

**A STUDY OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT
APPLICATION IN PROPERTY MANAGEMENT IN KENYA**

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"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..(Hosea 4:6).

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¹ The Holy Bible - Revised Standard Version

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July, 2008

DECLARATION

I, Catherine Minne G. Kagiri, do hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.



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ABSTRACT

The business environment is constantly evolving, and this was especially evident in the late 20th century. The new business environment included changes like globalisation, increased use of technology, cultural and gender diversity; and demands for power and control by employees.

In the fast changing business environment, knowledge is recognized as a major asset in the firm. Any business organization or firm's competitive leverage is reliant on its knowledge assets. The value of the knowledge assets can exceed that of all the firm's physical assets. Knowledge assets may be packaged as experienced staff, patents, licenses and even manuals, reports and minutes of meeting's.

Knowledge is information in use or action. This results in a wealth of knowledge being created through experience, and integrated with cultural beliefs. Knowledge enables firms to make decisions for an uncertain future. In addition, knowledge allows firms to predict future events and discern certain trends that can provide future opportunities. Wealth of knowledge also enables the firm to operate efficiently.

This study was prompted by an observation that the property management firms are trying to survive in an increasingly competitive business environment. Knowledge is the lifeline for the property management firm's business processes, as each department relies heavily on the knowledge of other departments, so as to function efficiently.

The main research objective for the study was to establish the nature and extent of knowledge management practices in Kenyan property management firms. As this was an exploratory study, it attempted to identify the extent to which the core processes of knowledge management (creation of new knowledge, storage of knowledge, distribution of knowledge, and the application of knowledge), were implemented. The research was conducted by surveying private property management firms in Nairobi.

Data was collected through personal interviews and a structured questionnaire (Appendix I).

The study revealed that knowledge management practices are limited in property management firms. However, it also revealed that relevant knowledge management expertise is lacking, and may deter the right type of knowledge from being gathered, stored or distributed within the property management firms.

In conclusion, it was found that there was a need for increased awareness on the practice of knowledge management within the property management firms. It is recommended that specialized training in knowledge management for Property Management firms is necessary.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Today, the world is moving at a fast pace due to rapid technology and communication advancement. In effect the business environment keeps evolving and is characterized by changes that include:

- Increased use of technology in the working place. There are more computers, telecommunication equipment, for example, mobile telephones, internet facilities;
- Increased number of women in the working place has redefined relationships in the working environment. Technology like washing machines, microwaves, dishwashers; has freed up time for women on the domestic front, and contributed to an increase of women in the workplace.
- An increase in the diverse cultures found in the working environment has led to change in the corporate culture and working relationships.
- Globalisation has caused an increase in competition due to breaking down of trade barriers. This has introduced increased competition from not only local companies, but also foreign ones.
- Society's thinking is changing, and has had a great effect on management functions within the business environment. There has also been the tendency to be more interested in technology that does work more efficiently, and not as much in the welfare of the workers.
- Workers are demanding a share of the power and control in the organisation. This is unlike in the early 20th century, when power and control was concentrated in the top management. This has led to increased authority at departmental and branch level in some organizations.

The 21st century business environment demands that for a business to survive, it needs to place a value on its information and knowledge. Knowledge and information have

been elevated from being insignificant issues to business assets. Signs of this are the increased level of copyrighted information that is available on the internet, in books, manuals, training procedures, branded products.

World-renown management guru, Peter Drucker ¹ is quoted in Wilson (1996:xvii) as stating that "*Knowledge is the only meaningful resource today. The traditional factors of production...have become secondary. They can be obtained...easily, provided there is knowledge*". In addition Giannetto and Wheeler (2000:ix) state that "*more organisations are coming to regard their intangible knowledge assets as important, if not more important than physical and financial assets*". These knowledge assets enable a firm to reduce future uncertainty and increase a firm's efficiency.

According to Ahmed et al (2002: 112) the benefits of knowledge management are improved efficiency, market position and communication between knowledge workers. The firm also enjoys profitability and continuity with the ability "to focus on the core business and critical company knowledge".

The property management firm is operating within this same business environment, and there is a need to assess its competitiveness in the fast changing business environment. The Kenyan property management firm that has assessed its knowledge assets, and uses them for the achievement of its goals and objectives to serve its clients, has an extra edge over other property management firms.

1.1 Problem Statement

A successful property management firm is one that achieves the goals and objectives of the property owner, as well as the property under its management. Kenyan property management firms are not utilizing their knowledge assets to successfully achieve their goals and objectives.

¹ Post Capitalist Society (1993)

The property management firm is service-oriented and knowledge is crucial when trying to offer first class services. Thus the property management industry is heavily reliant on the availability of accurate and reliable information to make the relevant decisions that are key to providing first class services. In the fast changing local and global economy, property management firms need to have a competitive edge over other firms in the industry, and according to Brooking (1999:8) "*...knowledge is a competitive advantage when it comes to providing services to customers*".

Knowledge comes in different forms. There is knowledge of how to prepare the service or product, knowledge of what the market requires, as well as knowledge of how to deliver the services and products. However, this knowledge might not be readily accessible because it is usually in the heads of employees, clients and tenants; and may not be stored in a common place for access to all employees. Knowledge is also found in company correspondence files, application forms, databases. All this knowledge can be processed and analyzed to provide the firm with an extra edge over their competitors.

