

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**EXPLORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AT A  
CONTACT CENTRE IN DURBAN**

**By**

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Commerce in Leadership Studies**

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**2016**

## DECLARATION

I, **RENITHA CHETTY**, declare that:

- i. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, and is my own original work.
- ii. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- iii. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people who have made this research study possible:

- ❖ To my Lord and Saviour, I want to thank you for never leaving me or forsaking me. You have brought me to this and you have seen me through it. Amen!
- ❖ To my Supervisor, Cecile Gerwel Proches, who assisted, guided, mentored and inspired me to keep the ball rolling. I appreciate all that you have done.
- ❖ To my husband Gabriel, I thank you for your support, love and understanding throughout this process. I appreciate all that you have done for me.
- ❖ To my son, Tyreece, you are truly an amazing young man and I thank you for supporting me during the most important year of your life. I love you and promise to support you in all your present and future endeavours.
- ❖ To my Mother and my siblings, I thank you for your assistance, patience and support.
- ❖ To my colleagues, Zahir Sayed, Sanele Nkuna and Mark Phillips, I thank you for your support and motivation. I would not have come this far without you.
- ❖ To the Management and Staff of the Durban Contact Centre, thank you so much for your assistance and contribution towards my research studies. Much appreciated!

## **DEDICATION**

To my husband, Gabriel Chetty and my son, Tyreece Chetty. I love; appreciate and treasure you both. You are true blessings from God. Your encouragement and support throughout this year was not in vain. To my Dad and Brother in heaven, I have gone further than I imagined, I know you would have been proud. To my Mum and Sisters, I thank you for your support and understanding.

To my colleagues, Zahir, Sanele and Mark, with whom I started my academic journey, your encouragement to persevere will always be cherished. I wish for good health, wealth, and success in all your future endeavours.

## **ABSTRACT**

The knowledge management concept was introduced to the Contact Centre approximately eight years ago, therefore the study focused on the implementation of the knowledge management concept at SARS in Durban. The aim of the study was to understand the perception of knowledge management; the benefits and challenges of knowledge management, as well as the role that the leadership team played in the implementation of knowledge management. The research methodology chosen for the study was of a qualitative nature. This research methodology allowed for an interpretative approach that obtained an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the knowledge management concept. Data was obtained using semi-structured interviews conducted on a total of 20 respondents comprising of Management and Staff from the Contact Centre at SARS who had used the system for approximately eight years. Some of the common themes that emerged were quality, service delivery, customer service and communication. The study confirmed that the knowledge management concept was indeed implemented and sustained successfully, with minor improvement requirements. The research findings indicated that there was a positive perception towards how knowledge management was implemented and that there was an understanding with both leaders and staff that such a system is beneficial to the organisation. Some of the key findings noted were training and development, service delivery, customer service, technology, communication and the role of leaders. Some of the key recommendations indicated that learning styles need to be addressed since people learn and absorb knowledge differently. Social media management as a process enhancement could be implemented to improve service delivery and the taxpayer experience. Future research should focus on implementing the knowledge management concept in other divisions within SARS.

## **GLOSSARY**

<b>B-coms</b>	<b>: Business Communications</b>
<b>Buzz Sessions</b>	<b>: Meetings</b>
<b>COP</b>	<b>: Communities of Practice</b>
<b>Divisions</b>	<b>: Departments</b>
<b>e-Filing</b>	<b>: Electronic Filing</b>
<b>HR</b>	<b>: Human Resources</b>
<b>IT</b>	<b>: Information Technology</b>
<b>Knowledge Review</b>	<b>: Knowledge Evaluation Tool</b>
<b>KPI</b>	<b>: Key Performance Indicator</b>
<b>Now You Knows</b>	<b>: Informative Updates</b>
<b>PAYE</b>	<b>: Pay As You Earn</b>
<b>SARS</b>	<b>: South African Revenue Services</b>
<b>SIOL</b>	<b>: SARS Institute of Learning</b>
<b>Taxpayers</b>	<b>: Clients or Customers</b>
<b>Tax Products</b>	<b>: Income Tax; PAYE; VAT</b>
<b>Vat</b>	<b>: Value Added Tax</b>

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The Contact Centre Division is a department within the South African Revenue Services (SARS) that was established in February 2003. This division was created to provide taxpayers with a quick and knowledgeable service solution. The Contact Centre has since grown to an 800 seat division which is located in the following parts of the country; Durban; Belville, Alberton and Doringkloof. This division of SARS renders services via telephonic channels by providing answers to ad-hoc and complicated queries (SARS Contact Centre, 2014).

Calls to the Contact Centre are made using one number as an entry point, i.e. 0800 00 7277. The Contact Centre operates on a three tier model: the first tier being the self-service Interactive Voice Response (IVR) function, which assists taxpayers in helping themselves by selecting options from the IVR menu. The second tier is when calls are routed to the Contact Centre Agent and if the call cannot be resolved in this tier, the call is then routed to the third tier for intervention from a Contact Centre Consultant.

The aim of this chapter is to outline the research problem, explain the purpose behind the study and briefly describe the methodology employed for the study. A brief description of the structure of each chapter is provided as a synopsis later in this chapter.

### **1.2 Background**

The Contact Centre division is committed to quality, cost and service delivery, including the maximum utilisation of staff which then led to the introduction of the Blended Solution that was introduced in 2010. This solution was created for outbound calls, where the agents and consultants call taxpayers reminding them of outstanding debt and securing a payment commitment. Consequently, fully utilising human resources (SARS Contact Centre, 2014).

Knowledge Management is approximately an eight-year-old concept in the Contact Centres, which was introduced and maintained. This concept raised the curiosity of exploring the implementation process. The concept was introduced to assist management and staff with their daily operational needs in order to enhance quality, save cost and improve service delivery. The Contact Centre has created an online workspace which serves as a platform to share updates, process enhancements and new developments. The knowledge management concept is not as evident in other divisions within SARS as it is in the Contact Centre. This has led to the birth of this research study (SARS Contact Centre, 2014).

The Contact Centre in Durban strives to enhance the taxpayer compliance rate by providing excellent service delivery to taxpayers that choose to utilise this service. The highlighted objective is to ensure that all calls and queries are resolved within the first call. In this way, taxpayers will be educated enough to comply on a voluntary basis since the timeous resolution of their queries will increase their satisfaction levels as well as their knowledge base. Furthermore, the Contact Centre is committed in creating knowledgeable staff and managers. This objective will be achieved through the use of the already existing knowledge management concept. With the use of knowledge management, the Contact Centre commits to educating its taxpayers and making it easier for compliance obligations to be met (SARS Strategic plan 2016/17 - 2020/21).

Greiner, Böhmman and Krcmar (2007) stated that knowledge is a sophisticated idea that intrigues many truth-seekers, researchers of other disciplines, and specialists. Kalkan (2008) confirmed that the knowledge management concept is currently receiving attention from academics and practitioners and adds that knowledge is a product that reflects on human involvement.

SARS is an autonomous agency that collects tax on behalf of the government. The agency was established in terms of the SARS Act 34 of 1997, which made the organisation responsible for administering the country's tax and customs structures (SARS Strategic plan 2016/17 - 2020/21).

SARS is ultimately responsible for but not limited to the following:

- ❖ The collection and control of the country's taxes and levies;



- ❖ The collection of revenue that may be levied under any other regulation as agreed upon between SARS and a government institute entitled to the revenue;
- ❖ Providing a customs service that facilitates trade, revenue collection and border protection against illegal trade; and
- ❖ Informing the Minister of Finance of revenue-related issues (SARS Strategic plan 2016/17 - 2020/21).

The Contact Centre is a division that renders assistance to taxpayers via a mere phone call, which secures taxpayer compliance through knowledge and understanding. The Contact Centre's divisional mandate is to act as a first point of contact for SARS and to deliver a comprehensive World Class service in respect of queries, thus enhancing the image of SARS (SARS Strategic plan 2016/17 - 2020/21).

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

The Contact Centre remains committed to adequately equipping the management and staff by enhancing their knowledge and expertise, enabling them to become resourceful enough to deal with calls effectively and independently. The Contact Centre further strives to reduce costs for both the taxpayer as well as SARS as an organisation. This commitment ensures that processes and requirements were simplified, improving the quality of service by continuously applying the knowledge management concept (SARS Strategic plan 2016/17 - 2020/21).

With the use of knowledge management, the Contact Centre renders a client-focused approach to their taxpayers. Services were designed around the needs and expectations of taxpayers, which results in resolving taxpayer queries quickly and efficiently when they arise. The implementation of Knowledge Management in the Contact Centre appears to be working and this concept could be introduced to other divisions within SARS and perhaps to other parastatals and Government organisations (SARS Strategic plan 2016/17 - 2020/21).

This research intends to establish what the benefits and challenges encountered by the Durban Contact Centre are, as well as to explore the perceptions of knowledge

management including the role played by the leadership in sustaining the knowledge management concept.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The Contact Centre is committed to SARS strategic objective of increasing performance levels through the careful and virtuous management of human capital, as well as other resources. The aim of this research was to improve and enhance performance and efficiency at operational levels. The Contact Centre prefers implementing the knowledge management concept by maintaining excellence in operations (SARS Strategic plan 2016/17 - 2020/21). It is for this reason that it was decided to explore the concept from implementation to maintenance; taking into account perceptions, benefits, challenges and leadership intervention.

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The Contact Centre hopes to achieve its goals and objectives by becoming internationally acclaimed and they envision assisting taxpayers from all walks of life, who are given the same personalised experience. This division aims to educate its staff internally so that they can then educate the external taxpayers. This obligation raised curiosity levels, thus resulting in the decision on embarking on a research study to explore the implementation of the knowledge management concept in Contact Centres focusing on the Durban Contact Centre specifically.

#### **1.6 Aim and Research Objectives**

The study aimed to examine how Knowledge Management was implemented in the SARS Contact Centre in Durban. In order to achieve this aim, the study focused on the following:

- ❖ Examining how Knowledge Management is perceived by staff in the Contact Centre;
- ❖ Identifying the benefits of Knowledge Management to the Contact Centre;
- ❖ Determining the challenges of implementing Knowledge Management in a Contact Centre; and

- ❖ Identifying the role of leadership in implementing Knowledge Management in a Contact Centre.

## **1.7 Research Questions**

The research questions were:

- ❖ How is Knowledge Management perceived by staff in the Contact Centre?
- ❖ What are the benefits of implementing Knowledge Management to the Contact Centre?
- ❖ What are the challenges of implementing Knowledge Management in a Contact Centre?
- ❖ What is the role of leadership in implementing Knowledge Management in a Contact Centre?

## **1.8 Limitations**

Limitations such as time, cost and accessing information can be classified as constraints in a research study. The scope of a research study according to Cilliers Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014) may have to be redefined due to a limitation. These authors further mention that limitations should be acknowledged and they are to be considered and illustrated as it will contribute to the reliability and validity of the research study. The research study was conducted in the Durban Contact Centre with a small sample size and time; cost and work commitments were the main constraints.

## **1.9 Research Methodology**

The qualitative research method was applied to this study. Permission to conduct research in the Contact Centre was sought from SARS and ethical clearance (Appendix 4) was obtained from the university. Primary data was collected in the Contact Centre through a semi-structured interview process. A total of fifteen questions were presented to twenty participants during the interviews which were scheduled with the respondents at their convenience. All willing interviewees signed

an informed consent form (Appendix 1) and the interview process was explained to the respondents. The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim.

### **1.10 Structure of the Dissertation**

Chapter one consists of an introduction and a background to the problem statement. It also provides the purpose and the objective of the study. A brief explanation of the research methodology is provided in this chapter.

Chapter two explains the theoretical structure and will contextualise the problem statement in terms of other authors and research conducted. Journal articles and textbooks were the main sources of information.

In chapter three, the research methodology and design are discussed in this chapter. The chapter also provides an explanation for the use of the particular method chosen for the study.

In chapter, four the results are discussed in the form of themes to provide a rich understanding of the problem statement. This chapter also provides a synopsis of the views of the various participants and this chapter provides a link between the results that were interpreted, as well as the theory and results of previous research.

Chapter five, the final chapter, provides a conclusion to the overall study links the findings to the theory and determines if the objectives of the research were met. It also provides recommendations on how to address problems that were identified.

### **1.11 Conclusion**

Knowledge Management is a very important concept especially in an environment like the Contact Centre. In order for a Contact Centre to be effective and efficient, it requires information at its finger tips. Bouthillier and Shearer (2002) were of the opinion that once knowledge is accumulated, knowledge must be stored and shared.

Snowden (1998) believed that knowledge sharing seems to be a huge concern with regards to knowledge management and most organisations seem to disregard the

fact that knowledge should be documented and made available when it is required. Snowden (1998) further mentioned that organisations should be ready to implement a variety of methods for knowledge sharing too.

It is expected that findings from this study will contribute towards improving and enhancing efficiency; processes and service delivery at SARS and the Contact Centre in Durban. The next chapter provides a literature review of knowledge management, highlighting important developments and studies on the subject.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The mission of the Contact Centre at SARS is to deliver on the organisation's strategy by creating value that contributes towards taxpayer satisfaction and an enhanced organisation brand. This is all arranged so that cost-effective enhancements in processes and systems aid people with tax compliance. The Contact Centre pursues this mission by providing a modified service delivery to all taxpayers, without any discrimination regarding the type of entity or economic background. The Durban Contact Centre envisions surpassing the expectations of taxpayers who interact with them on a daily basis. They are striving to become globally renowned (SARS Strategic plan 2016/17 - 2020/21).

Knowledge management is a vital concept for organisations that have Contact Centres, since it is important for frontline client, service-based types of business. Gao, Li and Clarke (2008) confirmed that the constant utilisation of knowledge plays an essential part in providing a basis that relates knowledge to organisations in this day and age. Gao et al., (2008) further mentioned that knowledge acquisition and transmission has continuously played a significant part in social concerns.

This chapter reviews literature focusing on knowledge management; the perceptions; benefits; challenges and leadership roles.

### **2.2 Knowledge Perceptions**

Organisations of today show a concerted interest in knowledge management. According to Gao et al., (2008), organisations show a natural interest in the knowledge management concept. Interest is given to knowledge that is already known and owned by the organisation, as well as knowledge that is known by employees within the organisation.

Contact Centres require knowledge management to aid management and staff to effectively achieve efficient outputs and improved service delivery. In support, Rasooli and Albadvi (2007) mentioned that service departments like contact centres make use of knowledge management by referring to the policies and procedures

related to creating and conveying significant knowledge, competently and speedily in order to provide for clients' or customers' requirements.

There are numerous interpretations of the word "knowledge". Gao et al. (2008), confirmed that the word, "knowledge", is open to various meanings. They mentioned that it refers to information and data linked with competence, skill and expertise, which was dependent on the context in which it was used. Knowledge management is often perceived as information, data and knowledge.

Pusaksrikit (2006) argued that data consists of details and outcomes from interpretations, studies and experiments. He added that information is data and that knowledge assists with generating information from data, or more esteemed information from less esteemed information. According to Gao et al., (2008) knowledge in the business sphere is regarded as practical knowledge. The author's recognised knowledge management as useful, especially for managers, productive units in manufacturing industries and service industries like the Contact Centres.

### **2.3 Knowledge Defined**

Al-Aama (2014) argued that knowledge, when successfully managed, results in organisational learning enhancement and will further support successful processes in organisations. Organisations share knowledge efficiently since they apply three core resources, namely people, processes and technology which are brought together by knowledge management.

Davenport, De Long and Beers (1998) defined knowledge as information combined with experience, context, interpretation, reflection and perspective that adds a new level of insight. Omatayo (2015) defined knowledge as the insights, understandings, and practical know-how that people possess adding that knowledge is the fundamental resource that allows people to function intelligently.

Sandrock (2008) confirmed that organisations that have successfully managed knowledge have created their own definition. However, this definition cannot be transposed to other organisations that are introducing the concept of knowledge management.

Sandrock (2008) further mentioned that knowledge management definitions do not come from a dictionary but from an organisation's knowledge management strategy. Al-Aama (2014) confirmed that knowledge is gathered through researching, reading, communicating and experiencing. He further added that knowledge management is considered an asset to business in general and confirms that this is what defined knowledge.

## **2.4 Knowledge and Strategy**

Coakes and Granados (2010) mentioned that according to earlier research, the management of knowledge depended on the strategy selected. An organisation's strategy is usually a high-level plan that is aligned towards the needs of the business. Wiig (1997) confirmed that organisations utilise knowledge management strategies that are integrated with the organisation's primary focus, the organisation's behaviour; organisation's culture and the organisation's competencies.

