td>
<td>15,106</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Houses</td>
<td>51,693</td>
<td>50,721</td>
<td>-1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSA</td>
<td>18,702</td>
<td>19,821</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *2010 employment in hotels revised to account for sampling changes

**2011 estimate of employment in non-licensed restaurants based on different measure

Table shows figures supplied on request 11/6/2012 by Failte Ireland (2011) and adapted by this author


\textsuperscript{30}British Hospitality Association http://www.bha.org.uk/policy/
Appendix C

Receptionist Pilot Questionnaire

In order to understand what it takes to be a professional Hotel Receptionist could you please mark the following questions from 1-5, with 1 being the lowest importance and 5 the highest importance. (This questionnaire will take 5-7 minutes to complete – thank you)

How important is it for a hotel receptionist to know the following about the Hotel?

Hotel History 1 2 3 4 5

Hotel Facilities 1 2 3 4 5

Hotel layout 1 2 3 4 5

The names of all staff 1 2 3 4 5

How important is it for a Hotel Receptionist to -

Be polite and courteous 1 2 3 4 5

Know his/her direct supervisor/manager 1 2 3 4 5

Have knowledge about the Hotel location 1 2 3 4 5

Have knowledge of facilities close to the Hotel 1 2 3 4 5

Have good English 1 2 3 4 5

Be multi-lingual 1 2 3 4 5

Know the nationality of guests 1 2 3 4 5

Know if guests have stayed before 1 2 3 4 5

Be prepared to take on new skills to improve the job 1 2 3 4 5

Be a team player 1 2 3 4 5

Have I.T. knowledge 1 2 3 4 5

Have telephony training 1 2 3 4 5

Meet regularly with fellow workers to share knowledge 1 2 3 4 5

Have communications Training 1 2 3 4 5
Have basic numeracy and literacy 1 2 3 4 5
Have third level education 1 2 3 4 5
Be able to multi-task 1 2 3 4 5
To have access to a work dedicated knowledge sharing platform (Blog) 1 2 3 4 5
Have selling experience 1 2 3 4 5
Have marketing experience 1 2 3 4 5
Have team based hobbies 1 2 3 4 5
Be prepared to do an evening course to improve skills 1 2 3 4 5
Be prepared to share knowledge (help trainees) 1 2 3 4 5
Be punctual 1 2 3 4 5
Rotate work (for example, running reception today and bar tomorrow) 1 2 3 4 5
Have specific receptionist training 1 2 3 4 5
Be prepared to do training in own time to improve skill-set 1 2 3 4 5
Do training for work rotation (training to run the bar, house-keeping) 1 2 3 4 5
To learn languages 1 2 3 4 5
Know the competition 1 2 3 4 5
Know when to offer an up-grade 1 2 3 4 5
Be prepared to rotate job for the benefit of the company 1 2 3 4 5
In your opinion how important is house-keeping staff 1 2 3 4 5
Ability to deal with complaints/unhappy customers 1 2 3 4 5
Be prepared to do an on-line training course to improve skills 1 2 3 4 5
Finally, from your knowledge and experience, what has not been covered here and in your opinion helps make a professional receptionist?
### Appendix D

Knowledge audit worksheet breakdown matrix: Question type, Job type, Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Type</th>
<th>Rec 0</th>
<th>Rec 1</th>
<th>Rec 2</th>
<th>Rec MT 1</th>
<th>Rec K 1</th>
<th>Rec K 2</th>
<th>Bar MT 1</th>
<th>Bar MT 2</th>
<th>Bar MT 2</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Totals</th>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Socio-economic</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Precarization work</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Income</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Job design</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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### Notes

- CS 11.1: Career Success
- CS 3.1: Career Success
- N/A 11.1: Not Applicable