Property management firms need to be aware that knowledge is lost when employees leave the firm through resignations, natural attrition and redundancy. Some of this knowledge cannot be recorded, for instance "*noting down how to ride a bicycle in a manner appropriate for someone who has not seen one before*", Brooking (1999:9). Yet, the property management firm relies heavily on the availability of accurate and reliable information in order to make the right decisions and to achieve the goals and needs of their clients.

One of the main functions of the property management firm is the coordination and implementation of maintenance of the properties under their management. Property management firms will either perform the maintenance function using in-house members of staff or sub-contractors. The requisite information should be available to the repair personnel in an accurate and coherent form. According to Aligula (1995:119) "*...maintenance clerks ...should be people with a knowledge of construction techniques and materials so as to allow faster and better initiation of maintenance action*". The

knowledge of those handling the information and forwarding it for action is important for the "*...better utilisation of maintenance resources*".

According to Kaaria's (2000:75) study on the role of the property manager in building design and construction, she recommends that the property manager be brought in at the building design and construction stages due to his/her knowledge of buildings' performance-in-use.

Kenyan property management firms need to be aware of their intangible assets in the form of knowledge. Knowledge assets give firms a competitive edge in their businesses and should be managed, processed and applied within the firm to fulfill their goals and objectives. There have been recommendations for the need of centralized databanks for estate managers in associated research studies.

In a study on property information needs for investment analysis, Kabok (1999:71) recommended that "*property stakeholders ... should... establish a central databank where all information can be accessed by estate managers...*". He recognised the need to harness information and store it for the use of estate and property managers.

According to Kaaria (2000:50), second to lack of finance, poor management policies are a cause of inefficiency in property management and result in the failure to utilise resources efficiently. Company policy is crucial to the efficient analysis, storage, distribution and application of knowledge in the property management firms. Management policy affects the attitudes within the firm towards use and application of knowledge. Property management firms need to ensure that their company's vision and strategy incorporates the management of available knowledge in the firm.

In conclusion, property management firms need an extensive store of knowledge and accurate and reliable information to perform their duties efficiently. There is a need to establish whether this knowledge is being effectively managed within the firm for the successful achievement of the company's goals and objectives. According to

Giannetto and Wheeler (2000) *"developing procedures that facilitate the identification, flow, learning and sharing of knowledge will become an essential management activity"*. The key question is **"Are Kenyan property management firms aware of their knowledge assets, and are they successfully utilizing them to achieve the goals and objectives of their clients?"**

This exploratory study was initiated by the fact that there is no evidence that property management firms are in possession of any knowledge assets. There is no documentary evidence in the form of journals or research papers on this particular subject in Kenya. In addition there are no on-going research studies or papers available in Kenya, on the practice of knowledge management in the Kenyan property management industry or companies.

1.2 Study Assumptions

Effective knowledge management practices, in property management firms, are dependent on the level of their knowledge and established procedures.

1.3 Study Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

- Identify the scope, role and importance of knowledge management in property management firms;
- Determine the extent of knowledge management practices in property management firms;
- Identify any constraints on the practice of knowledge management in property management firms.

1.4 Scope of the Study

1.4.1 Physical Scope

The scope of the study is limited to property management firms practising in Nairobi, Kenya since 80% of the registered property management firms are located in Nairobi.

1.4.2 Subject Scope

The term **property management** will cover those firms that are registered as estate agent firms, valuers, as well as asset valuers. These terms are defined in the Institution of Surveyors of Kenya (ISK) Handbook (2000:5) as those dealing in the "*special discipline of economics associated with preparing and reporting asset valuations and also managing landed assets*". Those defined as above should have undergone rigorous training and should demonstrate skills commensurate with the profession. In addition they should adhere to the strict code of ethics that is expected during the practice of Property Management.

1.5 Justification of the Research Study

The beneficiaries of this study will be property managers, clients, real estate industry in Kenya, government, Property Management researchers and students. All of whom currently have limited recorded information on local property management practices. In addition the study will:

- provide a foundation for future research on the effectiveness of knowledge management in property management firms.
- provide property managers with guidelines on how to establish and implement knowledge management practices in their firms
- provide accurate and well-researched knowledge on business management practices that is relevant to the property management industry.

1.6 Research Methodology

The study will be collecting primary data using structured questionnaires, personal interviews and local reports. The questionnaires will be structured in a simple manner to maintain comprehension and brevity. In addition research assistants will be trained to collect the data politely, patiently and painstakingly.

Data will be analysed using classification and tabulation methods. For instance some of the classifications will be the level of education of the respondents and types of policies in use in the firms. Tabulation of the data will make use of frequency distributions, for instance when analyzing the turnover of the firms, age of the firms and frequency of training.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Information: Information is processed or analyzed data.

Knowledge: knowledge as the cumulative stock of information and skills derived from use of information by the recipient.

Knowledge Management: a discipline that promotes an integrated approach to identifying, managing, and sharing all of an enterprise's information assets.

Knowledge Assets: Knowledge assets may be packaged as experienced staff, patents, licenses and even manuals, reports and minutes of meeting's.

Management: The process of achieving an organisation's goals through planning, organizing, leading and control of the organisation's resources.