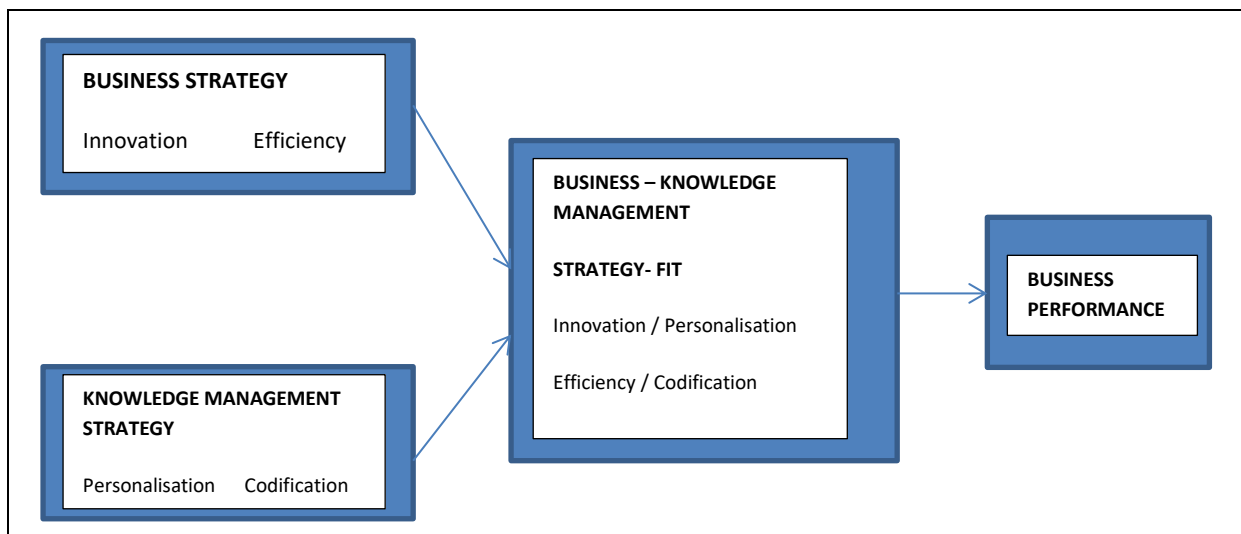
Greiner, Böhmann and Krcmar (2007) described two knowledge management strategies, namely the codification strategy and the personalisation strategy. The objective of the codification strategy includes gathering knowledge which is then housed in a database after collection and later made available in a codified form. Greiner et al., (2007) further explained the contrast of the codification strategy, which is known as the personalisation strategy. The objective of the personalisation study is to transfer and move knowledge with the use of information technology and meetings. Table 2.1 and Figure 2.1 illustrate these concepts.



**TABLE 2.1: Knowledge Management Strategies and Objectives**

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>INNOVATION</b>	<b>EFFICIENCY</b>
	Creativity and knowledge creation	Externalisation and re-use of knowledge
<b>Focus</b>	<b>People</b>	<b>Processes</b>
<b>STRATEGY</b>	<b>PERSONALISATION</b>	<b>CODIFICATION</b>
	Networking and Dialogue	Collect, store and disseminate explicit knowledge
<b>Problem</b>	New, unstructured, not repetitive	Repetitive Activities and similar processes
<b>Knowledge Type</b>	<b>Tacit Knowledge</b>	<b>Explicit Knowledge</b>

Source: Adapted from Greiner Böhmann and Krcmar (2007:6)



**Figure 2.1: Knowledge Management and Business Fit**

Source: Adapted from Greiner Böhmann and Krcmar (2007:6)

Service orientated organisations like Contact Centres need to ensure that knowledge management alone will not be successful without it being strategically coupled with service delivery measures, controlled costs, and the workforce. Hansen, Nohria and Tierney (1999) confirmed that knowledge management is not arbitrary since an organisation's strategy is dependent on the manner in which the organisation renders services to their clients; the manner in which business was undertaken; and the recruitment and placement of the correct people in the correct roles.

Abraham (2005) posited that strategic thinking attempts to find a different way for the organisation to conduct business from its competitors. This type of thinking may lead to the organisation undertaking business better or different from their competitors in ways that were appreciated by their customers, including enhanced quality; enhanced processes; improved performance; increased efficiency, speed, simplicity, etcetera.

Gao et al., (2008) stated that organisations must set out clear goals and strategies for knowledge management to exist in the business. The management of existing knowledge and the deployment of personal knowledge should be effective and efficient, ultimately achieving organisational objectives according to the strategies set. Consequently, there would be an increase in the competency levels since the organisation will communicate and innovate in order to keep relevant and keep their employees up to speed.

Abraham (2005) postulated that if the strategic plan is carried out appropriately, the strategy can enhance an organisation's image and secures client loyalty and faith, ultimately achieving efficiencies and strategic goals. Therefore, according to Abraham (2005), the route of the knowledge management activity should be defined by the strategic path of the organisation. Greiner et al., (2007) stated that the organisation's strategic route ought to decide the knowledge management course of action.

Porter (2008) contended that the Five Forces model was a good beginning for the analysis of the organisation's status quo. There are three standard business strategies that Porter defined namely differentiation, cost, leadership and focus. These counter the five forces of competition within an industry, which are supplier

power; buyer power; threat of substitutes; industry competitors; and barriers to entry (Greiner et al., 2007).

Greiner et al., (2007) stated that factors for the creation of competitive advantage include reduced costs for leadership on one hand and quality, time and enhanced developments for differentiation on the other hand. The capability of a certain business strategy is established by the nature of the organisation.

## 2.5 Types of Knowledge

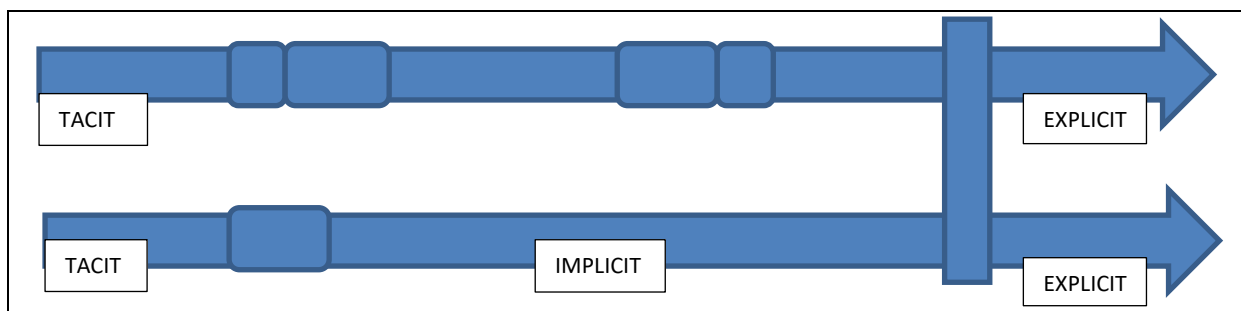
Knowledge can be separated into two types, explicit knowledge or tacit/implicit knowledge. Gao et al., (2008) explained these dimensions as follows:

**Explicit Knowledge:** this type of knowledge is conveyed in data formation, it is formal and normally written, typical example will be manuals and policies.

**Tacit Knowledge:** is not easily transferrable and is personal knowledge that can be put into action, an example of this will be the knowledge of an employee.

**Implicit Knowledge:** is tacit knowledge in another form, it is usually knowledge that is understood but difficult to express, an example of this could be language barriers or cultural differences.

The scale of the different types of knowledge: explicit knowledge, tacit knowledge and implicit knowledge is shown in Figure 2.2.



**Figure 2.2: Scale of Tacit and Explicit Knowledge**

**Source: Adapted from Gao, Li and Clarke (2008:5)**

Explicit knowledge is defined by Koh, Gunasekaran and Arunachalam (2005) as knowledge that is expressed and put in safekeeping in the written and automated medium. Providing quality customer service requires sound explicit knowledge not only of products and services, but also of procedures, rules and regulations of sales and after-sales, including data protection and consumers' legal rights.

Tacit knowledge is knowledge that is difficult to articulate and capture in documented format (Koh et al., 2005). Koh et al., (2005) described it as knowledge that is developed through experience and that can be understood only through participation and observation. Knowledge can be recognised as tacit or it can be recognised as explicit. Tacit knowledge is created from experiences; is difficult to express; is normally shared through influential interaction; and through the relating of stories and experiences (Al-Aama, 2014).

Koh et al. (2005) defined cultural knowledge as tacit knowledge since it is knowledge generated through the beliefs and value system that exists in an organisation. Like tacit knowledge locating cultural knowledge is difficult. Only through careful observation can one distinguish such knowledge.

According to Herschel, Neimati and Steiger (2001), many practitioners and researchers in the field of knowledge management confirmed that there are two forms of knowledge, explicit and tacit or implicit knowledge. According to Earl and Scott (1998), both forms of knowledge are important, one just manages the cost of the other.

Choo (1998) mentioned that knowledge creation activities can be compromised whilst trying to emphasise one strategy over the other, since it may alleviate many knowledge management issues operationally. However, Choo (1998) believed that new products, services, capabilities and innovation could be inhibited should an organisation choose to ignore the interaction of explicit and tacit knowledge.

People gain and apply tacit and explicit knowledge in their own way. Smith (2001) confirmed that supportive leaders in an organisation, who take knowledge management seriously, can only contribute towards the success of the concept which is essential to business. The sharing of specialised knowledge becomes more effective when employees are recognised and rewarded in a consistent manner for

their use of originality and insight in the workplace (Smith, 2001). According to Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick and Kerr (1998) individuals use different ways to think about problems and develop solutions because people possess slightly different types of tacit and explicit knowledge and apply their knowledge in unique ways.

Ashkenas et al., (1998) further stated that people share knowledge and group physical and intellectual assets in new and creative ways. He was of the opinion that a comparison between tacit and explicit types of knowledge is a thought. It is actually a way to think and not to point out differences in the knowledge types. Botha, Kourie and Snyman (2008) posited that knowledge is a mix of tacit and explicit features, instead of giving one preference over the other. He added that both tacit and explicit should be seen as an assortment of variety instead of a conclusive point. For the purposes of understanding knowledge, these types can be defined by clearly outlining their differences in theory.

Ashkenas et al., (1998) iterated that tacit knowledge is technical or cognitive and is made up of mental models, values, beliefs, perceptions, insights and assumptions. Technical tacit knowledge is demonstrated when people master a specific body of knowledge or uses skills like those gradually developed by master craftsmen. Explicit knowledge is carefully codified, stored in a hierarchy of databases and is accessed with high quality, reliable, fast information retrieval systems. Once codified, explicit knowledge assets can be re-used to solve many similar types of problems or connect people with valuable, reusable knowledge.

According to Liebowitz and Beckman (1998), tacit knowledge is inanimate. It does not require thought and requires very little time. Tacit knowledge only assists organisations with making decisions that influence a collective. Smith (2001) contended that tacit knowledge is a more confined knowledge type since it cannot be found in books, policies or electronic repositories.

Smith (2001) explained that explicit knowledge is technical since it requires an academic level of understanding gained through a structured study route or formal education route. He added that explicit knowledge is systematic knowledge that is shared and communicated through formal means. It is academic information or technical data found in policies, manuals and formal language.

On the contrary, Massingham and Massingham (2014) contended that knowledge cannot be removed from an individual and this is the reason that it cannot be managed. They added that knowledge cannot be captured, stored or shared and claims made that knowledge can be captured, stored and shared are false. Storey and Barnett (2000) confirmed that knowledge management is difficult since barriers like culture and systems are the most commonly identified. These barriers will have to be managed. However, securing management commitment to this process is a barrier in itself. Storey and Barnett (2000) asserted that knowledge management cannot create value for an organisation.

Ragab and Arisha (2013) stated that debates around types of knowledge have been going on for decades and to date have still not reached resolution. They added that these debates are likely to continue since knowledge types are dependent on subjective views which are quite philosophical in nature. Ragab and Arisha (2013) were of the view that since there was a need for knowledge resources to be managed, the birth of the knowledge management concept resulted.

## **2.6 Communities of Practice**

McDermott and Snyder (2002) defined communities of practice (COPs) as groups of people who share a common understanding or perception about certain subject matter. They have expanded and developed their expertise in the area of concern through continuous interaction. Dalkir (2005) referred to communities of practice as a groups of people who share a common professional interest and that comes together to make use of the shared knowledge in order to enhance and create value amongst the group.

Dalkir (2005) suggested that people with common tasks, not necessarily within the same organisation, come together to put knowledge into action. For instance, enhancing a new theory or enhancing a new process.

According to Dalkir (2005), an important characteristic of a COP is that it is a network formed because people need each other to realise a common objective. Mutual understanding and assistance are shared amongst all existing networks. Another characteristic of COPs is that they are not a dictatorship. There may be a leader who

oversees sustainability of existence, but there is also shared responsibility and accountability.

## **2.7 Knowledge Processes**

Andreeva and Kianto (2012) defined knowledge processes as a set of actions that are practiced in an organisation and conducted by managers to improve the organisation's effectiveness and efficiencies. They believed that knowledge processes can be controlled. Foss and Michailova (2009) stated that knowledge processes are conceptualised as management activities that allow the organisation to provide valuable service from their knowledge resources.

Knowledge management is generally seen as a process involving a variety of activities. Alavi and Leidner (2001) stated that these five basic processes involve activities; knowledge creation; knowledge storing; knowledge transferring and knowledge application. Similarly, Reid, Baloh and Desouza (2010) referred to the stages of knowledge as: creation, transfer, retention and utilisation. Koh and Gunasekaran (2006) posited that the use of knowledge management can streamline processes if applied correctly using both tacit and explicit knowledge, since this will avoid uncertainties.

## **2.8 Knowledge Retention**

Not many organisations have plans to retain knowledge. Van Winkelen and McDermott (2008) confirmed that in order to prevent knowledge loss, organisations will have to take the initiative to put methodical approaches in place. Yeh (2007) added that most organisations rely on ad hoc and responsive methods. Since knowledge workers may assist with increasing work contentment that will reduce employee turnover, there may be programmes that will address new employees who will align themselves with the organisation's culture.

Van Winkelen and McDermott (2008) postulated that exit interviews for employees who wish to leave the organisation may generally assist with ascertaining key matters that will perhaps help newly appointed employees. They added that this type of knowledge retention method may reduce the effects of staff turnover. De Long and

Davenport (2003) advised that in order to retain knowledge, it is best to identify critical knowledge areas that are at risk.

Organisations can implement a framework to identify job expertise and which can proactively anticipate possible knowledge gaps (Van Winkelen and McDermott, 2008). Milton (2008) added that organisations should embark on a social network analyses to detect and manage fundamental weaknesses in knowledge. Kamph (2007) stated that employees that retire take with them a wealth of knowledge, therefore another approach that could be implemented is to carry out a survey to ascertain possible retirees. This survey, as suggested by Kamph (2007), could assist in estimating the risk and assessing how indispensable employees planning to retire are.

Knowledge auditing and mapping procedures assist in creating transparency of knowledge. Hellstrom and Husted (2004) confirmed that mapping and auditing methods increase knowledge transparency in organisations so that information is consistent and available for employees, as well as open to improvements and enhancements. Idinopulos and Kempler (2003) stated that technology can house employee and organisational information which can address knowledge gaps, even if it is on the organisation's database. Milton (2008) concluded that the use of tacit knowledge can facilitate the process of documenting important tasks and processes.

According to Grant (1996), knowledge retention strategies should not only focus on the loss of individual knowledge but also consider that work gets done via networking. Consequently, social and cultural networks play a vital role when driving capabilities, which makes an organisation's knowledge an exceptional basis for competitive advantage. Grant (1996) added that networking generates collective and organisational learning. Adler and Kwon (2002) believed that human resources support actually builds social associations amongst employees through motivation, giving them the confidence to interact and share knowledge effortlessly.

Overall, knowledge retention strategies are generic and reactive. Koudsi (2000) was of the opinion that retention strategies; which include capturing, storing and codifying knowledge as well as exit interviews that capture lessons learnt from retiring or departing employees only house a minor percentage of knowledge that is created, acquired and utilised in the organisation.



## 2.9 Knowledge Sharing

An important factor that promotes operations and organisational performance is the facilitation of the knowledge sharing process. Slagter (2009) mentioned that there are a number of human resource processes for example, network creation and expert conferences, where knowledge is generated and shared within the organisation. Droege and Hoobler (2003) advised that organisations should ensure that they recruit prospective employees with the right attitude so that they can contribute towards knowledge sharing and positive engagement with each other.

There are many knowledge sharing methods that organisations may use to retain knowledge within the organisation. Aiman-Smith, Bergey, Cantwell and Doran (2006) described some of these methods as follows:

- ❖ **Phased retirement plans:** This method allows possible retirees to work on a part-time basis until actually retiring.
- ❖ **Consultants:** Some organisations offer possible retirees consultant work so that they can have access to their knowledge and expertise.
- ❖ **Board of Directors:** Organisations may even offer positions to their retirees on their board so that they can utilise their expertise and suggestions.

Levy (2011) proposed a three-stage process of knowledge retention. This process is based on a multi-case study conducted in seven organisations looking at over thirty knowledge retention projects which included possible retirees. The stages basically comprised of the following:

- ❖ To identify knowledge of high importance, which is to be retained;
- ❖ To transfer knowledge that is not yet documented; and
- ❖ To integrate knowledge that is retained for an organisations' internal use in business processes.

## 2.10 Knowledge Loss

Lesser and Prusak (2001) indicated that knowledge is such a valued concept that when organisations experience economic crises, they choose to reduce salaries instead of retrenching employees. This method ensures that there is minimum loss of knowledge and expertise. Sitlington and Marshall (2011) suggested that re-

allocation of a workforce is another method that can be utilised should an organisation find itself undergoing a rationalising strategy. The re-allocation of the workforce may still achieve cost reduction while at the same time maintaining the knowledge of core capabilities.

According to Nixon, Hitt, Lee and Jeong (2008) when applying reallocation strategies, it would be best to reduce specific job roles and/or departments instead of applying a percentage reduction per department, since selective downsizing is more effective. Hofer-Alfeis et al., (2008) stated that re-allocation and rotation methods may assist with knowledge sharing and enables the organisation to be less dependent on certain employees. However, there is still an involuntary knowledge loss for the department or organisation.

