

### Case study 9.5.3: **Knowledge Management at Siemens Spain**

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**Abstract** This case describes Knowledge Management initiatives at Siemens Spain, with a special emphasis on building Communities of Practice. The case also examines how this fits with the global Siemens strategy, with its commitment to knowledge sharing and continuous innovation.

The company's top management team strongly supported KM initiatives within Siemens. The Knowledge Strategy Process allowed for an alignment between KM actions and the long-term strategy objectives of the company. It helped identify

- which knowledge areas had an impact on business
- how strong the impact was
- the deficits in each knowledge area and
- which actions to carry out to respond to the various issues raised by the results.

The Knowledge Strategy Process was followed by the KM roadmap, which described the implementation, operation and standardizations of the basic components of KM solutions, as well as the change initiatives needed in the different teams. Siemens understood that knowledge management was not only about technological systems, but that social systems also had to be taken into account to encourage knowledge sharing and creation. The KM roadmap also contained those actions that might be needed in the future to enable KM solutions.

In Spain, the KM roadmap divided KM into three segments, each one with a quantitative estimate of its impact on business financials:

- the vertical segment, focusing on divisional KM initiatives,
- the horizontal segment, focusing on cross-divisional KM initiatives and
- the Collaboration KM segment, focusing on collaborating with clients and other external partners.

Communities of Practice were developed along each segment; 8 Communities of Practice in the vertical KM segment; 20 Communities of Practice in horizontal KM segment and 2 Communities of Practice in Collaboration KM segment. They also developed activity measures to track the performance of the other Communities of Practice.

Employees from Siemens Spain could access and participate in both horizontal and vertical Communities of Practice. The KM Team was considering expanding the use of Communities of Practice across the whole of the Spanish organization and was debating whether Communities of Practice should stay open, or become closed communities in which members' contributions could be better followed, and their efficiency and effectiveness more accurately measured.