Property Management: The supervision of an interest in landed property with the aim of securing optimum returns which may include social benefits, status, prestige, and political power.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW and THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 General Management Principles

There are various definitions of management depending on the individual outlook. Management is a process that weaves its way in every aspect of our society. Management can be viewed from the activities undertaken to achieve goals of the organisation. Daft and Marcic (1998:7) describe management as the achievement of the organisation's goals through planning, organizing, leading and control of the organisation's resources.

According to van Fleet (1991:8) management is a process undertaken to achieve an organisation's goals. This process comprises of a set of activities directed at the efficient and effective utilisation of resources in the pursuit of the company's goals. Management is practiced everywhere including universities, government agencies, health care organizations as well as businesses.

From the various definitions it can be concluded that management is an intricate process of activities, conducted with the aim of achieving the objectives of an organisation.

2.1 Functions of Management

There are four main functions of management which include:

- planning
- organising
- leading
- controlling

These functions incorporate the numerous activities that any manager has to undertake to ensure the efficient utilisation of the company's resources.

a) Planning

Planning is the defining of goals *"/or future organisational performance"* (Daft and Marcic, 1998:8). Planning also incorporates decision-making whereby the manager has to decide how the goals will be achieved, what tasks will be performed and what resources will be required?

Planning is conducted in 3 steps (van Fleet 1991:17)

- Goals and objectives are established. The top management does this.
- Strategic plans are developed. They serve as general guidelines to the organisation's future. Top management also carries out strategic planning.
- Tactical plans are developed by middle managers.

Lack of planning or even poor planning can hurt an organisation's performance (Daft and Marcic, 1998:8).

b) Organising

Organising is the grouping together of the necessary activities and resources to achieve the company's goals and objectives, for instance, the recruitment of staff and allocation of their tasks. Daft and Marcic, (1998:9) state that *"Organising involves... the grouping of tasks into departments, and the allocation of resources to departments"*.

c) Leading

Leading is the ability of a manager to motivate his team or staff in utilizing the company's resources efficiently to achieve the company's goals. According to Daft and Marcic (1998:9) *"Leading means creating a shared culture and values, communicating goals to employees throughout the organisation and infusing employees with the desire to perform at a high level"*.

d) Controlling

Controlling ensures that all the organisation's activities are geared towards accomplishing the targeted goals. Controlling comprises of the monitoring and evaluation of each step in the process, and making any necessary adjustments to keep

the organisation focused on a straight path. Controlling can only be successful when *"...achieved through control of people"* (Koontz and O'Donnell, 1955:36). This is because all activity is carried out through staff members of the organisation. Thus staff has to be motivated and well informed.

2.2 Knowledge

Knowledge has been defined in numerous ways by different researchers. Knowledge is very often defined as information and vice versa.

Turban (1992) defines knowledge as "information that has been organized and analyzed to make it understandable and applicable to problem-solving or decision-making". Burton-Jones (1999) defines knowledge *"as the cumulative stock of information and skills derived from use of information by the recipient"*.

According to Drucker (1989) *"Knowledge is information that changes something or somebody either by becoming grounds for actions, or by making an individual (or an institution) capable of different or more effective action "*.

Wilson (1996:33) defines knowledge as *"...that -which is known, and ...is an essentially human form of information"*. He also states that "by selecting and analysing data, we can produce information, and by selecting and combining information, we...generate knowledge".

Knowledge and information are distinct from each other. The difference between information and knowledge is that *"knowledge is about commitment and beliefs... Knowledge is about action"* in that the information an individual possesses needs to be acted on for new knowledge to be created. " (Takeuchi and Nonaka 2000:185). When the information is acted on, personal beliefs and experiences result and this becomes the individual's personal knowledge. Giannetto and Wheeler (2000:4), place knowledge on a higher level than data and information. They believe that knowledge incorporates *"beliefs and values, creativity, judgment, skills and expertise, theories, rules, relationships, opinion, concepts (and) previous experiences "*

Knowledge has two main functions within a firm (Gladstone 2000:89). Firstly, it *"enables organisations to cope with an uncertain future...recognising trends and opportunities, predicting (future) events,...making sense of the unfamiliar"*. Secondly, it enables the "efficient operation" of the firm.

2.2.1 Types of Knowledge

Knowledge has been classified in many different ways for successful use in the business environment. According to Brooking (1999:32) the goals of a firm can be successfully achieved if the following types of knowledge are present, and it is known who possesses the particular type of knowledge:

2.2.1.1 Brooking's Type of Knowledge

- a) Knowledge of a particular job. In a property management firm this includes tasks like how to prepare an invoice and statements, and how to receive rent payments, issue receipts and record the transaction in the monthly rent report forms.
- b) Knowledge of who-knows-what in the firm is important, as this is usually the person who spends time talking and networking with everyone. They usually have information on any issue in the firm due to their activities, yet it might

have nothing to do with their designated tasks. Sometimes laying off or firing such people can cause loss to the firm, of years of knowledge gathered.