## **2.11 Organisational Learning**

Effective social networks in knowledge retention and minimising the loss of knowledge is emphasised by HR and knowledge management literature. Fisher and White (2000) confirmed that an organisation's learning abilities are dependent on socially fixed affiliation. Capelli (2000) suggested that loyalty to a group is more often than not stronger than loyalty to an employer and adds that changing the relationship characteristic of an organisation's social arrangement reduces the tacit knowledge loss from staff turnover.

## **2.12 Human Resources**

According to Davenport and Volpel (2001), when one manages knowledge they are simultaneously managing people and vice versa. Robertson and Hammersley (2000) stated that the importance of staffing solutions is to emphasise the capability of aspiring employees to fit into the organisation's culture or unique way of working, instead of just matching them to a job requirement. Brelade and Harman (2000) stated that employees need to be retained, and this happens when organisations make growth opportunities available for career advancement. HR processes and procedures should be created to meet with employees' personal goals.

### **2.13 Service Quality**

Fonseca (2009) explained that services are intangible and can only be experienced by clients and that service rendition usually occurs in the same location in which it is being consumed. Grönroos (1984) contended that service quality is the point where the service is actually being fulfilled and it is the result of the service delivered versus the client's expectation.

Etzel, Bruce and William (2001) stated that service quality is a comparison between a client's actual experiences and their expectations of the service, based on the clients, measurement scale. Customer anticipation towards the service rendition will be influenced by their individual standards, experience and public reputation. Simultaneously, Petruzzellis, D'Uggento and Romanazzi (2006), posited that the higher the service quality, the more it is that new clients could be attracted and existing clients retained. Increased service quality can even attract clients away from competitors.

Etzel et al., (2001) concluded that customer satisfaction depends on their perception of the service quality that they receive. In other words, if service quality is rendered better than expected the customer's perception will increase and vice versa. Therefore, service quality is important for attracting new customers and, more significantly, retaining existing clients (Li, Shue and Lee, 2006). This topic has been one of the most discussed topics in the field of management and marketing literature. In a competitive environment, it is regarded as an important factor in the success and survival of management strategies.

Akmanligil and Palvia (2004) noted that organisations today pay attention to service quality since it places the organisation ahead of their competitors. They added that the utilisation of evaluation tools serves to assess and improve service performance. The assessments also serve as a basis for employee and corporate rewards. Liu, Guo and Lee (2011) defined service quality as the quality perceived by customers after using the service and is the premise of customer satisfaction.

Saravanan and Rao (2007) summarised service quality as a significant factor due to its relation with cost, performance, and client maintenance. Organisations have now shifted their focus to developing strategies in order to achieve customer satisfaction, placing emphasis on service quality.

## **2.14 Organisational Strategy**

Driving the success of knowledge management means that organisations should have a flawless and a well thought out strategy. Liebowitz (1999) suggested that a good strategy forms the basis on which an organisation sets out its competencies to achieve knowledge management objectives. Soliman and Spooner (2000) indicated that there are numerous organisational strategies that can be implemented. There are many suggestions as to how the knowledge management strategy can be implemented. However, the most suitable strategy is the one that best suits the organisation in its context.

Maier and Remus (2002) remarked that to add more value to the importance of a knowledge management strategy, the concept should support vital business related matters within an organisation. It is agreed that knowledge management has to be connected with organisational strategy.

## **2.15 Organisational Performance**

Al-Aama (2014) stated that knowledge management reduces backlogs and enhances quality, service delivery and organisational reputation. In essence; the effects of knowledge management on operational and organisational performance are positive.

Rasula, Bosilj and Stemberger (2012) stated that organisational performance is one of the key benefits of introducing knowledge management practices in an organisation because of its positive effect. Measurement acts like a data collection system that gives useful information about a particular situation or activity. Rasula et al., (2012) added that if knowledge management is not measured, it may run the risk of becoming just another management fashion craze.

According to Arora (2002), measuring the effects of knowledge management is essential as this will ensure that planned goals are achieved. To determine an organisation's knowledge management benefits and effective outputs, organisations should enable measures in order to track the progress of the concept. Ahmed, Lim and Zairi (1999) remarked that ideally, measuring knowledge provides a source for organisations to improve, evaluate, control and compare the performance of knowledge management.

Associating knowledge management activities with an organisation's financial outcomes can be difficult, as there are other variables that can affect the financial performance of an organisation (Hasanali, 2002). It may be essential to link and compare knowledge and finance. However, it is not necessary to connect and link the organisations financial performance with knowledge management. Gupta, Iyer and Aronson (2000) stated that there is no standard method by which to measure knowledge management and this area is still being researched by academics.

Knowledge management as a field has become increasingly important because the world is moving towards knowledge-based economies. Knowledge, with its unique characteristics which distinguish it from physical products, has brought fresh perspectives to all management fields, including the idea of "managing" this new source of value creation in companies (Merat and Bo, 2013). The advantage of knowledge management is that it can empower, innovate and catapult an organisation's competitive advantage, which can be beneficial with correct implementation that is effectively managed (Al-Aama, 2014).

Gao et al., (2008) stated that knowledge is symbolically declared as a fundamental means for organisations. Twenty-first century business organisations claim that knowledge gives them an added advantage. According to Gao et al., (2008) knowledge is the driving force for nation building, competing and sustaining a competitive advantage. Hansen et al., (1999) mentioned that organisations are quite aware of the fact that knowledge management is the route to a competitive advantage. However, only a few organisations realise the advantages of this appreciated concept.

Danskin, Englis, Solomon, Goldsmith, and Davey, (2005) stated that internal knowledge systems create an arena for knowledge management to be transferred to

external partners. The implementation of management systems creates an enhanced organisational experience of competitive advantage which can be sustained over an extended time period.

## **2.16 Technology**

Gathering and organising knowledge requires technology as the key role player for distribution purposes. Smith (2001) asserted that it is imperative for an organisation to have a strong and resilient information technology (IT) structure, which was designed and implemented to systematically store and distribute information. Ettore (1999) posited that the following features are to be considered in the selection process of technology: functional suitability; technical suitability; cultural suitability; and cost suitability.

One of the key enablers for implementing knowledge management is IT. Alavi and Leidner (2001) stated that IT was once regarded as an archive of information but has now evolved into a link between human and information and human connectivity. Alavi and Liedner (2001) added that technology can now retrieve information; it aids the speedy search for information and enhances communication. Therefore, technology supports an organisation's knowledge management processes by assuming a variety of roles. Wong and Aspinwall (2003) mentioned that technology is but only a tool and not a solution.

According to Luan and Serban (2002), technology can be classified into any of the following categories: corporate competence; knowledge repository; association; document solutions; knowledge portals and e-learning. The important element that requires consideration is that it is simple and easy to use. However, Hansen et al. (1999) cautioned that the structures required to assist and fund technology-sharing processes often require large monetary investment.

## **2.17 Resources**

Successful knowledge management implementation is dependent on resources especially financial resources. Martensson (2000) stated that if an organisation is investing in technology, there is undoubtedly going to be a requirement for financial

support. Human capital may be required to occupy knowledge-related job roles and time is a very important resource since organisations will have to allow their employees to execute knowledge-related activities, like knowledge sharing. Davenport and Volpel (2001) mentioned that attention is actually one of the scarcest resources in many organisations.

Martensson (2000) added that the provision of time opportunities for employees to learn and share is quite important. Davenport and Volpel (2001) stated that the need to focus on attention management is a fundamental success factor for knowledge management and further argue that resource availability should also be appropriately considered, since one of the vital concerns in accomplishing effective knowledge management is to manage resources. Important here is knowing how to acquire, allocate and manage resources for the success of knowledge management.

## **2.18 Knowledge Processes and Activities**

Johannsen (2000) referred to knowledge processes as something that can be finalised in the organisation. Wong and Aspinwall (2003) confirmed that processes which characterise the knowledge management concept are vast as many researchers and authors associate knowledge management with a number of activities. Alavi and Leidner (2001) postulated that the knowledge management process is usually at the heart of a successful knowledgeable organisation. Therefore, it is imperative that a process-based approach to knowledge management is adopted.

Holsapple and Joshi (2000) stated that in order to ensure that knowledge management processes are addressed; appropriate interventions need to be in place. Knowledge processes need to be addressed in a systematic and structured manner. They further suggest that coordinating knowledge processes is crucial and it should be included in day-to-day workflows in the hope of it becoming second nature or common practice (Holsapple and Joshi, 2000).

## **2.19 Education and Training**

Wong (2005) indicated that in order for individuals to understand roles that they are to perform, training and knowledge-related roles and responsibilities may be required. It is equally essential to develop and train employees to adopt techniques such as creative innovation and knowledge sharing. Horak (2001) suggested that skills should be developed in the following areas, namely networking; peer knowledge and learning; team building; peer collaboration; written and verbal communication, as well as creative initiative. Yahya and Goh (2002) remarked that skills developed in relation to the latter definitely have a progressive outcome on the knowledge process.

## **2.20 Motivation, Reward and Recognition**

A common idiom states that “you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink”. In keeping with this saying, Hauschild, Licht and Stein (2001) mentioned that motivating, rewarding and recognising employees is so vital that no amount of intervention and investments will make knowledge management effective without them. In addition, Hauschild et al., (2001) suggested that establishing the correct incentives and motivation tools will only encourage employees to share and use knowledge as intended.

## **2.21 Change Management**

A significant factor that can influence the result of organisational change effort is, resistance to change (Huang and Huang, 2009). There are various organisational change literature that offer several definitions, the most common being that resistance to change is seen as a failure for change processes (Armenakis et al., 1993). Nadler and Tushman (1993) mentioned that it is a problem that must be reduced or resolved. Coetsee (1999:209) stated that resistance to change can be assumed as “power directed at impeding blocked energies.”



## 2.22 Knowledge Successes

Knowledge becomes beneficial to an organisation when employees have the required knowledge to perform their daily duties. Employees become effective when they have the required knowledge in usable form at their fingertips (Al-Aama, 2014). According to Hasanali (2002), the success of knowledge management depends on many factors, namely leadership; culture; structure; roles and responsibilities; IT infrastructures; and measurement.

Greiner et al., (2007) suggested that knowledge management goals and strategies need to correspond with the organisation's objectives and strategies, which should intend to create a lasting effect. Al-Aama (2014) stated that knowledge taxonomy could be utilised as a guide if knowledge management is successfully implemented. Greiner et al., (2007) mentioned that at times knowledge management is initiated by an organisation's objective and business needs to add strategic value.

Wong (2005) posited that many success factors are evident and have been put forward by various authors. Some of these success factors can be clustered as follows:

- ❖ Leadership Commitment and Support;
- ❖ Business Culture;
- ❖ Knowledge Technology;
- ❖ Strategic Purpose;
- ❖ Organisational Set-Up;
- ❖ Organisational Measures;
- ❖ Knowledge Activities;
- ❖ Incentive Aid;
- ❖ Development; and
- ❖ Human Capital.

A description of these factors follows:

**Leadership Commitment and Support:** Leaders can showcase their commitment and support by driving the importance of knowledge management to individuals within the organisation, including uplifting employee morale, promoting a knowledge creation and sharing culture, as well as steering the change that comes with

knowledge management (Wong, 2005). Horak (2001) agreed that management commitment and support involves influencing the success of knowledge management, which can be viewed as a key factor.

**Business Culture:** Goh (2002) suggested that business culture is important since it allows for collaboration knowledge between employees. Business culture plays an important role in the success of knowledge management since it defines values, beliefs and norms that direct the behaviour of employees in an organisation (Wong, 2005).

**Knowledge Technology:** When knowledge management systems are being developed it is important to consider that they should be kept simple for ease of use and should cater for the needs of the users. The information should be relevant and consistent (Wong, 2005).

**Strategic Purpose:** Wong (2005) stated that the strategic purpose of knowledge management is to be clearly outlined for all employees. An organisation's strategic purpose needs to be supported since this practice will secure buy-in and commitment, ultimately securing success with knowledge management.

**Organisational Set-Up:** Wong (2005) posited that implementing knowledge management necessitates the development of a suitable organisational set-up. Davenport (1998) added that a suitable organisational culture implies creating a set of roles and responsibilities for teams to perform tasks related to knowledge management.

**Organisational Measures:** According to Arora (2002) and Ahmed et al., (1999), it is vital for knowledge management to be measured since this will ensure that objectives and goals are achieved as per the organisation's vision.

**Knowledge Activities:** Johannsen (2000) stated that in order to ensure that knowledge activities are addressed in a structured and methodical manner; applicable tools and interventions are required.

**Incentive Aids:** Effective knowledge management required employee incentives and motivation, which will enhance and secure positive employee attitudes and behaviours (Wong, 2005).

**Development:** Wong (2005) suggested that employees should be trained and educated and developed in using the knowledge management concept, including the use of knowledge-related systems and knowledge-related tools that will assist with managing the concept.

**Human Capital:** To improve and enhance employees' confidence and value, human resources need to intervene since people are the designers of knowledge (Davenport and Volpel, 2001).

### 2.23 Knowledge Barriers

Oliva (2014) suggested that knowledge is an essential asset of organisations and that this concept is so important that managed in a proper manner, it will elevate an organisation to achieve its strategic goals and objectives. He further mentioned that understanding the barriers that compromise knowledge management will afford organisations an opportunity to create plans to overcome these barriers.

Oliva (2014) posited that there are five main barriers, namely:

- ❖ Absence of concern from employees;
- ❖ Ineffective interaction and communication;
- ❖ Little or no interest in the culture of information sharing;
- ❖ Poor intellectual competence of employees; and
- ❖ Lack of motivation, rewards and recognition.

According to Oliva (2014), stages of the knowledge management process are affected by the barriers in an unfavourable manner. These barriers mentioned affect the distribution of knowledge and the assessment and gathering of knowledge.

The following barriers were identified based on analysis of the literature:

- ❖ Poor Performance Measures;
- ❖ Poor leadership and management;
- ❖ Lack of Accountability and Responsibility;
- ❖ Problematic Organisational Culture;
- ❖ Poor Implementation;
- ❖ Employee Retention; and

## ❖ Power, Conflict and Ethics.

These barriers are discussed in detail below:

### **2.23.1 Poor Performance Measures**

Knowledge management becomes complicated when trying to evaluate its effects, especially monetary evaluation due to its intangible nature (Ahn and Chang, 2004). Due to the fact that the value created from knowledge management is indirect, assessing this concept proves to be very difficult (Carlucci, Marr and Schiuma, 2004). According to Wu, Du, Li and Li (2010), performance indicators are vital for management to continue believing in the concept. Heaidari, Moghimi and Khanifar (2011) suggested that a successful knowledge management measurement tool is a success factor for performance.

### **2.23.2 Poor Leadership and Management**

Pettersson (2009) confirmed that inadequate management support secures failure as a consequence and adds that a lack of management responsibility is a factor for failure. Weber (2007) contended that knowledge management fails due to a lack of leadership support in the organisation.

Chua and Lam (2005) stated that knowledge management is likely to fail if there is an absence of relevant skills. In order to sustain the knowledge management project, the right business and technical skills must be sustained. Wu et al., (2010) suggested that skills can be sustained and enhanced through training interventions and implemented with concise, measurable and clear goals.

### **2.23.3 Lack of Accountability, Responsibility and Ownership**

An organisation may end up with no control over knowledge without the proper enforcement of leadership accountability and responsibility (Weber, 2007). According to Hansali (2002), arranged and structured responsibility is an element that has an effect on accountability, and vice versa. Singh and Kant (2008) confirm that the lack of interest in assuming responsibility is classified as a knowledge barrier which is largely dependent on organisational culture.

#### **2.23.4 Poor Implementation**

Singh and Kant (2008) confirmed that there are three general problems that an organisation may encounter when implementing knowledge management. These generic problems are:

1. Poor performance outputs;
2. Poor organisational processes and culture fit; and
3. Over-dependence on technology.

These problems are elaborated on below.

**Poor performance outputs:** Issues related to knowledge management performance include poor practical arrangements, poor knowledge representation and poor use of knowledge systems (Singh and Kant, 2008).

**Poor organisation processes and culture fit:** Weber (2007) posits that organisational goals and processes are dependent on one another. Therefore, failure will take place if the knowledge management concept is not integrated into these processes. However, Benassi, Bouquet and Cuel (2003) argue that information technology should be compatible with the organisational model.

**Over-reliance on technology:** Chua and Lam (2005) stated that with the over-emphasis of knowledge management systems, negligence for tacit knowledge was evident. Botha et al. (2008) commented that tacit knowledge is best transmitted from one individual to another. They added that since IT is an enabler, it is not sufficient by itself. Weber (2007) stated that when the need for knowledge management approaches arises, only then should the technology be adopted.

#### **2.23.5 Employee Retention**

According to Olcer (2007), employee retention is considered the second highest problem amongst the barriers to knowledge management. Singh and Kant (2008) stated that staff turnover and retirement can lead to the failure of knowledge management implementation.

Olcer (2007) suggested that there is a need to transfer knowledge before employees retire or leave for another organisation. However, Liebowitz (2011) asserted that the moment an employee is hired in an organisation, the process for knowledge retention should begin. He added that only a few organisations have strategies to retain knowledge. Yazdani, Yaghoubi and Hajiabadi (2011) stated that employees with valuable knowledge resources can be brought back as Consultants.

#### **2.24 Power, Conflict and Ethics**

Rechberg and Syed (2013) stated that conflict stems from a power struggle between competing parties and such conflict occurs when knowledge is treated as power and when there is a lack of recognition for contributions towards executing knowledge processes. Rechberg and Cacciolatti (2013) suggested that conflict can sometimes arise when decisions are taken to delegate tasks which may not sit well with certain employees within the organisation.

#### **2.25 Leadership and Knowledge**

Anantatmula (2008) stated that the roles of managers and leaders are equally important, but at different stages in the life-cycle of knowledge management: Leadership plays a crucial role in creating and implementing knowledge initiatives, whilst managers assume a greater importance in maintaining effective efficiency outputs. Bounfour (2003) described knowledge management as a set of procedures.

Anantatmula (2008) confirmed that leadership plays a critical role in the development and management of knowledge management systems. While research in the field of knowledge management has focused on diverse topics, little research has considered the relationship between leadership and knowledge management (Analoui, Doloriert and Sambrook, 2012).

Verma (1996) stated that a leader places emphasis on performing the correct task; whilst managers place emphasis on performing the task correctly. Verma (1996) also stated that leadership skills required for knowledge management are no different from what an old-fashioned leader requires. Liu and Fang (2006) viewed leadership as possessing the capability of influencing others to align themselves with

the leader's goals and objectives. Prabhakar (2005) shared a similar view by stating that leaders should be confident to inspire the same in their interaction with employees.

Selg (2007) indicated that leaders employ different types of leadership styles when interacting with individuals or teams, as they are regarded as role models. Leaders create a vision of the goals; a persuasive reason to reach the set goals; timelines for the goals; and they possess the ability to convince a team to be willing to get the job done. Helm and Remington (2005) stated that managers should possess qualities like the capability to simplify links and connections, along with political alertness, vision supporting and partnering.

Gehring (2007) stated that managers' character traits, which are applicable to leadership, have alluded to contributing towards success. The concept of leadership according to Pearce and Conger (2003) was in existence since ancient times. However, interest in the concept was only scientifically studied after the industrial revolution. They added that the leadership concept originally appeared as command and control responsibilities. Sveiby (2010) suggested that this method of leadership existed in social groups in the form of hunter-gatherer bands until the last two decades.

### **2.25.1 Leadership Styles**

Harris (2010) referred to thought leadership as a style that employees want to emulate since employees prefer following knowledgeable managers. This type of leadership style is also referred to as a "lead by example" style. According to Birkinshaw (2010), a thought leader exhibits options which motivate colleagues and employees to think of new and improved ways to complete tasks.

According to Harris (2010), managing and leading can be combined to inspire, motivate and challenge individuals by managers displaying how a task can be completed instead of instructing employees to complete a task. Burkinshaw (2010) stated that by combining leadership and management, the concepts will have to work hand in hand for powerful results.

Transformational leadership according to Gardner and Stough (2002) is to a large extent related to emotional intelligence, unlike transactional leadership. Barling (2000) posited that transformational leadership is by far the most positive link to organisational success; organisational performance; trust amongst employees and managers; and employee satisfaction.

Politis (2001) and Saeed Almas Anis-ul-Haq and Niazi (2014) stated the three leadership styles that can be applied by managers; supervisors and the entire leadership of an organisation, namely:

- ❖ Transformational Leadership
- ❖ Transactional Leadership
- ❖ Laissez-faire Leadership

**Transformational leadership:** According to Birasnav, Rangnekar and Dalpati (2011), transformational leaders generate positive and energetic vibes amongst employees which in turn inspires eagerness and assurance through coaching and supporting. This results in an increased return on income as employee performance is enhanced. Barling (2000) considered the transformational leadership style as to be important feature which generates positive outputs.

**Transactional leadership:** Politis (2001) stated that this leadership style involves a transaction between leaders and employees. Followers perform due to the rewards offered by the leader. In addition, transactional leaders clearly outline what the requirements are in order for employees to reach the desired outcomes and meet organisational objectives. Bass (1997) defined transactional leadership as reward for performance; corrective action to ensure performance; and lastly, leadership intervention when matters arising are serious in nature. In other words, “the carrot-stick approach.”

**Laissez-faire leadership:** Saeed et al., (2014) stated that laissez-faire leaders tend to evade their roles and responsibilities. They try to dodge decision making. Employees reporting to managers who display this kind of leadership style are often left to make their own decisions when performing their duties. Saeed et al., (2014) contended that this kind of leadership style has a negative effect on organisational performance.



### **2.25.2 Leadership Roles**

Leadership and management roles are so closely linked together that the distinction between management and leadership is barely obvious. Traditional roles such as plan; lead; organise and control are measures found within the scope of management. Decision-making that is related to procedures and responsibility that improves operational outputs falls under the banner of management. Leadership, on the other hand, is concerned with motivation and support which encourages individuals to want to realise their full potential in order to achieve complex goals and objectives (Anantatmula, 2008).

Amidst the leadership styles there are situational leaders who focus on roles and responsibilities, as well as relationship attitudes (Hersey and Blanchard, 1996). Selzer and Bass (1990) believed that transformational leaders encourage new and innovative ways to inspire problem-solving (Anantatmula, 2008).

DeTienne, Dyer, Hoopes and Harris (2004) confirmed that in every organisation, leaders set the tone for others. There is an assumption that leaders have a direct impact on how organisations should approach and deal with knowledge management processes and practices. DeTienne et al., (2004) added that it is very likely that knowledge management programs will fail if managers do not showcase their commitment and drive regarding the concept. Similarly, Kluge, Stein and Licht (2001) indicated that it is vital for Senior Executives and CEOs to be involved in the knowledge-sharing process as this practice will secure buy-in from employees in the lower levels of the organisation.

### **2.25.3 Leadership Support**

Management and/or leadership play a key role in influencing the success of knowledge management. Ribiere and Sitar (2003) confirmed that leaders are important in displaying the desired conduct for knowledge management. They believed that management should exhibit a willingness to continuously learn and seek out new knowledge and innovative ideas. Managers should share and offer their expertise freely to their subordinates and colleagues within the organisation. Holsapple and Joshi (2000) were of the opinion that managers should display their behaviour through actions and deeds, instead of only words.

Storey and Barnett (2000) postulated that management support should be continuous and conveyed using a practical method. Support should come from the top-down approach as this practice could be translated as sincere efforts to employees, who will want to then emulate what they see and contribute to the success of knowledge management. In support, Holsapple and Joshi (2000) indicated that managers drive the required circumstances for effective knowledge management. As per all change and enhancement initiatives, maintenance and guaranteed support from senior management is vital to a knowledge management initiative (Sharp, 2003).

#### **2.25.4 Knowledge Leaders**

Hubbard, Samuel and Cocks (2002) mentioned that effective organisations rely on their leadership. Knowledge leaders provide roles such as carrying out the knowledge agenda; providing organisational visions from a strategic level; motivating employees, communicating effectively and coaching others (Debowski, 2006). Leaders should continuously communicate goals and objectives so that employees can identify and own the process.

Knowledge leaders operate at tactical and futuristic levels (Kouzes and Posner, 2002). Maurik (1999) stated that strategic leadership behaviours operate from understanding the core business and its relation to the organisation's value. Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) suggested that visionary leaders are knowledgeable and their leadership expertise has a positive effect on the organisation's environment, which proves to be essential when direction is required.

Hubbard et al., (2002) was of the opinion that innovation and creativity required encouragement from knowledge leaders, as well as the ability to predict stable processes. Therefore, knowledge leaders must be in the possession of solid and knowledgeable understanding of people, processes and business deliverables which influence organisational decisions (Debowski, 2006).

Knowledge leadership, according to Kouzes and Posner (2002), is based on continuous networking; building relationships; and providing a listening ear with the intention to act on the information received from employees and individuals. Ritchie and Martin (1999) stated that employees are encouraged to build relationships;

recognise employee contributions; and provide a platform for development and learning.

Kotter (1998) contends that employees remain motivated by making certain that they can relate to the organisation's vision, mission and value system, as well as including them in the foundation phase of the process. Debowski (2006) was of the belief that knowledge leaders should encourage employees to strive for more senior positions since this will ensure that information is shared from various sources. Kotter (1998) also states that knowledge leaders rely heavily on communication, whilst Kouzes and Posner (2002) confirmed that those working with new thought processes and strategies fulfil important roles, like collaborator and catalyst.

Mittal and Dhar (2015) were of the opinion that knowledge leaders should lead the knowledge-sharing process and that this should be done with a plan that involves the employees surrounding the topic of knowledge-sharing. They added that employees are not so comfortable with knowledge-sharing, since it is what places them ahead of their colleagues.

## **2.26 Deep Analysis**

Knowledge Management according to Wiig (1997) has naturally resulted from the cultural, economic and industrial changes that have taken place. Wiig (1997) further added that many management specialists have gained entry into the "knowledge society". This concept, knowledge management, was based on the emphasis in organisations on gaining the competitive lead in specific industries related to their business. Wiig (1997) confirmed that the knowledge management concept placed emphasis on products and services by adding a competitive value. This added value is by application of the concept through human expertise.

Gao et al., (2008) mentioned that organisations have an inherent interest in knowledge management since it includes employee's personal knowledge along with knowledge owned by the business. This combination makes it practical for utilisation by both management and staff to ultimately enhance services, process enhancements and encourage innovation.

These authors have a similar understanding regarding knowledge management and it can be summarised from the literature presented throughout this chapter that this is a value adding concept that places an organisation in the lead from their competitors, ultimately securing a favourable turnover.

## **2.27 Conclusion**

The literature reviewed in this chapter provided valuable input to better understanding the dynamics of knowledge management. This chapter provided a detailed theoretical framework on knowledge management that integrated several perspectives drawn from research studies across the world. The literature review on knowledge management revealed a variety of points, such as challenges and concepts on matters like processes, cultures and current trends within the field of knowledge management. These studies confirm that there is growing interest in knowledge management and the impact that it has on organisations.

The common thread in the majority of research studies is that a competitive business environment requires the effective and efficient use of communication to maintain the concept within the Contact Centre division. Knowledge management is an important tool that contributes towards the divisional strategy, as well as the organisation's strategy. This theory will be considered in the analysis of findings in Chapter four. The next chapter focuses on the methodology employed to obtain the empirical data.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

According to Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014) primary research proceeds to gather information regarding questions initially asked. Cilliers et al., (2014) asserted that information is sourced in different ways and the information sourced is interpreted in different ways. Research methodology, according to Myers (2009), is a tactical analysis that is not based on assumptions but rather design and data collection. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) stated that research is a process that involves finding knowledge that is scientific in nature by sourcing unbiased approaches and techniques.

Welman et al., (2005) posited that research methodology includes methods that can be used to conduct research. The most popular methods are qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative research entails the use of detailed observation procedures and the conducting of semi or unstructured interviews with the intention of gathering information regarding the views of a subject. Whilst the quantitative research method is a controlled method that uses a more practical approach. These methods are discussed in more detail further on in this chapter.

The previous chapter provided theory on the subject of knowledge management and the diverse outlooks adopted by research studies on the concept. This chapter focuses on the methodology and design supporting the research process. The location of the research study; the respondents' profiles; data collection method; analysis of the data; and the reliability and validity of the study is included in the chapter.

### **3.2 Research Paradigms, Traditions and Methodology**

According to Cilliers et al., (2014), having knowledge of what paradigm or tradition a researcher attributes to is vital, since it is a deciding factor of what problems are worth conducting research on, and what processes are mandatory for solutions to these questions raised in the study to be acceptable.

There are three key paradigms according to Cilliers et al., (2014): namely, positivism; interpretivism and critical realism. These paradigms have the following positions: epistemological; ontological; metatheoretical; methodological; and axiological. Table 3.1 summarises the differences more clearly.

**TABLE 3.1: Summary of Research Traditions**

	<b>POSITIVISM</b>	<b>INTERPRETIVISM</b>	<b>CRITICAL REALISM</b>
REASONS FOR RESEARCH	To establish causal connections in order to anticipate and regulate processes.	To acknowledge and define significant collective exploits and experiences.	To interpret traditions and permit people to change culture fundamentally.
ONTOLOGY	Reality is outward and unbiased and the laws that govern it can be revealed.	Reality is flowing and biased and is generated through human relations.	Reality alters over time and is governed by causal associations.
EPISTEMOLOGY	The only effective knowledge is one that is produced via practical reflection.	Is grasped as knowledge when it feels right to those being studied. Practicality is an important source of knowledge.	Knowledge should provide people with the required tools to transform their own world.
METATHEORY	By creating pivotal relations we can envisage effects and take action to influence or regulate outcomes.	Principles should inform a story to create comprehensive know-how of other people's realities.	Principles should be analysed to reveal actual social stances and that it assists people to see the way to a more enhanced world.
METHODOLOGY	Consistency is imperative. Unbiased, quantitative research is used.	Biased, qualitative methods are used.	Mixed methods are used: quantitative and qualitative methods are combined.
AXIOLOGY	Unbiased research, truth and reasoning are appreciated.	Individuality is appreciated.	Lack of restrictions, fairness and liberation are respected.

**Source: Adapted from Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014:34)**

Generally, there are three types of research designs available to research practitioners, namely: quantitative research, qualitative research and mixed methods research. The mixed methods design is a combination of the quantitative and qualitative research designs as confirmed by Creswell (2014).

Welman et al., (2005) stated that to accept or reject a theory, quantitative research assesses data which comprises of numbers and utilises a process of analysis that is centred on intricately designed methods. On the other hand, a comprehensive observation method is used with qualitative research in order to acknowledge concerns raised by apprehensive participants who have had experience in the matter, by conducting unstructured interviews about their opinions and views.

### **3.2.1 Quantitative Research**

According to Sofaer (1999), the traditional approach to research in the social sciences has been quantitative research. Sofaer (1999) further mentioned that qualitative and mixed method research emerged later than the quantitative method. The quantitative research focuses only on what was commonly and accurately quantified (Sofaer, 1999).

Quantitative research, according to Stone-Romero (2004), is made up of a link that is established between reliant and self-regulating variables. In order to quantify solid statistics, these variables are signified through numerical relationships. Stone-Romero (2004) added that to simplify relationships into numerical order a quantitative methodology is the appropriate manner in which to study these relationships since this method is informed by measures like questionnaires, rating scales and tests. Creswell (2014) stated that quantitative research results can be illustrated via charts, diagrams and graphs, etcetera, since information is gathered from tests, rating scales and questionnaires. The data from these sources are easy to portray on charts, diagrams and graphs. However, the research method utilised for this research was qualitative in nature and the quantitative method was included to outline other routes that this study could have embarked on.

### **3.2.2 Qualitative Research**

The term qualitative research according to Johnson, Buehring, Cassell and Symon (2007) refers to an intangible method that people commonly use to understand by suggesting particular forms of management research, i.e. an idea that supports one to contribute order to one's impressions by assisting the classification of certain

facets of existing knowledge which may vary with regards to how the intangible perception is interpreted.

Humphrey (2014) defined qualitative research as an adventure into the unknown. He adds that qualitative research is unconventional and it involves different ways of representing data and thought processes. Van Maanen (1998) stated that to arrive at a clear-cut definition of a concept which is complex, qualitative research can be quite risky because the definitions used are often emergent and tacit as opposed to being explicitly conveyed.

Nevertheless, Johnson et al., (2007) were of the opinion that such definitions, no matter how unwarranted and implied, often play a fundamental part in how people comprehend and communicate their knowledge and experiences. Furthermore, what is normally found with qualitative research are activities that classify this type of research as a diverse social science, since it can take a variety of forms and theories.

Goulding (2001) suggested that recently there is an increasing interest in the use of qualitative research in various fields of research. Boje (2001) mentioned that some research practitioners have a resentful attitude towards authenticating qualitative research. Symon, Cassell and Dickson (2000) contended that the qualitative method was once considered inferior to that of quantitative research. However, Johnson and Duberley (2000) posited that since quantitative research methodologies have dominated conventional management research, the development of qualitative research posed a challenge to the research status quo.

According to Van Maanen (1998) people regularly utilise qualitative research as a conceptual scheme to aid in making sense of reality by indicating specific procedures of management research. The qualitative research method enables the grouping of certain facets of lived experience. Such definitions, according to Prasad and Prasad (2002), often play an important role in understanding and communicating experiences no matter how it is implied. The qualitative method was chosen to conduct research for this study.

This study adopted the qualitative research method because the intention was to bring about clarity concerning the vague dynamics associated with the matter. This



research sought the opinions of the management and staff of the Contact Centre regarding the implementation of the knowledge management concept. The primary tool of analysis and data was the interview schedule.

### **3.2.3 Mixed Methods Research**

Creswell (2014) stated that qualitative and quantitative research methodologies combine to form a mixed method research methodology. This method can have an impact on the direction of the study in other words; the research direction can point towards a qualitative or a quantitative method. Alternatively, research practitioners can choose to highlight both methods equally.

Proponents of this method argue that it provides a more complete understanding of a phenomenon (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, 2013). The rationale underpinning the mixed methods approach is firstly the belief that one cannot always get accurate answers to the research questions and secondly, that more than one method will provide a better picture of the research problem (Kumar, 2014).

Having explored the different research methods available for the purpose of this study, the qualitative method was chosen to clarify any ambiguity and underlying aspects. According to Humphrey (2014), qualitative research studies should provide logical theory by comparing or validating the findings of a study with previous studies conducted. This practice encourages a hypothetical overview which contributes towards increasing the external legitimacy of study findings.