- c) Knowledge of how to get things done in the firm requires an understanding of the company's laid down procedures as well as the company culture. According to Brooking (1999:35) "*administrators and caretakers...*" seem to master this knowledge very well. In addition, a sales representative who has been dealing with a particular customer for years will acquire extensive knowledge of the client's company procedures and culture to the advantage of his employer.
- d) Knowledge of who performs a task best: Employees in the firm may be knowledgeable about a certain issue but unless the management is aware of the talents of their employees they may not utilize their employees to the maximum benefit of the firm.
- e) Knowledge of corporate history provides the "*context for current and future activities*". According to Brooking (1999:36) Such knowledge may be possessed by the CEO or even a messenger who has been there since the inception of the firm.
- f) Knowledge of a particular Customer Account makes selling your services and products easier. This knowledge can be found in the files on the firm, the sales representative or Account Manager dealing with them.
- g) Knowledge of geographical region is crucial as it can mean the winning or losing of a client. It is especially important in the global economy where different business cultures are meeting to do business.
- h) Knowledge of how to put a team together is crucial when teamwork is necessary for a task. Brooking (1999:38) states that "*knowledge about people means*

better teams". There should be personnel with knowledge about the employees in order to put together a winning team.

- i) Knowledge on how to approach a difficult problem: There are people with knowledge on how to think out problems. This is the result of the experience and analytical skills they possess. This knowledge is crucial for leaders of the firm.

2.2.1.2 Gladstone's Four Categories of Knowledge

Knowledge can also be categorized into 4 groups according to Gladstone (2000:95).

These include:

- Customer knowledge
- Market knowledge
- Product and service knowledge
- Environmental knowledge

a) Customer Knowledge[^] comprises of the essential knowledge on a customer. For instance in a property management firm, the knowledge will comprise of:

- i. Which locality elicits the highest demand for rental houses?
- ii. Which property price range is most in demand?
- iii. How many bedrooms are the highest in demand for residential flats?
- iv. What average amount of office space is in highest demand?

Gladstone (2000:96) states that *"...explicitly kept customer knowledge is limited to the sort of material that enables administration and fits comfortably in standard information management systems...For real appreciation of the individual characteristics of customers,...look to the tacit knowledge possessed by individual sales people about their clients "*.

b) Market knowledge: is knowledge of the environment that the customers are found in or come from. The fast modes of communicating and exchanging information is making knowledge about markets, accessible. In addition faster communication methods are eliminating distances between markets. Firms that have a wider reach or knowledge of a wider market are in a more competitive position as compared to those with a narrower scope. Gladstone (2000:97) states that *"some of the fastest growing corporations appear to move almost effortlessly into markets on the strength of their tacit knowledge"*.

c) Product and Service knowledge: is gathered in the course of the firm's operations. Firms need to connect their product and the service required by the customer. The firm needs to provide the product to the customer and even enhance it with after sales service or other complementary services.

Gladstone (2000:99) quotes Lou Gerstner in IBM's 1998 Annual Report *"...creating integrated solutions that draw on the full range of solutions and, increasingly, services. And it means connecting the dots between what you learn in the lab and what you learn in the market place."* Customers are more likely to remain with a firm that provides good after sale service after they buy a product rather than buy a high quality product and tolerate poor after-sales service.

d) Environmental knowledge: is learned from the external environment through various ways like relationships, field experience, competitor information, customer feedback reports, newsletters, annual reports. Gladstone (2000;100) states that the challenge for any firm is *"to consistently find ways to recognise harvest and learn from the environmental knowledge..."*

2.2.1.3 Tacit and Explicit knowledge

Other categories of knowledge are defined by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) as:

- Tacit knowledge that comprises of experience from bodily skills, simultaneous knowledge of here and now, and practice knowledge.
- Secondly there is explicit knowledge that is that of the mind or rationality. Sequential knowledge of there and then and finally
- digital knowledge based on theory.

a) **Tacit knowledge**

Tacit knowledge is that knowledge that is "*inherently indescribable*" (Funes and Johnson 1998: 29). Tacit knowledge is gathered by the senses, from experience, intuition. Examples are how to ride a bicycle, how to design a house, how to work well with colleagues.

Tacit knowledge is usually transferred through '*some form of apprenticeship, usually involving much practice and learning from great and good yet the skill or knowledge never appears in attaining manual*' (Funes and Johnson 1998: 29). Polanyi (1966) as quoted by Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, Lampel (1998:210) states that "*Tacit knowledge is personal, context-specific, and therefore hard to formalize and communicate*".

b) **Explicit Knowledge**

This type of knowledge is that which has been codified or written down (Brooking 1999:50), and can be accessed by other people. Explicit knowledge can be an explanation of business processes in manuals or other documents like training materials. Examples of explicit knowledge include the instructions of how to use a piece of equipment like the television or video. It should be noted that not all explicit knowledge might be easy to use (Brooking 1999:50)

Polanyi (1966) as quoted by Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, Lampel (1998:210) states that Explicit or "*codified knowledge, on the other hand, refers to knowledge that is transmittable in formal, systematic language*".

c) Conversion of Tacit Knowledge to Explicit Knowledge

According to Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, Lampel (1998:210) the "*conversion of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge*" is crucial for the firm. Explicit knowledge is found in written form. It can be transferred or shared with other employees within the organization. Thus it becomes an asset of the company and contributes to achieving the goals of the organization.

When knowledge remains in the tacit state or has not been codified it ..."*is a human centered asset*", According to Brooking (1999:53) knowledge as 'a human centered asset belongs to the individual' whereas when it has been codified into explicit knowledge it is an infrastructure asset that belongs to the organization. When knowledge remains in the tacit state, it is easily lost because employees may not be available when the knowledge is required.