**TABLE 3.2: The Difference between Qualitative and Quantitative Research Method**

QUALITATIVE METHOD	QUANTITATIVE METHOD
Highlights the importance on understanding	Highlights the importance on testing and verification
Emphasis is placed on the understanding from the respondents viewpoint	Emphasis for social events are based on reasons and facts
Coherent and clarified approach	Common Sense and critical approach
Opinions and Measures in ordinary setting	Measures are controlled
Biased viewpoint and close to data	Unbiased viewpoint not close to data
Orientation is explorative in nature	Orientation is hypothetical and deductive in nature
Procedure Orientated	Outcome Orientated
Holistic perception	Specific and analysed
Overview by contrast and situation of individuality	Overview by population association

**Source: Adopted from Ghauri and Gronhaug (2010:76)**

Table 3.2 clearly outlines the differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods. Both methods can contribute equally towards an outcome of a research study. The utilisation of one over the other, or both, solely depends on the choice of the research practitioner (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2010).

### **3.3 Data Sampling Methods**

According to Cilliers et al., (2014) there are two sampling methods namely: probability and non-probability. A sample is referred to as a group of a population, represented for the purposes of the study. Creswell (2009) stated that there are a number of sampling methods which researchers can utilise. However; this depends on the route that the study is taking or the matter that is being observed. It is also dependent on the questions raised for the research, which assist research practitioners in selecting a sample.

The probability sampling method, according to Cilliers et al., (2014) is commonly utilised in quantitative analysis. The different designs under this sampling method are simple random, systematic, stratified and multi-stage cluster sampling. Cilliers et

al., (2014) stated that probability sampling refers to a sample population that has an equal prospect of being drawn.

Kumar (2014) postulated that the six sampling designs found in non-probability sampling are quota, accidental, convenience, purposive, expert and snowball sampling. These sampling methods are utilised when elements are unfamiliar and when elements cannot be identified individually.

For this research study, the purposive sampling method was employed. Participants were chosen based on their experience; engagement and interaction with the implementation of the concept, including the different levels of management of the knowledge management concept in the Contact Centre in Durban. Kumar (2014) stated that purposive sampling assesses the information provided. The information provides answers to the problem statement or objective of the study. Kumar (2014) stated that a research practitioner usually approaches individuals whom the research practitioner believes may have the necessary information and the individuals are willing to share such information.

Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) stated that the researcher selects respondents/participants who can prove to be advantageous since it is more cost effective and convenient. Welman et al., (2005) added that purposive sampling is dependent on the choice of the researcher. However, Koerber and McMichael (2008) stated that respondents ought to possess a certain character trait as a requirement for purposive sampling.

### **3.4 Data Collection and Analysis**

Cilliers et al., (2014) confirmed that in any research study, data collection is classified as one of the most significant aspects in a research study, therefore research practitioners need to be very wary of the data they collect. They need to ensure that the data they collect is true and correct since it influences the results and findings of the research study. They further confirm that there are two types of data collection that can be used to give a research practitioner relevant information towards a research study namely: primary data collection and secondary data collection.

The data collection task for this study was not difficult or daunting. The setting up of interviews and gaining access to the securely controlled Contact Centre was not as difficult as anticipated.

**TABLE 3.3: List of Respondents**

Respondents	Designation	Age	Gender
R1	Contact Centre Manager	40-49	Male
R2	Contact Centre Manager	40-49	Female
R3	Consultant	20-29	Male
R4	Team Member	30-39	Female
R5	Team Member	50+	Female
R6	Team Member	40-49	Male
R7	Team Member	30-39	Female
R8	Team Member	20-29	Male
R9	Consultant	40-49	Female
R10	Consultant	30-39	Female
R11	Knowledge Analyst	30-39	Male
R12	Operations Manager	40-49	Female
R13	Resource Planner	30-39	Male
R14	Contact Centre Manager	40-49	Male
R15	Specialist	30-39	Male
R16	Operations Manager	30-39	Female
R17	Specialists	30-39	Male
R18	Business Support Specialists	30-39	Female
R19	Contact Centre Manager	40-49	Male
R20	Contact Centre Executive	40-49	Male

Table 3.3 described the respondents, their designation, age and gender which were all integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the respondents' profile. The colours were included in the table to indicate the different job titles held by the respondents. The respondents offered a detailed viewpoint on the problem statement since they had the necessary experience and knowledge.

### 3.4.1 Primary Data Collection

Primary data can be collected from various sources (Cilliers et al., 2014). Data can be sourced from interviews, observations, questionnaires, and focus groups, all of

which will add value to the research study of interest by answering the objectives of the study. These data sources are classified as primary data since it is derived directly from respondents. Boyce (2002) defined primary data as data that is non-existent and believes that data will originate as a research study progresses.

Interviews were selected as a source of data collection. There are different types of interviews that one can utilise namely:

**Focus Groups Interviews:** The difference between this type of interview and other interviews, according to Kumar (2014), is that it serves as a basis for comprehensive planning and discussions. Topics for planning and discussions are prepared in advance. Researchers who choose this method intend to explore the group perceptions, experiences and knowledge with their research study.

**Unstructured Interviews:** Warren and Karner (2015) described this type of interview as a social interaction between two individuals as an interview. According to Kumar (2014), unstructured interviews have no restrictions since the researcher is completely free to structure the questions; content and order of the interview. Esu (2009) stated that this interview type, takes into consideration an individual's thought processes; their feelings and actions.

**Structured Interviews:** This interview process is precise and standardised and requires answers to a precise set of questions. The same questions are presented to all the respondents. Structured interviews are normally used when the research study and objective is clearly defined and a targeted response is required (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, 2013).

**Semi-Structured Interviews:** The semi-structured interview process is the most suitable of all interview types (Creswell, 2009). Creswell asserted that it allows for an easy flow of communication between the interviewer and interviewee. This interview process works best with a smaller number of respondents since it allows the researcher to gain clearer insights and perspectives.

This study utilised the semi-structured interview process whereby participants were interviewed at their convenience. The interviews were conducted face-to-face at the convenience of the participant and lasted no longer than twenty minutes. Respondents were given an informed consent letter (Appendix 1) to ensure that the

participants were aware of the process. The interviewees were comfortable and keen on participating and expressing their views and expertise, which enabled for a variety of data collection.

### **3.4.2 Secondary Data Collection**

Secondary sources of data according to Kumar (2014) referred to data previously collected. Jennings (2010) posited that secondary data is data produced by an individual for their primary use but which can also be used by other research practitioners. Secondary data is made up of journals, articles, newspapers, reports from organisations, previous research and books.

For the purposes of this research study, a variety of journals were studied. These journals were sourced for the purpose of providing past and present perspectives on the study topic in question. Journals are usually written by experts in a particular field and they offer reliable information to a researcher as they are peer reviewed. Reports from the Contact Centre division and the SARS website were used to provide current information for the study.

### **3.4.3 Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected from the interviews. This process of thematic analysis was utilised to separate the important data from the less important ones and to identify themes. The process of thematic analysis involved dissecting data collected from the interviews. The materials were analysed to establish themes that were recognised and placed into categories. Cilliers et al., (2014) confirmed that thematic coding is referred to as conceptual coding and this process of thematic/conceptual coding is used to reduce data and recognise themes.

Cilliers et al., (2014) described the changing of raw data into significant logic that offers a resolution to the objectives of a research study is best known as data analysis. They further add that qualitative data possesses some unique features namely:

- ❖ Textual: This feature included graphic language, oral language, written language, moving and still images, and the worldwide web. Analysis and

decoding of textual information requires intense reading of the text. It is significant since it conveys meaning.

- ❖ Iterative: The analysis and interpretation of data is continuous and the researcher can gain greater insight and new meaning.
- ❖ Hermeneutic: This is a Greek word which means “to interpret”. This feature implies a clarification from general information to specific information.
- ❖ Subjective: The analysis of data lies with the researcher. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the researcher to motivate the results of the research study.
- ❖ Constructed and Symbolic: This feature highlights the social aspect of signs and insights, as a product of social life, using important symbols such as language. In other words, the goal is to understand experiences from perspectives.

Warren and Karner (2015) postulated that qualitative analysis requires good organisational and informative abilities. The researcher is required to sift through a vast amount of data in a methodical manner so that the relevant information related to the research study can be established. Warren and Karner (2015) also stated that concepts and theories are created whilst data is collected and this analysis process enables the researcher to maintain a focused study.

### **3.5 Credibility and Trustworthiness**

Reliable and valid data was interpreted from the interviews conducted, journal articles, books and Contact Centre reports. The understanding of the concept of knowledge management and the Contact Centre division ensures that the data is reliable and valid. Furthermore, since this study was an exploratory study in nature, the opinions of the management and employees were significant since their responses were mostly influenced by experiences, emotions and feelings. Validity was maintained by posing the same set of questions to all the respondents and a comparison of the answers received was analysed equally (Appendix 3).

Creswell (2009) described the process of reliability and validity with respect to data collection as follows:

- ❖ The interview questions should be clear and concise to the respondents since they should be specific to the research study;

- ❖ The interview questions should not be leading; and
- ❖ The interview questions should be simple so that there are no misunderstandings.

Credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability are strategies that support the reliability of a qualitative research (Cilliers et al., 2014). These strategies are further defined below:

- ❖ Credibility: Kumar (2014) explained that credibility refers to the degree to which information related to the study is believable and trustworthy.
- ❖ Transferability: Kumar (2014) argued that transferability can be widespread and the onus lies with the researcher to ensure that the process of the study is followed in an orderly fashion and that the settings of the study are defined.
- ❖ Dependability: This affiliated to the notion of reliability. Kumar (2014) posited that this strategy refers to research findings that can be duplicated with concepts related to similar experiences and similar situations.
- ❖ Confirmability: According to Kumar (2014) this is the point to which the results can be confirmed by others and is achieved by retrieving collected data that was stored in an orderly manner. Cilliers et al., (2014) were of the opinion that conformability is a consideration of the data collated and how the findings are sustained.

Another important concept in qualitative research is triangulation of data, which refers to establishing the external validity of the data. This is done by comparing different types of data and different methods of data collection to test whether they corroborate one another (Silverman, 2013). Triangulation ensures that the accuracy of findings in qualitative research is increased. Findings were compared and contrasted with findings from previous research.

### **3.6 Research Ethics**

Research studies are usually undertaken due to an interest in the clarification of a phenomenon and to understand the meaning of a concept. Qualitative analysis ensures that there are no misconceptions in a research study by clarifying generalisations. Research ethics is extremely vital in a research study, especially when people are involved. All research practitioners need to ensure that they



practice ethical principles when interacting with their respondents. They need to make their respondents feel comfortable and respected. Respondents should not be forced to partake in the research study. They should be presented with a choice and should be free to decline without obligation. Creswell (2009) confirmed that information provided for the research study should be confidential since this will ensure that the respondents feel reassured.

To ensure research ethics was undertaken for this study, ethical clearance (Annexure 4) was applied for and granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Office. Interviews were then scheduled and an informed consent letter (Annexure 1) was handed over to the respondents along with a consent form (Annexure 2). These forms enabled the respondents to agree or decline to partake in the interviews without obligation.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The research paradigm, strategies, design and methodologies were outlined in this chapter. The focus of this chapter was on the research methodology. Data collection and data analysis were emphasised to justify the direction of the research study. For the purposes of this study, the qualitative research approach was utilised and interviews conducted as an instrument to collect data. The one-on-one interaction with the participants allowed for appreciation of the respondents' experiences and emotions whilst they responded. Maseko (2011) mentions that this process assists in realising the deep lessons embedded in the data. The next chapter presents the findings and focuses on the data collected from the interviews, applying the process of thematic analysis.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Yin (2003) stated that qualitative data analysis aimed to determine themes, theories, designs and the significance of the data, which provided explanations and underlying understanding. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the process of thematic analysis was applied in this study. This process enabled a focus towards the data collected and information categorised.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted at the Durban Contact Centre of SARS in order to obtain data from a total of twenty respondents that consisted of management and staff. Some of the themes that emerged were quality, service delivery, client service and communication.

This chapter discusses the findings of the study. The findings indicated the successes, failures, perceptions and contribution of management/leadership towards the implementation of knowledge management within the Contact Centre in Durban.

### **4.2 Detailed Analysis**

Thematic analysis was used in this study. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, which allowed for themes to emerge as data was analysed. Sub-themes also materialised during the process of analysis. Table 4.1 summarises the themes and sub-themes:

**TABLE 4.1: Summary of Themes and Sub-Themes**

<b>THEMES</b>	<b>SUB-THEMES</b>
<b>Perceptions of Knowledge Management</b>	Knowledge Conception
	Knowledge is Effective
	Introduction to Knowledge Management
	Knowledge Significance
<b>Advantages; Disadvantages and Barriers of Knowledge</b>	Knowledge Advantages
	Knowledge Shortcomings
	Knowledge Barriers
<b>Knowledge and Quality</b>	Knowledge Excellence
	Application versus Theory
<b>Training and Development</b>	Development and Upskilling
	Knowledge aids the development of skills
	Knowledge as a Confidence Builder
<b>Strategy</b>	Knowledge Strategies
	Competitive Advantage
	Knowledge Sustainability
	Internal Communities of Practice
	Knowledge and Change
<b>Technology</b>	Knowledge and Technology
	Knowledge Repository
<b>Performance</b>	Knowledge and Performance
	Knowledge as a Performance Indicator
<b>Customer Service</b>	Improves Organisational Reputation
	Improves Customer Service
	Knowledge Enhances Processes
	First Call Resolution
<b>Time Management</b>	Time Constraints
	Turnaround Time For Query Resolution
	Standardisation
	Communication
<b>Knowledge Influences Managers and Leaders</b>	Managers and Leaders
	Knowledge Leaders
	Lead By Example
	Managers and Leaders Communicate

## 4.2.1 Perceptions of Knowledge Management

### 4.2.1.1 Knowledge Conception

Respondents were of the opinion that knowledge management is of value since it keeps them updated with changes regarding processes. They regarded the knowledge management concept important since they require knowledge to assist their clients. Knowledge is utilised through regular communication via morning meetings known as “buzz meetings/sessions”; electronic information highlighting important information known as “Business Communications”; and “Now You Knows”. The respondents shared a common understanding of the concept and mentioned that it is very helpful and assists with providing an efficient service to clients, also known as taxpayers, in the SARS environment.

*I think it is important we've got a lot of things that we do here in the Contact Centre to ensure that we keep the knowledge alive. We have our daily buzz sessions, we have business communications that are sent out so any new things that come about we put into a briefing because nobody got time to sit and read that whole internal communication. So we just put it into a briefing and send it out and then on a monthly basis we actually test the agent on whether they retained any of that knowledge. So I think that knowledge management is very important in the Contact Centre, without knowledge they can't actually assist the client. (R2)*

Some respondents mentioned that knowledge should be applied correctly because they are working in real time and they require information at their disposal almost immediately. There was a general understanding that knowledge empowers employees and they believed that it is a very good tool to have. However, one interviewee mentioned that there was a missing link between the Contact Centre and the rest of the organisation. This respondent was adamant that there is a wealth of knowledge that can be explored but, it is sitting in the Contact Centre and unfortunately information is not shared with the taxpayers. Sometimes the rest of SARS is sharing information that differs from the Contact Centre.

*I think it is useful to have it in place but it needs to be applied correctly because I mean I don't know if, what's the right word, if you have the concept of knowledge management right but if you can't convey that message the information to the people at the right time then you are going to fall apart, especially in a Contact Centre environment where it is real time they need to be able to have access to that information. (R17)*

*I think that there is a disconnect between the Contact Centre and the rest of the organisation. I think that there is a bunch of or a wealth of knowledge sitting in the Contact Centre and that's the only place it sits at and I think that's all I am going to say that's there is a disconnection between what is happening in the Contact Centre from what we know from our taxpayers and what they looking for, as opposed to what the organisation is sharing with our taxpayers. (R20)*

#### **4.2.1.2 Knowledge is Effective**

There was a general understanding amongst respondents around the effectiveness of knowledge management. Respondents felt that knowledge was an important part of their job since it enabled them to assist more taxpayers. Furthermore, it was mentioned that the knowledge gained assists the staff in providing assistance to their taxpayers efficiently and with ease.

*It is very effective because to answer like a certain question that we are required to when helping our clients we require knowledge and it is a very important aspect of our job, I think without it we wouldn't be able to assist as many people that we are currently assisting. (R3)*

*Very effective because a lot of agents they just do one thing continuously so with regards to the knowledge reviews and everything like that you gain more knowledge. If there is a rare technical query with regards to any tax affairs we can assist the client much easier and efficiently. (R8)*

Respondent 11 mentioned that knowledge management is effective with knowledge teams supporting the Contact Centre. He added that the knowledge teams render support to the Contact Centre in terms of technical matters, system problems, complex queries and escalations. He confirmed that it was imperative to have a knowledge team to render assistance and support operations as it creates a more efficient client service experience.

#### **4.2.1.3 Introduction to Knowledge Management**

Respondents confirmed that they were introduced to the knowledge management concept via the induction process, whilst some could not even remember that far back. Others mentioned that they were introduced to the concept via the morning “buzz sessions”; e-mails and correspondence by their reporting supervisors and managers.

*Most probably in a briefing in the morning, I am not sure. It has been a long time. (R9)*

*Communicated to us and then we were briefed as in like in a normal general meeting in the morning. That’s how. (R10)*

*At a team member level, yes, when I was still an agent that’s how it was introduced to me. Yes it was introduced in the form of a buzz meeting the ones that we normally have in the mornings and then our Ops Manager explained to us what will be done regarding the knowledge management and then going forward how communication will be done. (R16)*

When respondents were questioned about how they would have introduced knowledge management, most responded that they will not change a thing. They shared a similar understanding that they will perhaps embark on the same strategies that the Contact Centre utilised.

*Well I would possibly just; I don't know I wouldn't change a thing with regards to how SARS has done it. It is effective. (R3)*

*I think I guess I will do the same sending e-mails, making sure that all the team leaders are updating their team members on a daily basis in terms of all the changes. So I am actually quite happy with how it is being done at the moment. (R4)*

*Okay, I wouldn't have changed anything in what is currently in how it is currently being done. By getting those communications so there is nothing that I can change so. (R5)*

#### **4.2.1.4 Knowledge Significance**

There was a common understanding that knowledge management is significant since respondents mentioned that the concept is essential especially when responding to taxpayers. Respondents believed that through knowledge management, they were able to respond in a consistent manner. Furthermore, they agreed that it is a valuable tool, especially for a Contact Centre.

*My views, on knowledge management, are that it is essential in the Contact Centre environment, especially because we need to provide standard responses or similar responses to all types of queries. We have had people giving different variations of the same particular answer; there is one knowledge management tool that we use we will all give the same answer. (R15)*

#### **4.2.2 Advantages; Disadvantages and Barriers to Knowledge Management**

##### **4.2.2.1 Knowledge Advantages**

Respondents confirmed that knowledge has its advantages. It was mentioned that knowledge management keeps them up to date with changes and updates. They confirmed that knowledge builds their confidence levels too, since it not only assists them with work matters but it acts as an upskilling tool which eventually develops their personal knowledge base. When information and updates are shared with the staff, they are informed enough to deal with the taxpayers and this then elevates

their confidence, which has a ripple effect with the clients who are satisfied with the services rendered.

Another advantage that was mentioned was the “single repository”. This is an electronic information hub that agents utilise when assisting taxpayers. This information hub or single repository as the respondents referred to it; assists the agents in providing a faster, better and more efficient service. Respondents further mentioned that the single repository assist clients in resolving their queries on the first call.

*The benefits are that basically we have confidence in ourselves when dealing with taxpayers because we know the answers because of knowledge management so it is very important that we have that confidence so that the clients as well can be confident about the answers that we give them. (R3)*

*Well you upskilling yourself. You are making yourself do your job better you helping the taxpayers you more efficient at your job so it is definitely a benefit. (R9)*

*The entire knowledge management concept is very effective in that it assists with the reduction of escalations and it increases first call resolution. (R18)*

Respondents believed that knowledge management is powerful since it can stimulate the mind. They felt that knowledge management is empowering to a point that they can render assistance to the taxpayers by resolving matters within the first call made by the taxpayer. Some respondents classified knowledge management as a tool for empowerment. There is a popular saying that “knowledge is power” which was mentioned in the interviews. Based on this assertion, it can be said that the management of knowledge is the key to power. A knowledgeable person will always have an advantage over the one that lacks it.

*With regards to knowledge reviews I think it is brilliant because it stimulates the mind. Knowledge is power and without power you don't mean anything. (R8)*

*My view based on what my history of knowledge management; it is a good tool it is a very good tool for us to empower our employees. (R19)*



#### 4.2.2.2 Knowledge Shortcomings

Some respondents mentioned that information overload is a challenge that they endure. It was mentioned that when changes take place, the information is shared with them and at times the information becomes too much to remember and understand. There was mention of language being a challenge since business language is English and the Contact Centre is quite diverse and not everyone speaks English as a first language.

One respondent mentioned that age was a barrier since grasping information is done in different ways: some are faster and some are slower in grasping. Alternatively, some prefer learning through pictures, whilst others learn through reading or in a class format. Sometimes the respondents find that information is delayed, which makes it difficult to assist clients. There are times when taxpayers are aware of the information before SARS employees do. One respondent mentioned that she observed some individuals battling to make use of the computers.

*I will say maybe information overload. You must understand now that a lot changes in all different departments but you want to bring all of the different information to the one person, so they can suffer from information overload. (R1)*

*When the changes are coming it is quite difficult to adapt but we eventually do adapt. (R4)*

*It may be a challenge if the information is delayed where we get to hear information for us from outside SARS so it means that they are leading us with information. We need to hear and get the information first. (R6)*

Respondents added that another challenge was the policies and procedures. Some felt that the policies and procedures should be drawn up by individuals that were hands on, as opposed to the way it is currently done. The respondents felt that there was a lack in the connection between what is happening on the ground and what is put on paper. Respondent 20 felt a bit more passionate about this and went as far as pointing out a gap in the process as well.

*Sometimes there are challenges because most of the time it is being implemented by the people that are not hands on with their jobs, so there are things that we would like to ask them to change or scrap because we are the people doing the job, thus we get challenges on that. (R5)*

#### **4.2.2.3 Knowledge Barriers**

Some of the barriers identified by the respondents were language barriers; comprehending communication; generation gap; and learning pace.

- ❖ **Language barrier:** it was mentioned that in the Contact Centre; there are agents who only speak in English for work purposes and when communication regarding process enhancements are shared this sometimes pose as a barrier.
- ❖ **Comprehending Communication:** according to some respondents, this barrier may lead to people assuming or interpreting the information according to their own understanding as opposed to what was actually intended. Furthermore, respondents mentioned that process enhancements and business communications should be shared in the simplest form to avoid ambiguity.
- ❖ **Generation Gap:** respondents shared that the generation of today prefer information via technology since they are quite technology savvy. Whilst, the older generation, according to the respondents, prefer information via different formats and this generation gap must be taken into consideration so as to enable everyone to absorb the information shared.
- ❖ **Learning Pace:** it was further mentioned that each individual is unique and not everyone learns at the same pace. Respondents felt that once again information needs to be simple so it can be easily digested and absorbed by all recipients.

### **4.2.3 Knowledge and Quality**

#### **4.2.3.1 Knowledge Excellence**

Most respondents confirmed that knowledge and quality go hand in hand. They believe that taxpayers are assisted via knowledgeable staff. Therefore, if staff are knowledgeable, then the assistance rendered to taxpayers are of quality. Many shared the same opinion that knowledge and quality go together.

*For quality purposes it is actually something very good because if you have the knowledge then you are definitely giving good quality to your taxpayers so for me it definitely works hand in hand, I mean you cannot have one without the other. Knowledge needs quality. (R9)*

*I think they go hand in hand together because I mean you have to be knowledgeable about the products and then obviously we need to inform the client accordingly that's where quality comes in and quality assurance comes in as well, ensuring that we are providing the right information as well. I think they go hand in hand. (R10)*

*I think it goes hand in hand with quality. They have that similarity relationship. (R15)*

#### **4.2.3.2 Application versus Theory**

The respondents indicated that there was a common challenge that was noticed in the Contact Centre this common challenge was: application versus theory. The respondents mentioned that the challenge usually occurs when employees are trained on different tax products but operationally expertise may be required in one specific queue, the information that they have regarding other products may be lost since they are not using the knowledge acquired for the other products. It was mentioned by the respondents that the loss will be due to the lack of practice; thus resulting in agents experiencing difficulty in applying their knowledge when the need may arise. Some respondents at times found themselves well informed but they found it difficult to apply the knowledge acquired due to the inability to interpret the information.

*Like most things it is an application. You can read up and be informed on the theory of knowledge management but then it comes down to the application and then perhaps it's the transference of theory into application that is probably the most difficult. (R14)*

## **4.2.4 Training and Development**

### **4.2.4.1 Development and Upskilling**

Respondents confirmed that the Contact Centre invests in training and developing their staff so that they are better equipped to assist their taxpayers. The management and agents are trained in most of the tax products namely: Income tax; VAT; PAYE; and Customs. The training and development intervention not only develops the agents to assist taxpayers but, it develops their personal knowledge thereby elevating their self-esteem and confidence levels too.

It was mentioned that there is a tax academy that trains staff in SARS in relation to tax updates and tax enhancements to processes. The academy offered a tax training via distance learning and respondents were in favour of this type of development and training.

*One thing I supported what academy introduced for other divisions is to be able to tap into knowledge. There was a project a tax project that they were doing distance learning most of our agents also enrolled for that and I think the other divisions must have joined in and the interaction with Call Centre agents and back office staff would have helped. (R19)*

### **4.2.4.2 Knowledge aids the development of skills**

The staff at the Contact Centre see knowledge management as a concept that upskills them. They see the benefit in the business communications and the process enhancements as a positive means to self-develop, and a tool that enables them to render efficient service to the taxpayers.

*Well you upskilling yourself. You are making yourself do your job better you helping the taxpayers you more efficient at your job so it is definitely a benefit. (R9)*

#### **4.2.4.3 Knowledge is a Confidence Builder**

There was a general feeling that knowledge is not only a business enhancing tool, but a confidence builder too. The respondents felt that this concept builds individual's self-esteem and confidence. They were of the opinion that knowledge enabled them to perform efficiently, which in turn builds a positive organisational reputation, and thus building a better client relationship. This is then regarded as a benefit to the organisation.

*The benefits are that basically we have confidence in ourselves when dealing with taxpayers because we are; we know the answers because of knowledge management so it is very important that we have that confidence so that the clients as well can be confident about the answers that we give them. (R3)*

*Where you have a more satisfied customer; you have more confident staff. (R17)*

#### **4.2.5 Strategy**

##### **4.2.5.1 Knowledge Strategies**

There were indications of the knowledge management concept being introduced to other divisions within SARS. Some respondents suggested that the introduction of knowledge management should be a straight forward co-ordination. Others suggested that since it was a positive introduction in the Contact Centre, perhaps there is a need to share the experience with the other divisions through meetings and presentations. Whilst some suggested that knowledge management is not a "one size fits all" concept; so it would be best to cater for the needs and requirements of that specific area accordingly. Respondents also added that the concept can be introduced through communication with the use of technology.

*Well I suppose the same way it was introduced in the Contact Centre. They just need someone to co-ordinate it I suppose so it should be straight forward, I think. (R9)*

*First you got to see how it has helped the Contact Centre in a positive way and then maybe also brief the other sections as well, have meetings show them slides or presentations. (R10)*

*You know what I think if a KM process needs to be introduced you have to look at each area and you have to identify the best way for them to approach KM. If you for instance look at audit they not going to be able to do their KRs electronically since you have to look at the business and cater the needs specific to that area and then take it from there. It is not a one shoe fits all. (R12)*

*It can be introduced through communication and technology we are living in the good times of technology so we have got e-mails we have got phones but what I can say communication is the best way of sharing information. (R13)*

#### **4.2.5.2 Competitive Advantage**

There was an understanding amongst the respondents that should one possess more knowledge than their competitors; one will indeed have a competitive advantage. Respondents confirmed that SARS is in competition with other Government departments; and there is competition with revenue collection, since there are revised and increased targets that need to be met. According to respondents, knowledge management assisted with achieving set targets and overall organisational objectives.

*Knowledge is power so if you do have knowledge and if you are managing it, definitely you will be competitive. (R16)*

#### **4.2.5.3 Knowledge Sustainability**

According to some respondents, knowledge is sustained through the assistance of a knowledge team. This team assists with distributing business updates to the management and staff in the Contact Centre. The Knowledge teams assist with investigating and providing feedback to complex queries. The team also renders guidance and direction since an aspect of knowledge management is a key performance indicator (KPI). Furthermore, respondents mentioned that the concept is sustained so well due to continuous communication via meetings, e-mails, and electronic updates.

*We got a knowledge team, they normally dish out business communications to people as updates; we got a calendar that tells us what is up and coming so from that calendar we check to see if we need to maybe send refreshers to people, also if we have queries of complex issues and we don't know how to deal with these queries, we will push these through to the knowledge management team; they will investigate and give us guidance and direction. (R1)*

*It is an ongoing thing. It is something we don't even have a choice it is on our scorecards we have got an entire team across all the four centres looking at it so. (R2)*

*In briefings/meetings, almost every day. We get informed communication sent out to us via business communications or our team leaders will send to us and then meetings as well. (R10)*

#### **4.2.5.4 Internal Communities of Practice**

There was consensus that internal networking between the Contact Centre and the rest of SARS is not very effective. Some respondents mentioned that the back offices lacked commitment regarding query resolution. There was a general feeling that a channel between the Contact Centre and the rest of SARS is necessary and vital for improved service delivery; efficiency and taxpayer experience.

*To cut a long story short I probably would but I think it is going to be very resource intensive I suppose the way we doing it now is suitable might not be the best way of doing it but I think it does the trick like I said I think the basic big thing for me is how do we share this with the rest of the organisation so they can see what our pain points are so they can understand how their work affects us in the front line. (R20)*

#### **4.2.5.5 Knowledge and Change**

Some interviewees emphasised that knowledge can be beneficial to an organisation since it can bring about change. An observation that was clearly outlined when conducting the interviews was that the employees from the Contact Centre all shared a common understanding that knowledge management is a valuable concept and they are ready for change in processes; policies and information. There was a

common belief that knowledge management will assist them in their daily duties, as well as enhance processes. Furthermore, the agents seem to welcome these changes since they had a common understanding of the knowledge management concept.

*The benefits for me, you must be able to make it change the result of something you got out of the umbrella of knowledge management so going down to all the basics of data and how it rolls up into information and how it rolls up into a particular outcome and output and then turn it into a piece of knowledge for example for me you must turn that into change, not necessarily all the time, there may not be change coming out of that but that's the value for me there must be a result in change. (R14)*

#### **4.2.6 Technology**

##### **4.2.6.1 Knowledge and Technology**

Participants indicated that technology and knowledge go together and that technology makes sourcing out of information very easy. A respondent mentioned that in the past, knowledge was kept in files and sourcing this information was an operational nightmare. Currently, the information is housed electronically and information can be sourced at any time making sourcing of information an operational dream.

*A very close connection, currently we have our assessments online and all the information if you are on a telephone call and if you are with a taxpayer everything is on the system we have things on our website we have portals we have which you can access if you need to find certain things so highly reliant on technology right now. (R18)*

##### **4.2.6.2 Knowledge Repository**

According to respondents; the knowledge repository in the Contact Centre is regarded as a benefit. They agree that the repository enables them to provide the taxpayers with better service. Knowledge repositories consist of knowledge that is stored systematically. This repository is organised in a manner that allows one to



search and retrieve information when required. The Contact Centre has a repository that contains standard operating procedures, policies and process enhancements.

*The benefits are that we are getting information instantly so now and then we getting information so it is benefitting us. (R6)*

*The benefits for knowledge management is single repository for all queries accessible by everyone at any time standard answers provided to clients they are satisfied they don't have conflicting information. (R15)*

#### **4.2.7 Performance**

##### **4.2.7.1 Knowledge and Performance**

Respondents pointed out that they have a KPI which measures their level of knowledge. This measurement tool is referred to as a “knowledge review”; and is completed on a monthly basis. It was mentioned that this review process is completed by both Management and Staff in the Contact Centre on existing standard operating procedures or SOP and current updates. It was further confirmed that the knowledge reviews are made up of multiple choice questions that is taken electronically via the SARS intranet. There was a common understanding that reviews help them keep their knowledge and skills relevant, ultimately assisting them in providing a world class service to their clients.

*I think well first of all it is a key KPI we understand how knowledge drives customer service and they too are interlinked so we understand that very well I think it is really just through the regular engagement and the connection that we make between the customer and the agent and the reason why it is still a KPI. (R14)*

Respondents further revealed that the knowledge reviews improve their performance levels at the same time empowering them. It further assists the staff in the Contact Centre with navigating the SARS website for information, which in turn enables them to provide a faster; efficient and quality level of service since the knowledge reviews are timed as well. There was consensus of cost saving and time saving since the faster queries are answered, more time becomes available so more calls will be answered, ultimately saving costs and time.

*Well it improves the performance because it empowers them with information on where to find information for example on the SARS website to be able to assist taxpayers quicker to be able to resolve certain queries in a speedy manner so in a way it supports operations to be able to interact better with the taxpayers to give that information as quickly as possible to the taxpayers. If they had a bigger picture way I suppose it saves money because less calls the Contact Centre will save money because they do not have to hire as many people. (R11)*

Some respondents confirmed that knowledge management is a key performance area in the Contact Centre. According to the respondents; knowledge management is regarded as a critical success factor that is measured from staff level to Executive Management level. There was a common understanding that the Contact Centre cannot do without knowledge management.

#### **4.2.7.2 Knowledge as a Performance Indicator**

According to the respondents, knowledge in the Contact Centre is measured, evaluated and feedback is given timeously. The knowledge levels of individuals are tested by way of a knowledge review. This review is taken every month and it is an open book review that is done online via the SARS intranet. This knowledge review holds and approximately 30% weighting on the individual's scorecard and an approximately 20% weighting on the operations manager's scorecard.

#### **4.2.8 Customer Service**

##### **4.2.8.1 Improved Organisational Reputation**

Participants indicated that knowledge management is valuable to the extent that it enhances the organisation's reputation. SARS is a parastatal that acts as a collection agent for the South African (SA) Government. SARS has to ensure that it maintains a positive reputation at all times; since maintaining a positive reputation will prove to be very effective. Respondents confirmed that there will be an improvement in the organisations reputation as well as taxpayer confidence in SARS will increase through knowledge management.