Every company's goal should be to identify the most important knowledge in the firm and codify it. Tacit knowledge can be converted to explicit knowledge through the following methods.

Table 2.1 **Methods of converting Tacit Knowledge to Explicit Knowledge**

Tacit	Explicit
By teaching	•
By analysis	•
By mentoring	•
By repetition	•
Then by writing it down	•

Source: *Funes Mariana and Johnson Nancy. 1998.*

d) Explicit to Tacit knowledge

Explicit knowledge can also be converted into tacit knowledge. This is explained by Brooking (1999) in the case of an apprentice who learns to tune an engine. He will attend classes, take exams when he will be requested to write down the engine tuning procedure. He uses different types of equipment to assess whether the engine is tuned. Over the years after his apprenticeship and studies, he will attain the ear and eye experience, and will take shortcuts in the tuning process. The systematic and written knowledge acquired in his studies is now converted to tacit knowledge through experience.

2.2.2 Characteristics of Knowledge

Knowledge has multiple characteristics as defined by Day and Wendler (1998) in Ahmed et al (2002:11).

- a) Knowledge tends to remain in people's heads. This is because it comprises of their experiences and is personalized. Since it is in their heads, it is difficult to transfer speedily to another person as you would with something tangible.
- b) Knowledge increases in value and brings additional returns over time. Knowledge as an asset does not depreciate especially when more and more people use it and add onto it. This is not the case with a firm's physical assets that depreciate over time.
- c) Knowledge tends to fragment as it is added on. According to Day and Wendler (1998) "today's specialist skill becomes tomorrow's common standard as fields of knowledge grow deeper and more complex...(but)...expiring patents or former trade secrets...become less valuable...".
- d) Knowledge is in constant flux, as more is created each day. It gets difficult to find knowledge as it becomes old and obsolete.

- e) The value of knowledge is difficult to quantify, as it may not produce the expected results. On the other hand it may be a great investment, but it is unpredictable who will benefit most from it. For instance, will it benefit the client, the competitor or the holder/creator of the knowledge.

- f) Knowledge tends to be specific, as it is created within a certain context or environment, knowledge created within the property management firm will only be useful to those who are affected or influenced by the property or real estate industry. Thus the knowledge created can only be transferred within this realm whether nationally or internationally.

- g) Knowledge can be considered subjective. Even within the firm, employees may disagree on what is useful knowledge and what is not within their work context.

2.3 Knowledge Management

Knowledge management was little known before 1997. Today there are journals dwelling on just the single discipline. For example there were special issues of the International Journal of Strategic Management² and the Expert Systems with Applications³, besides the Knowledge Management Journal. Knowledge management is also getting recognition in academia, and management consulting firms are offering knowledge management services to their clients.

2.3.1 Definition of Knowledge Management

Loshin (2001) defines knowledge management as a "*procedural methodology (that) has evolved ... to help integrate the technical, organisational, behavioral issues associated with enterprise knowledge*".

² International Journal of Strategic Management Vol. 30(3), June 1997

³ Expert Systems with Applications Vol. 13(1), July 1997

The Competence Center of Knowledge Management at Fraunhofer IPK, Berlin defines knowledge management as *"... all methods, instruments and tools that in a holistic approach contribute to the promotion of the core knowledge processes - to generate knowledge, to store knowledge, to distribute knowledge and to apply knowledge supported by the definition of knowledge goals and the identification of knowledge - in all areas and levels of the organisation. "*

The Gartner Group defines knowledge management as a *"discipline that promotes an integrated approach to identifying, managing, and sharing all of an enterprise's information assets". These information assets are identified as "databases, documents, policies and procedures as well as previously unarticulated expertise and experience resident in individual workers".*

Hibbard (1997) defines knowledge management as the process of *"capturing a company's collective expertise wherever it resides - in databases, on paper or in people's heads - and distributing it to wherever it can help produce the biggest payoff".*

Corral1 (1998) states that knowledge management takes a *"...more holistic view of information, not only combining internal and external information, but also coordination, planning and control (monitoring) of information and consolidating informal (soft) and formal (hard) information".*