*Our reputation will always be high up there if we make sure that we have the right knowledge, as well as taxpayers will have confidence and then they will pay tax knowing exactly that they get value for what they are paying for. (R16)*

#### **4.2.8.2 Improves Customer Service**

Participants mentioned that knowledge management enhances client service and this is done by equipping the staff with knowledge and information; which in turn makes a provision for a valued client experience leaving clients satisfied. Respondents were of the opinion that a knowledge enhanced team delivers excellent service. There was an agreement that knowledge improves the taxpayers experience and operations.

*The benefits of KM is to ensure that we have knowledgeable team members and also we excel in service levels and service experience with the customers and so it helps in such I can say. (R3)*

*Well I can say that it has improved our handling time of our queries that means we can now answer more calls as we previously did; we abandoning less calls and we improve on our service levels. (R15)*

*It definitely reduces the handling time per client query which then improves your availability of staff which in turn allows you to answer more calls and your turnaround times. (R17)*

#### **4.2.8.3 Knowledge Enhances Processes**

There was an understanding that knowledge can improve processes by forming a knowledge team to assist internal as well as external clientele. Respondents believed that knowledge can be effective and can enhance processes to a point where more taxpayers can be assisted. There was an understanding that processes govern work in organisations and they are critical to the organisations operations. Participants mentioned that processes might be made of, and executed by, humans, machines, or a combination of the two, and added that knowledge was required to accomplish tasks that can enhance processes by increasing effectiveness and efficiency in the organisation.

#### **4.2.8.4 First Call Resolution**

A general feeling was expressed by the participants; that that they should be informed of the most current information in terms of policies and procedures so that they can assist the taxpayers in resolving their queries within the first call. "First call resolution" according to respondent 19, empowers and educates the taxpayers. There is a common understanding that knowledge management will improve the taxpayers experience with the Contact Centre in Durban which will ultimately increase the taxpayer compliance rate with SARS.

*Okay it is to empower the agents with the latest information not only in terms of tax knowledge but also in terms of procedures so policy and procedures go together as well as now systems so they are able to assist the taxpayer and provide a first call resolution. (R18)*

*First call resolution and empowering taxpayers as well and the information is available for our agents to educate the taxpayer. (R19)*

#### **4.2.9 Time Management**

##### **4.2.9.1 Time Constraints**

Some respondents alluded to the fact that time is very important in the Contact Centre. Agents have limited time in which to deal with their taxpayers; they are required to assist the clients faster more efficiently and correctly. Due to such high quality standards; agents prefer not to place their calls on hold but rather opt to request assistance from their peers instead of consulting computers for the information. Their thought process around this practice is that they are able to assist clients more effectively.

*I will say that it is not regarding the challenges of the knowledge management persé because in the Contact Centre we work with time so sometimes you find it much better to ask a fellow colleague because of the time constraints you need to deal with the client you know putting them on hold and all those things so sometimes you will opt for asking your colleagues so that you can then assist the client more effectively rather than keeping them waiting on the line. (R7)*

#### **4.2.9.2 Turnaround Time for Query Resolution**

Respondents identified a gap with regards to resolving taxpayer queries. Participants mentioned that other divisions within SARS seem to be working with a different understanding from that of a taxpayer interfacing division like the Contact Centre. There are queries that cannot be resolved within the first call to SARS, so these types of queries are then escalated to other divisions for assistance. Unfortunately, the matter of urgency is not as stringent as it is in the Contact Centre. Consequently, this then poses a constraint in resolving queries within the stringent turnaround time. The respondent feels that there should be a process flow that connects the other divisions with the Contact Centre in order for the queries to be dealt with immediately. Consequently, delays are avoided and the processes and taxpayer experience were enhanced.

#### **4.2.9.3 Standardisation**

Standardisation of processes is something that is commonly agreed to by the respondents. There was a common understanding that knowledge and information relevant to the tax products need to be consistent and standard in order for the responses to be similar in nature. There were instances when taxpayers called the Contact Centre for a query resolution and were unfortunately given a different answer for the same question. This alters the organisation's reputation resulting in a degeneration of the trust initially gained in the organisation.

*My views on knowledge management are that it is essential in the Contact Centre environment especially because we need to provide standard responses or similar responses to all types of queries. We have had people giving different variations of the same particular answer; there is one knowledge management tool that we use we will all give the same answer. (R15)*

#### **4.2.9.4 Communication**

Knowledge is sourced and then housed in a knowledge repository since the respondents alluded to the fact that when they need information to assist their taxpayers they can search for this information and it is easily accessible for them too. This information is gathered by knowledge workers who provide the necessary and

relevant information as a support to the management and agents in the Contact Centre.

*I do find it helpful when I need some information regarding enquiries that we deal with as Contact Centre agents so when you go and look for it you do get the information you looking for. (R7)*

Respondents were of the opinion that knowledge management in the Contact Centre appears to be improving on an annual basis. This concept seems to be sustained through continuous communication. There was a common understanding that information is shared via meetings that are known as “buzz sessions” in the Contact Centre as well as business communications via e-mail and “did you knows” which highlights the important points to note. To ensure that the information is acknowledged and understood, the Operations Managers and their teams are tested.

#### **4.2.10 Knowledge Influences Managers and Leaders**

##### **4.2.10.1 Managers and Leaders**

Respondents were of the opinion that knowledge management should make the task of the leadership easier. They believed that the concept affects them in a positive way. Some made mention of how knowledgeable leaders will be able to steer the business in the right direction. There were other respondents who said that a knowledgeable workforce is an empowered workforce, ultimately making a big difference since it builds confidence in employee’s wellbeing. Some respondents believed that since Managers do not work with calls from the taxpayers and if they are required to intervene or render assistance then they are able to access the information they need from the system.

*How it affects them? It should make their jobs easier. I mean I’ve been in an acting position so I know if you don’t know something you know where to find it, that’s why I am saying that it should make their jobs easier. (R9)*

*Yes it affects them in a positive way because I mean if you as a Manager, you are knowledgeable and your team is knowledgeable that's makes things easy, it makes the centre to be able to achieve its objectives and goals. (R13)*

*The managers and leaders don't always take calls so they are not always up to date with the information so if they do have to answer a query there is a site that you can always access and they can get the information they need. (R15)*

#### **4.2.10.2 Knowledge Leaders**

The management of knowledge is endorsed as an important and a necessary dynamic for an organisations competitive advantage. Respondents agreed that knowledge should be managed since knowledgeable managers create knowledgeable teams. Knowledge leaders assisted organisations to achieve their goals and objectives. Some respondents felt that one leads by example, so if the manager is able to assist with query resolution, then, the subordinates tend to follow their managers lead.

#### **4.2.10.3 Lead by Example**

In most organisations, leaders are the role models for others. Therefore, there is an assumption that leaders have a direct influence on how the organisations like the Contact Centre deal with knowledge management processes and enhancements. In other words, the Operations Managers in the Contact Centre have definitely played their part in leading the Knowledge Management concept since the respondents confirmed that the managers inform them of changes that directly or indirectly affects them. One of the managers that were interviewed mentioned that they ensure that their subordinates are well informed since it is extremely important to keep up to date with information.

#### **4.2.10.4 Managers and Leaders Communicate**

Managing and leading knowledge is no different from managing or leading a budgets and cost saving initiatives. When knowledge is managed it relies heavily on communication. New concepts and improvements require managers or leaders to

play the role of collaborator, since they have to identify what information to communicate and to ensure that it is communicated effectively and on time.

*It will affect us a lot like if we don't communicate correctly if we don't give the right knowledge to our team members it will affect as well as it will also affect the team members and they taxpayers because obviously they will communicate something that is not as per required standards. (R16)*

## **4.3 Discussion**

The discussion of these findings in this chapter will be in terms of comparing research in the similar field including theoretical literature that exists on the knowledge management concept. The discussion is not based on any order of priority but merely focuses on presenting the results.

### **4.3.1 Knowledge Management Concept**

Respondents alluded to the fact that the management and staff in the Contact Centre have a basic understanding of the knowledge management concept and its importance. There was consensus around the significance of the concept and its value as a tool that assists with achieving organisational objectives; enhancing skills and intellect as well as giving the organisation an added advantage.

Management and staff were of the opinion that “knowledge is powerful” since it empowers them in providing efficient service effectively. The study findings are in line with Serenko and Bontis (2004) who added that since its growth over the past few years, knowledge management is now recognised as an academic module. This then indicates that the knowledge management concept is a value adding one. Indications are that the concept is indeed powerful since it enhances processes; service delivery and taxpayer experience.

### **4.3.2 Service Delivery**

Previous research according to Lin and Liang (2011) confirmed that service providers like the Contact Centres and government service providers; who practice the art of displaying positive emotions and positive behaviours, affected clients



behaviour and attitude positively. The respondents mentioned that they believe knowledge management can develop them in their current job roles as well as their personal lives. They believed that if they are well informed with policies and procedures as well as new developments, they will be more confident in assisting clients. This then increases their taxpayer's satisfaction levels which increases their faith in the organisation which results in the positive relay of information to other taxpayers.

#### **4.3.3 Client Service Focused**

The respondents believed that organisations should focus on clients by aligning information with business processes; since employees manage information whether it is for the client; about the client and sometimes from the clients. Study findings differ from Bontis, Richards and Serenko's (2011) when they mentioned that good service delivery goes beyond the focus of clients. The alignment of employee conduct and their commitment to clients are an absolute requirement.

#### **4.3.4 Training and Development**

There was general agreement that training and development act as an aid to management and staff to assist taxpayers. The more they are updated and trained, the more they are able to provide efficient and effective and efficient service delivery to taxpayers. The findings from Al-Aama (2014), who drew on Singh (2010), stated that in organisations where people are continuously learning, the two concepts that stand out with regards to knowledge management are the usage and sustaining of knowledge. Furthermore, an organisation's performance and enhancement are reliant on the knowledge that is shared by the management and staff, who eventually create and manage knowledge that adds value to the organisation (Al-Aama, 2014).

#### **4.3.5 Technology**

It appears that the effective use of knowledge management processes to assist in the retention and transfer of important knowledge related to CBO website maintenance could assist in preventing some of the confusion, and frustration

associated with developing, and maintaining, their websites (Bingley, Urwin, Hunter and Burgess, 2010).

Halawi, McCarthy and Aronson (2007) confirmed that an organisation can indeed achieve its competitive advantage with the proper management of knowledge resources. Knowledge management; according to Bontis and Fitz-ens (2002) encompasses the active collection and creation of an organisations knowledge base which builds and enhances the organisations intellect, assisting in objective achievements.

#### **4.3.6 Strategic Advantage**

Bontis, Richards and Serenko (2011) who drew on Grants (1996) work, mentioned that operational knowledge sharing supports the handover of tangible and intangible knowledge from one person to the entire collective within the organisation, resulting in increased capabilities and eventually increased strategic advantage. According to Allio (2015), competitive advantage is gained through strategic management when clients are happy with services rendered, when the competition makes a costly mistake and the when the economic environment is favourable.

#### **4.3.7 Organisational Behaviour**

The management and staff at the Contact Centre portrayed a culture that is committed to achieving their goals. They were knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities and they understood how their efforts formed part of the bigger scheme of things. A general understanding that knowledge is an important concept was evident in most of the responses. The respondents were very aware of the fact that knowledge management enhances their ability to render world-class services to their taxpayers. Bontis et al., (2011) confirmed this finding by stating that, managing knowledge, although not the only way to achieve customer satisfaction is necessary when interacting with clients daily. Bontis (2002) postulated that the alignment of learning processes and operational processes leads to efficient outcomes that increase an organisations performance levels.

#### **4.3.8 Communication**

It was unanimously indicated that communication was the driving force behind the introduction of the knowledge management concept in the Contact Centre. Respondents confirmed that through continuous communication, they were able to render enhanced efficient services to the taxpayers. They affirmed that they received communication verbally during their morning meetings and electronically via e-mails and electronic newsletters. The findings in this study are in line with those of Nando (2007) who confirmed that communication is a critical success factor. He further adds that communication is important since it is a medium that is used internally in an organisation as well as externally with clients and stakeholders and that most organisations successes are due to communications. Respondents strongly believed that processes were kept updated through regular communication and the testing of knowledge levels.

#### **4.3.9 Inter-departmental COPs**

There was an evident gap between the Contact Centre and other divisions within SARS. According to the respondents, this gap needs to be addressed to secure an improvement with service delivery and taxpayer satisfaction. Inter-departmental COPs will encourage knowledge sharing and assist the Contact Centre in achieving the first call resolution goal. Sandrock (2008) confirmed that COPs consist of employees from all departments of an organisation who come together to solve issues; experiment with new and improved processes and build a rapport with each other. They are willing to work together to benefit the organisation.

#### **4.3.10 Knowledge and Business Leaders**

Participants indicated that standardisation of processes enabled agents to assist taxpayers in a consistent manner. Agents are able to provide the same response to similar questions or queries raised by the taxpayers. Respondents believed that if processes are standardised; responses are consistent and taxpayers are satisfied; this practice not only improves organisational reputation but, it secures a level of trust with the taxpayers too. Leijen and Baetes (2003) posited that standardisation of

knowledge leads to a more structured process. It is a defined process that is organised and specific.

#### **4.3.11 Knowledge and Leadership**

Respondents suggested that managers and leaders set an example for their subordinates, by walking the talk. This was supported by Allio (2015) who confirmed that followers find their confidence levels increase in leaders whose behaviour can be imitated. Managers and leaders steer the organisation into the direction that is intended. Respondents outlined in their responses that their managers continuously communicated and updated them when necessary furthermore, the managers themselves are tested on a monthly basis to ensure that they are able to support the needs of their staff.

The responses from the participants suggested that the leaders and managers in the Contact Centre adopted a transformational leadership style. According to Birasnav Rangnekar and Dalpati (2011), transformational leaders inspire their employees to improve their intellectual abilities, by providing them with vision and consideration.

#### **4.3.12 Time Management**

Respondent R7 mentioned that time is of the essence in the Contact Centre. Agents have a time limit in which to deal with taxpayers that call in. They have a strong belief in the use of knowledge repositories as this will enable them to provide the required service at their fingertips. Other respondents alluded that if they assist taxpayers in the fastest possible time they will then be able to render quality service to more taxpayers within the limited time frame.

#### **4.3.13 Change Management**

There was a unanimous understanding that change in the Contact Centre is generally good, the management and staff portrayed a very engaged and encouraged mannerism. It is believed to be a valued concept which management and staff are open to. This is due to the continuous communication from management and the knowledge workers within the Contact Centre division.

Respondents alluded to the understanding that change is positive; therefore, they affirm that knowledge is beneficial since it brings about change. This finding is confirmed by Arnold (2015) who has a wealth of experience in the field of change management. He has driven many programmes for change management internationally and states that real and sustainable progress occurs when management and staff are communicated to on a continuous basis, encouraging them to be fully engaged.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

There were different points of views that were expressed on the knowledge management concept. Most of the respondents were very positive about the knowledge management concept; however, they did not shy away from expressing their concerns regarding the challenges. The common denominator here was that the other divisions within SARS adopt a similar understanding of the knowledge management concept as it is done in the Contact Centre.

A summary of the results was provided in this chapter. Management and staff experiences from the Contact Centre Durban were highlighted. There was consensus that the knowledge management concept plays a very important role in the Contact Centre. There was a comparison of the theoretical perspectives and previous studies of various authors on the knowledge management subject. Most of the views were comparative in nature alluding to the importance of knowledge management in organisations in this day and age. Conclusions will be outlined in the next chapter, and recommendations and future research will also be outlined.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study was to explore the implementation of knowledge management in the SARS Contact Centre in Durban. The knowledge management concept is approximately eight years in existence in the Contact Centre and only a small portion of the concept was adopted in other divisions within SARS. This was the significant reason for the topic of the research. The research was conducted in the SARS Contact Centre in Durban amongst management and staff. Information was gathered from the research results and the discussion on the results reflected that knowledge management was successfully implemented in the Contact Centre. Other divisions within SARS could use this concept and its implementation process in their business area, based on the best practices.

The study objectives acquired the views of management and staff in the Contact Centre in order to explore the perceptions of knowledge management; the benefits and challenges experienced; the role that the leaders and managers played; and to suggest recommendations. The research method that was utilised was qualitative in nature. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and twenty participants were interviewed. Respondents displayed a huge interest and this was evident enough to conclude that they had a wealth of information to share and this research study provided a platform for them. It was unmistakeable that this study proved that although not perfect, but, the implementation of knowledge management within the Durban Contact Centre was an overall success and other divisions within SARS can adopt the concept. Key findings and recommendations are considered in this chapter.

## **5.2 Addressing the Objectives**

Themes that emerged from the analysis of the data from the interviews will be discussed as key in terms of objectives.

### **5.2.1 To Examine how Knowledge Management is Perceived in a Contact Centre**

Knowledge in the Contact Centre is perceived as a concept that will enable management and staff to provide efficient service effectively. Quality service delivery will be provided with the assistance of technology and regular communication enables the management and staff to confidently respond to incoming calls. The knowledge in the Contact Centre is tested on a monthly basis and these tests are popularly known as “knowledge reviews”. These “knowledge reviews” are key performance indicators that are measured on a scorecard. These tests are timed, open-book tests, that enhance the individual’s navigation skills.

The Contact Centre aims to assist taxpayers on the first call made to them. This was mentioned by most of the participants. From the responses received from the participants, the knowledge management concept appeared to be well understood. The respondents seemed to share a consistent understanding that “knowledge is power” and that it is not only beneficial to the organisation but it assists the individuals in developing themselves.

The concept is perceived to be a beneficial and valuable tool which enabled the management and staff to communicate on a regular basis. Communication is usually conveyed in the morning meetings known as buzz sessions and regular updates are conveyed via an electronic medium like e-mails and electronic business communications also known as “bcoms”. Updates on policies and procedures are also communicated electronically via e-mails and this communication is known as Ops Matters.

Technology in the Contact Centre plays a very important role since it houses most of the information required by the Contact Centre management and staff. Interviewees mentioned in their interviews that once calls are answered and taxpayers require assistance; the information is readily available at their “finger tips” so to speak.

A knowledge team is very visible in the Contact Centre and they assist operations with complex queries that cannot be answered within the first call. They further assist with identifying the lack of understanding when the results from the “knowledge reviews” are calculated. Training needs are identified and the knowledge team ensures that the knowledge gaps are addressed so that a world class service can be rendered to the taxpayers.

### **5.2.2 To Identify the Benefits of Knowledge Management in a Contact Centre**

The concept of knowledge management is beneficial to the Contact Centre since it keeps the information relevant and up to date. Training needs are identified and skills are developed to ensure that all employees perform at the required level. Confidence levels are enhanced making the employees happier and at the same time keeping them engaged and motivated. This also affects the reduction in absenteeism; happy employees enjoy what they do and will ensure that they are available to perform their duties required. Knowledge management standardises processes; this then secures a streamlined process where the same responses are provided to the same type of queries.

There was a general feeling that knowledge assists in enhancing their service delivery. They alluded towards the fact that knowledgeable staff that is in possession of valuable information related to their tasks; renders efficient and quality service in the fastest possible time. This means that the faster the calls are answered and dealt with, the more time will be available to answer other calls, thereby increasing productivity and efficiency.

The management and staff at the Contact Centre are adaptable to change. Their responses are indicative of this since they are aware that change is something that takes place quite regularly. However, when there are changes, these changes are communicated and do not come as a surprise to the management and staff.

Participants were pleased with the technology since they have all the required information to assist them when dealing with queries in a single repository; this enables the staff to access information at any time. The information in the repository is relevant and updated regularly. The Contact Centre mentioned that their aim is to ensure most calls that are answered are resolved within that call; this information



was mentioned by respondents in the Executive Management role as well as the productive units that are referred to as Agents.

The consistent responses received from the participants, suggests that the management and staff are well informed and that information is regularly shared and understood. The management and staff in the Durban Contact Centre seem to be very engaged and committed.

### **5.2.3 To Determine the Challenges of Implementing Knowledge Management in a Contact Centre**

Implementing new processes will always be beneficial, however, along with the benefits; more often than not, there will be challenges not too far behind. Some respondents indicated that information overload was a challenge since too much of information was shared too quickly. There was a challenge grasping a particular update when new and improved updates have to be communicated and learnt. The Contact Centre is a very diverse division since it comprises of different genders; race groups; age groups and religions. Different people perceive things differently and this may pose a barrier when information is shared and has to be grasped.

Some respondents revealed that information was delayed at times. This makes interacting with taxpayers uncomfortable since they are aware of the changes that management and staff should have been familiar with. Other respondents mentioned that processes are sometimes changed by people who are not hands on, they may document a change that looks good on paper, however, when the processes were tested, there were glitches that needed fixing; this posed a problem since there were delays with the implementation and delays with processing queries.

Time is of the essence especially in the Contact Centre, sometimes the staff do not want to use the technology available; they choose to correspond with each other when assisting taxpayers. This means that calls are placed on hold and time is being wasted whilst they are waiting for their colleagues. This could be avoided if the knowledge repository was navigated for the answers. One respondent mentioned that some staff experienced problems with using their computers. There was an observation that some staff may lack the knowledge of computer usage.

Resistance to change was another challenge that was noted, staff were not happy to have their knowledge tested, there was a feeling of uncertainty; however, they soon overcame this after the first knowledge test. There are times where staff are sent for in house training; however, this information is soon lost on return from the training since staff are not always practicing what was learnt.

The application of the theory sometimes posed a problem since staff found it difficult to transpose application into theory. There was an assumption that perhaps language was the barrier in comprehending the written word or it could be that the theory is written in a level that makes it difficult to comprehend.

#### **5.2.4 To Identify the Role of Leadership in Implementing Knowledge Management in a Contact Centre**

The leadership in the Durban Contact Centre played a very vital role in the implementation of the knowledge management concept. They were the drivers in the implementation phase. The most important tool that they utilised was communication. They continuously communicated with staff keeping them well informed of changes; updates; enhancements and new processes. Respondents confirmed that their first level managers steered the process in the right direction. They continuously kept the staff engaged; therefore, the lifespan of the knowledge management concept has lasted and is still improving with each year.

The leadership in the Durban Contact Centre are committed to the knowledge management concept since they too have their knowledge tested on a monthly basis. They ensure that the staff are kept informed and knowledgeable so as to render the best service to the taxpayers. Many respondents mentioned that knowledgeable managers lead knowledgeable teams. This ensures that the Contact Centre objectives are met and goals achieved.

Managers in the Contact Centre “lead by example” or they say what they mean and they mean what they say. They walk the talk, so to speak. This is evident when staff were interviewed; where they mentioned that they received information via their managers. Sometimes the managers have to attend to queries and they do this with the use of the available technology and they rely on their tacit knowledge to resolve complex matters.

The managers in the Contact Centre implement initiatives as per the strategic plan that is discussed and finalised at Head Office level and the knowledge management concept is no different. At a strategic level, the KPIs are established, then communicated down to the regional level and it is here that the leadership team then drive the initiatives according to plan.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

### **5.3.1 Organised and Controlled Communication**

Updates and enhancements are regularly shared, however, the moment a new update or enhancement is communicated the next one is ready to be shared. Sometimes the information was not even understood and the information is still fresh in the minds of the employees; the next set of information has to be shared. Communication of this nature needs to be streamlined. There should be days or dates when set timelines for updates and enhancements are to be released and communicated. This will eliminate confusion as well as improve the quality of service. Furthermore, people will be kept more engaged and the momentum will be kept alive since new information and knowledge will become an initiative that management and staff will look forward to.

At times information intended for management and staff finds its way to the public first. The staff found themselves at a loss for words since they are now being schooled by the taxpayers instead of the other way around. It would be best to ensure that knowledge should be shared during set timelines. This way there will be no surprises for management and staff.

Nando (2007) stated that it is vital for communication to be perceived as an important concept that involves the entire organisation. Communication should be viewed as vital for both internal and external; with partners; stakeholders and other individuals outside the organisation. Nando (2007) further mentioned that organisations of today link their communications success with customer interaction, partners and other stakeholders.

### **5.3.2 Keep it Simple**

Communication needs to be kept simple since the Contact Centre is made up of a diverse workforce. There are people of different genders; ages; religion and race groups. They comprehend spoken and written work in different ways. To avoid new knowledge being open to interpretation and processes being compromised, information should be kept as simple as possible. It should cater for the needs of all; since some learn through pictures and some prefer the written word.

### **5.3.3 Learning and Training**

Processes are changing and updated quite regularly in the Contact Centre. Respondents confirmed this when data was collected in the form of interviews. They were of the opinion that knowledge management is predominantly made up of the “knowledge reviews” which is taken on a monthly basis. The reviews are but just one aspect of knowledge management. The understanding and perceptions of the concept seem to be on track with most of the respondents, however a reminder of how this concept encompasses the reviews; the communication and updates need to be refreshed.

Learning styles need to be addressed since people learn and absorb knowledge differently. One respondent mentioned that perhaps surveys should be introduced to find out peoples learning styles and then implement training sessions appropriately. An interactive training style should be introduced; one that is able to point out exactly what fields are to be completed as per the different queries. This interactive type of training should be available to management and staff whilst they are servicing their taxpayers too. This way quality of work will improve and queries will be attended to faster.

Virtual Reality seems to be the new fashion trend with the smartphones these days, a training application that relates to taxpayers should be developed to assist the taxpayers with the completion of their tax returns for all tax types as well as to object to their assessments outcomes. E-Filing for mobile phones does exist but it needs to be enhanced so that it can include training material for taxpayers too.

Management and staff in the Contact Centre complete a Personal Development Plan (PDP). This plan is made up of training needs that the individuals complete and update regularly. There should be a link that alerts the internal training division which is currently known as the SARS Institute of Learning (SIOL) to identify training needs from critical need to “nice to have needs”, the link should further inform the training institute of the most requested training needs to the least requested. Furthermore, these training interventions need to be attached to a development programme that ensures the trainees commitment and willingness to learn. There should be a link with career progression too as this will only enhance the intellectual capital in the Contact Centre since people will want to achieve the best results for a higher pay band and perhaps a higher position at the same time securing employee engagement.

#### **5.3.4 Integration After Training Intervention**

Respondents mentioned that there is a gap which they find evident when people return from training; they find it difficult to integrate the knowledge acquired with day to day processes. Before the staff are placed on active duties, there should be some kind of interaction between the Operations Manager and the staff member; they should decide on follow-up sessions to determine if the training was worthwhile and if the training has assisted the staff member with performance and service delivery.

#### **5.3.5 Assessing and Rewarding**

As mentioned previously, knowledge management in the Contact Centre is measured by way of a test that is known as a knowledge review. This review is an open book test that has a set timer to a maximum of 60 minutes and the scores from this test are recorded on a scorecard since it is one of the KPIs. This test enhances the staff navigation skills which comes in handy when they are assisting taxpayers. Along with the knowledge reviews there should be other ways of measuring knowledge levels like creating a knowledge index that encompasses the knowledge reviews; scores from the training academy and the communication of process enhancements as an added feature. This index should be a measurement that should remain on the scorecard as a KPI.

### **5.3.6 Knowledge Workers and Social Media Management**

Knowledge workers should be available to assist management and staff at all times. These knowledge workers should be able to aid the Contact Centre with complicated queries as well as unusual queries. Once these queries are resolved, the knowledge workers need to update the electronic repository, should similar queries of this nature arise, and staff can then source this information from the repository.

Another recommendation is that these knowledge workers touch base with the division that deal with social media and communications to gather information. This information gathering should be based on the complaints; compliments and suggestions that are derived through Facebook, twitter, helopeter; e-filing application and the SARS website. There are many process enhancements and developments that could be sourced out to improve service delivery and taxpayer experience. Floreddu and Cabiddu (2016) stated that social media permits new methods of communication that may contribute to the enhancement of client interaction.

### **5.3.7 Technology and Knowledge**

Technology plays a huge role in the Contact Centre and they are already in possession of a knowledge repository which is used on a daily basis by the management and staff daily. However, this repository is required to be user friendly and some respondents mentioned that it is not as user friendly. Perhaps the developers need to programme the repository to be as user friendly as the “Google” search engine. Since this is what the repository is used for, when assisting taxpayers. Furthermore, the information housed in the repository must be updated regularly.

## **5.4 Recommendations for Future Research**

This research study focused on the implementation of knowledge management in the Durban Contact Centre. Future research should focus on implementing the knowledge management concept in other divisions within SARS. Further studies could explore the perceptions of management and staff from other divisions so that a general viewpoint is acquired. The viewpoints could prompt findings that could

confirm or contrast the research study views which could influence the suggested recommendations.

Further research studies implemented in other Contact Centres; parastatals or government organisations could be compared with the knowledge management implementation process implemented in the Contact Centre, in SARS including all the Contact Centres regionally. This study could focus on exploring the similarities; differences or even the existence of the concept.

It would be ideal to conduct research within the SARS in other regions like the Alberton; Doringkloof and the Bellville Contact Centres for a larger sample. It would be useful to consider conducting research studies across a variety of organisations with Contact Centres.

Future studies around knowledge management could also focus on evaluating the knowledge management investment and its cost benefit for the Contact Centre or SARS as an organisation. The study could include the recovery of cost period and the return on investments.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The research study began with defining the problem statement and subsequently provided a literature review that expanded on significant features of the knowledge management concept. The methodology engaged on explaining the research processes was supported by realistic and empirical evidence used to interpret data that was involved in the research. The research was conducted to establish how the knowledge management concept was introduced and maintained by focusing on the perceptions; benefits; challenges and the role that the leadership played. The study confirms that the knowledge management concept was indeed implemented and sustained successfully with minor improvement requirements. These improvements are presented in the recommendations in this chapter which keep the momentum of knowledge management ongoing.

The findings of this study have confirmed that in order for the Contact Centre to remain competitive and gain an advantage, they will have to continuously improve, obtain, organise, apply and share knowledge and knowledge resources since there

is a wealth of knowledge within the Contact Centre and SARS as an organisation. Schiuma et al., (2014) confirmed that in order for organisations, in the public or private domain, to gain a competitive advantage, it is essential for these organisations to convert their knowledge into products and services that secures profits and re-energises the organisations capabilities.

Furthermore, when knowledge is efficiently and effectively managed then its full potential is realised; through the aligning of knowledge processes with the organisations strategies. In addition to successfully managing knowledge there is a requirement for a healthy collaboration of a loyal and supportive workforce as well as good technological tools and support systems.

The following quotation was most appropriate to sum up this study.

*“Knowledge management provides benefits for all types of organisations, however managers within these organisations must be able to determine what information is relevant given a specific situation and what approach to apply in order to adapt knowledge successfully into their organisation.” (Waddell and Stewart, 2008:43)*



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## **APPENDIX 1: INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

### **UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP**

**MCom Research Project  
Researcher: Renitha Chetty (0833075416)  
Supervisor: Cecile Gerwel Proches (0312608318)  
Research Office: Ms P Ximba (0312603587)**

Dear Respondent,

I, Renitha Chetty, am a Master of Commerce in Leadership Studies student, at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled: *“Exploring the Implementation of Knowledge Management at a Contact Centre in Durban”*.

The aim of this research study is to examine how Knowledge Management was implemented in the Contact Centre in Durban.

Through your participation; the researcher hopes to learn and understand the successes and failures experienced as well as adopting the successes to implement in other divisions of the South African Revenue Services.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this interview. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, UKZN.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in the interview or about participating in this study, you may contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed above.

The interview should take about 45 minutes to an hour. I hope you will take the time to participate.

Sincerely

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

This page is to be retained by the participant

## **APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM**

### **UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP**

**MCom Research Project**  
**Researcher: Renitha Chetty (0833075416)**  
**Supervisor: Cecile Gerwel Proches (0312608318)**  
**Research Office: Ms P Ximba (0312603587)**

#### **CONSENT**

I.....(full names of participant)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the  
research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I hereby consent/do not consent to record the interview.

**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**

**DATE**

.....

This page is to be retained by the researcher

## **APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP**

**MCom Research Project  
Researcher: Renitha Chetty (0833075416)  
Supervisor: Cecile Gerwel Proches (0312608318)  
Research Office: Ms P Ximba (0312603587)**

#### **Exploring the Implementation of Knowledge Management at a Contact Centre in Durban**

##### **Interview Questions**

1. What are your views regarding knowledge management since this concept was introduced to the Contact Centre approximately 8 years ago?
2. How effective is this concept to the Contact Centre?
3. What in your opinion are the benefits of knowledge management?
4. What in your opinion are the challenges of knowledge management?
5. Describe how knowledge management was introduced to you?
6. What are your perceptions of knowledge management and its connection with quality?
7. Explain how knowledge management affects the managers and leaders?
8. How was knowledge management sustained in the Contact Centre?
9. Describe how you would have introduced knowledge management?
10. How has knowledge management affected you?
11. How can knowledge management be introduced to other divisions within SARS?
12. Explain the term competitive advantage and its link to knowledge management?
13. What is the connection between technology and knowledge management?
14. Explain how knowledge management affected performance in the Contact Centre?
15. What will you do differently, if you were to implement knowledge management?

## APPENDIX 4: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FORM



28 April 2016

Mrs Renitha Chetty (214579446)  
Graduate School of Business & Leadership  
Westville Campus

Dear Ms Chetty,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0430/016M

Project title: Exploring the Implementation of Knowledge Management at a Contact Centre in Durban

### Full Approval – Expedited Approval

With regards to your application received on 25 April 2016. The documents submitted have been accepted by the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee and **FULL APPROVAL** for the protocol has been granted.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Cecile Gerwel Proches  
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Muhammad Hoque  
Cc School Administrator: Ms Zarina Bullyraj

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

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Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)



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## APPENDIX 5: LANGUAGE EDITORS FORM

696 Clare Road

Clare estate

4091

29 November 2016

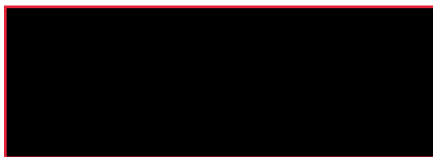
### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Editing of Masters Thesis : Exploring the implementation of knowledge management at a Contact Centre in Durban.

Ms Renitha Chetty

The above thesis has been language edited.

Regards



MP Mathews

083 676 4778



## APPENDIX 6: TURN IT REPORT

### Turnitin Originality Report

**Masters Dissertation First Draft by Renitha Chetty**

**From Initial Draft (Research Dissertation 2016)**

**Processed on 21-Nov-2016 2:39 AM CAT**

**ID: 739490028**

**Word Count: 32762**

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<http://www.knowledge-management-tools.net/references.html>

3

2% match (publications)

Journal of Knowledge Management, Volume 17, Issue 1 (2013-05-27)

4

2% match (publications)

Journal of Knowledge Management, Volume 12, Issue 4 (2008-07-06)

5

2% match (student papers from 07-Dec-2015)

Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal on 2015-12-07

6

1% match (student papers from 20-Nov-2015)

Submitted to Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College on 2015-11-20