2.3.2 Knowledge Management Process

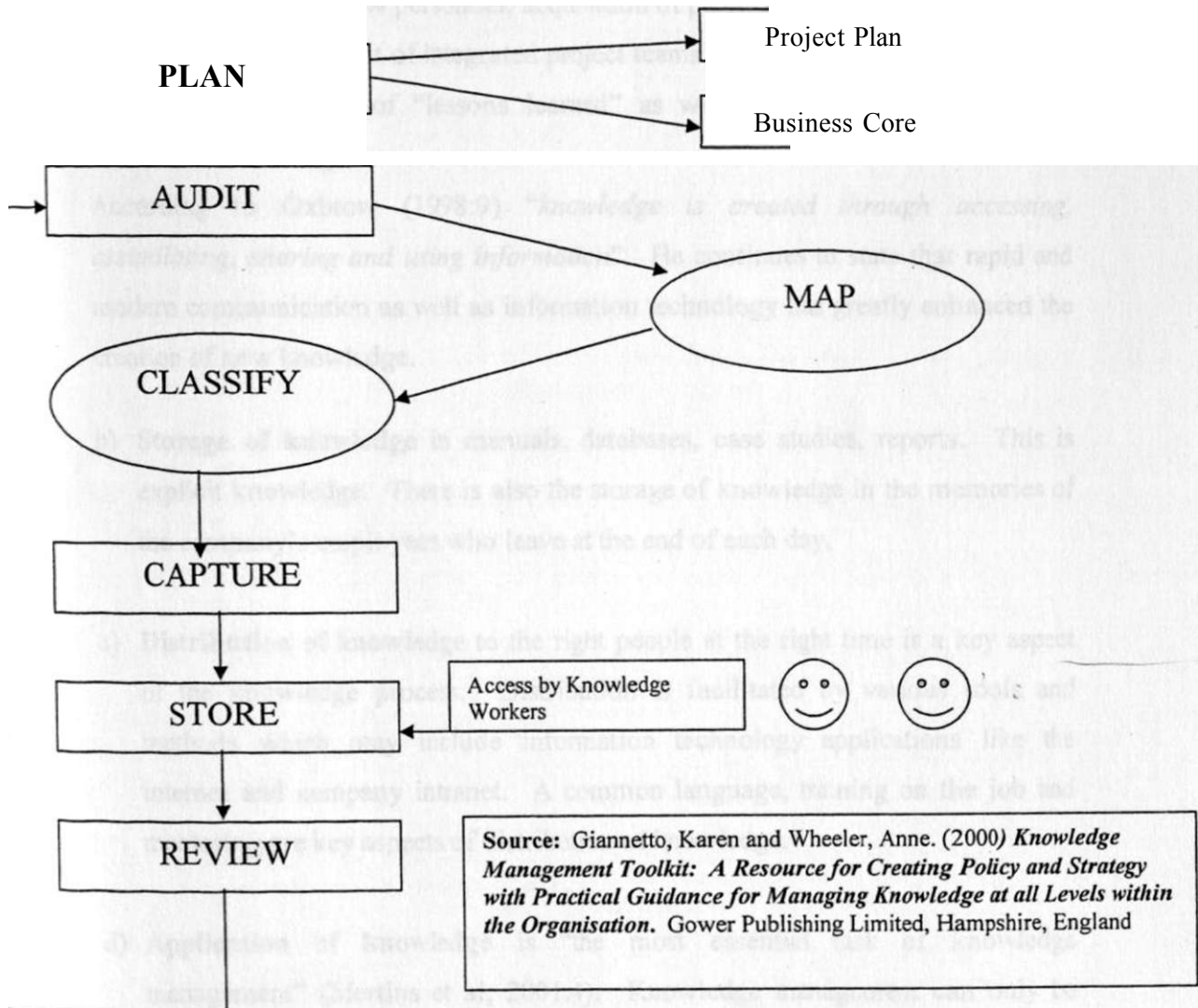
A firm needs to establish certain steps to ensure the successful implementation of knowledge management (Giannetto and Wheeler, 2000:15). These steps include:

- identifying the firm's knowledge
- evaluating the kind of knowledge that will result in the firm's success
- Knowing what knowledge and expertise is held by the firm's employees. This includes, who knows what and where can it be found.
- Categorising the knowledge into classes that are useful to the firm's users.
- Disseminating the knowledge to all employees in the firm who require it

- Encouraging the firm's employees to share their best practices
- Identifying the kind of knowledge that is required to achieve the firm's business goals

Figure 2.2

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PROCESS



The Competence Centre for Knowledge Management at Fraunhofer IPK, Berlin designed a core process that integrates organisational, motivational and technical aspects of the firm. According to Heisig (1998) quoted by Mertins et al (2001:3) the core processes of knowledge management are as follows:

a) **Creation of new knowledge** through the:

- i. acquisition of external knowledge for example through mergers, recruiting new personnel, acquisition of patents and use of consultants.
- ii. Establishment of integrated project teams that also include clients
- iii. Application of "lessons learned" as well as "methods to elicit tacit knowledge"

According to Oxbrow (1998:9) "*knowledge is created through accessing, assimilating, sharing and using information*". He continues to state that rapid and modern communication as well as information technology has greatly enhanced the creation of new knowledge.

b) **Storage of knowledge** in manuals, databases, case studies, reports. This is explicit knowledge. There is also the storage of knowledge in the memories of the company's employees who leave at the end of each day.

c) **Distribution of knowledge** to the right people at the right time is a key aspect of the knowledge process. Distribution is facilitated by various tools and methods which may include information technology applications like the internet and company intranet. A common language, training on the job and mentoring are key aspects of distribution of knowledge.

d) **Application of knowledge** is "the most essential task of knowledge management" (Mertins et al, 2001:4). Knowledge management can only be applied successfully by overcoming prejudice barriers within the firm.

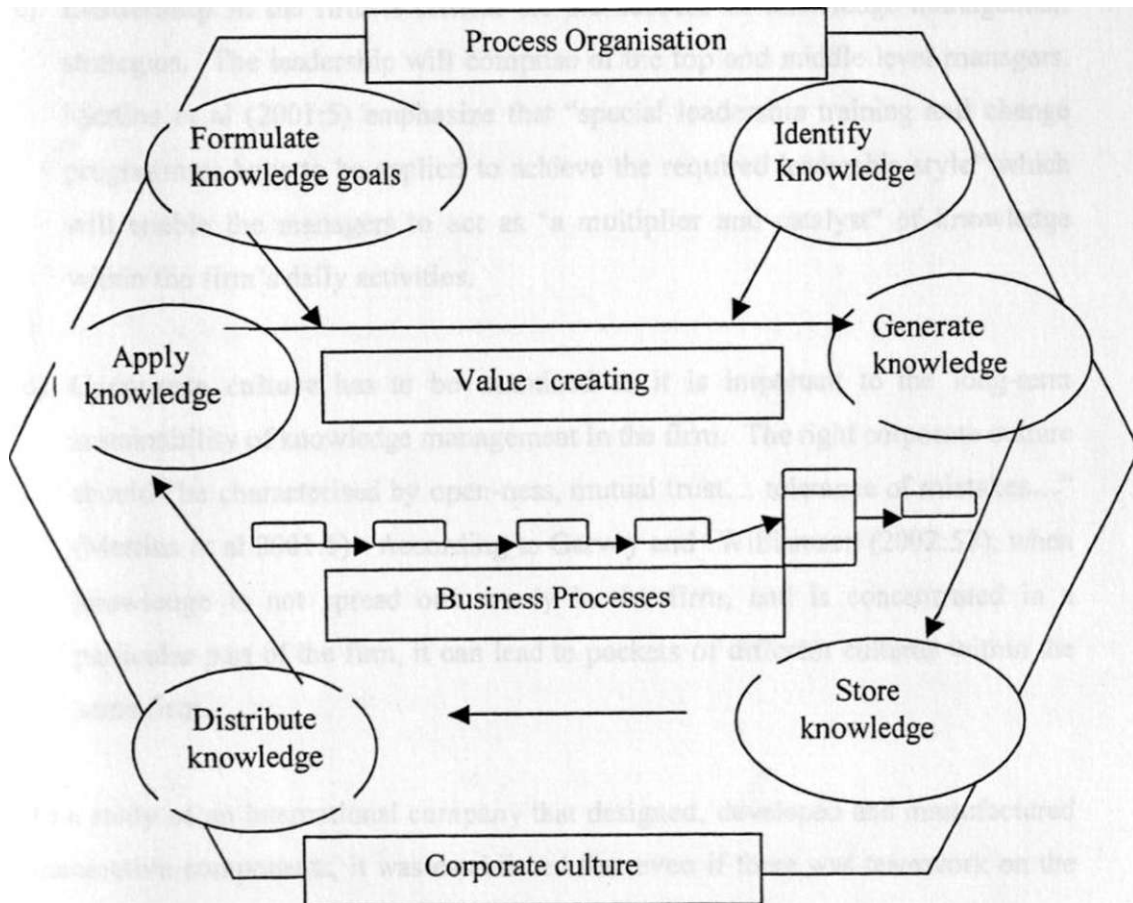
2.3.3 Design fields of Knowledge Management

According to Mertins et al (2001:5), whilst the core process of knowledge management is important, it is equally important to provide a link between knowledge management

and the firm. This is through the firm's Business processes, Information systems, Leadership, Corporate culture, Human resource management, and Controlling.

- a) **Business processes** are the areas where the core process of knowledge management is applied. In a property management, the business processes are the functions carried out, for instance rent-collection, record keeping, marketing, lease preparation. According to Mertins et al (2001:5) "*existing knowledge has to be applied and new knowledge... generated to fulfill the needs of internal and external customers.*"

Figure 2.3 CORE PROCESS AND DESIGN FIELDS OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT



Source: Mertins Kai, Heisig Peter, Vorbeck Jens (editors).(2001).

- b) According to Mertins et al (2001:5) "**information technology** is currently the main driving factor in knowledge management". This has been due to the technological innovations in data storage and transfer through the internet and intranet. Technology has enabled the storage of massive amounts of data (data warehouse) as well as its analysis (data mining). According to Quinne et al (1996:338), intensive training and work schedules were the key methods to create leverage against competitors. Today new technology and management approaches that incorporate "*new software tools, incentive systems and organisation designs...*" are being used for leverage. All these are tailored to suit the firm's needs.
- c) **Leadership** in the firm is critical for the success of knowledge management strategies. The leadership will comprise of the top and middle level managers. Mertins et al (2001:5) emphasize that "special leadership training and change programmes have to be applied to achieve the required leadership style" which will enable the managers to act as "a multiplier and catalyst" of knowledge within the firm's daily activities.
- d) **Corporate culture** has to be examined as it is important to the long-term sustainability of knowledge management in the firm. The right corporate culture should "be characterised by open-ness, mutual trust... tolerance of mistakes..." (Mertins et al 2001:5). According to Garvey and Williamson (2002:57), when knowledge is not spread out evenly in the firm, and is concentrated in a particular part of the firm, it can lead to pockets of different cultures within the same firm.

In a study of an international company that designed, developed and manufactured automotive components, it was established that even if there was teamwork on the surface, it was strained between welders and machine operators. Since both groups had different skills, they tended to view each other as separate groups in the same company.

- e) **Human resource management** is crucial to facilitate the development of the relevant knowledge management skills like:
 - a. developing the ability to apply research and retrieval methods
 - b. formulating and presenting the relevant knowledge and information

Human resources management is also responsible for motivating employees to document and share their knowledge with the rest of the firm. For instance, according to Mertins et al (2001:5), "career plans have to be re-designed incorporating aspects of knowledge acquisition of employees. Performance evaluation schemes have to be expanded towards the employees' contribution to knowledge generation, sharing and transfer". According to Quinne et al (1996:338) *"Professional know-how is developed most rapidly through repeated exposure to the complexity of real problems...the learning curve depends heavily on interactions with customers"*. Professionals reach their peak knowledge through on-the-job training, mentoring and peer pressure.

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- f) All management strategies are required to demonstrate their effectiveness. This can be achieved through **controlling** strategies or indicators.

The Fraunhofer IPK Competence Center of Knowledge Management carried out a survey on the German Top 1000 and European Top 200 companies using a questionnaire (Appendix I) sent out to the chief executive officers. The questionnaire was comprehensive and was based on the conceptual model of Core Process and Design Fields of Knowledge management.

The questionnaire requested information on the company "as a whole and then focuses on a selected business process". According to Mertins et al (2001:6) this method of survey enables the selected business process to be the "... candidate of the participating company for the selection of best practices".

The survey questionnaires were structured into 3 sections:

- general understanding and the status of knowledge management activities in the whole organisation
- knowledge management activities in the business process the company considers their best practice
- demographic data of the company

The survey identified that knowledge management offers "great potential for savings and improvements" (Mertins et al, 2001:7). 70% of the survey companies had noticed great improvements through the use of knowledge management. The improvements are as follows:

- approximately 50% saved time, money or improved productivity
- 20% of the companies improved their processes, increased the level of customer satisfaction or facilitated company decisions and predictions.

The survey identified differences between the responses from service industries and manufacturing industries. For instance 28% of the service companies indicated customer satisfaction as compared to 16% of the industrial companies.

Table No. 2.2

DIFFERENCES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT
IN THE SERVICE AND MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES

	Service	Manufacturing
1.Customer satisfaction	28%	16%
2.Improved quality	23%	15%
3.Clarity or Transparency of structure and processes	26%	14%

Source: *Mertins et al (2001)*

These companies were selected because they could afford the investment and effort required to introduce and implement new management methods.

2.3.4 Benefits of Knowledge Management

Knowledge management is practiced by firms with the main aim of increasing their competitive edge and profitability in business. These firms believe that Knowledge Management will help them increase efficiency, produce better products and handle their customers better. According to Elkin (2000:39) *'knowledge management has become one of the most discussed management trends of the 1990s...and...is seen to have the potential of making those organisation more effective, more creative and more competitive'*.

Various factors have necessitated the need to manage knowledge:

- a) Globally, organisations are considering knowledge more of an asset than their fixed assets. In fact investors are now valuing companies based on what they know. Loshin (2001:8) states that knowledge management's goal *"is the determination and the harnessing of the value of the information resources..."* within the business organisation.
- b) The trend for leaner companies has resulted in employee[^] leaving with crucial knowledge. Knowledge management enables the retention of an employee's knowledge and ensures it remains an infrastructure asset rather than a human centred asset. However, it is important to note that Knowledge management is not just the collection of all the knowledge of the organisation's employees. It is the analysis and gathering of insights from the employees, databases, and business partners (Honeycutt, 2000:xviii).
- c) Information is now being transferred at lightning speed through mobile phones, the internet, video conferencing and thus economies are changing from *"labour-oriented production-valued system to intellectual and skill-valued systems"* (Honeycutt, 2000:xvii)

- d) Technology is advancing at extraordinary speeds and the amount of data, information and knowledge stored and generated by technology exceeds the ability of employees to absorb and analyse (Honeycutt, 2000:xvii)
- e) Businesses need to respond fast in the rapidly changing business environment. Knowledge management is the most competitive method to remain in business today. Although Mwiha (2005:37) recognizes that there is still "*...much work (remaining) to be done to directly and systematically examine the link between...knowledge and performance in the business organisation.* "

2.4 Implementation of Knowledge Management in the Property Management firm

Companies implement knowledge management using different processes, which is determined by the company's knowledge assets and challenges. According to Wiig (1999) Companies that already practice knowledge management have implemented it in a manner that is "*... tailored to their needs, environments and perspectives*". However key issues that should be considered, when implementing knowledge management in the property management firm, include the following:

- identifying knowledge assets in the company
- identifying and overcoming cultural barriers to knowledge management
- aligning knowledge management with the existing business partners
- applying technology to the identified problems and ensure employees can use it.

International companies like Bucknow Laboratories, Dow Chemical, Hewlett Packard, Monsanto, FedEx have embraced knowledge management to "*... harness the intellectual capital*". A company like Caterpillar is using knowledge management strategies to acquire the knowledge of one third of their employees who are expected to retire by 2004. (Liebowitz, 1999: iii) This is an attempt to ensure that even as they retire, the company does not lose valuable knowledge since it is believed that "...70 -

80% of what's learned is through informal means versus formal methods like reading books, brochures, documents etc".

Since knowledge management is a new subject area, there is the tendency to have a multitude of conceptual frameworks. Hoog et al (1999:10-1) have identified three (3) approaches to the knowledge management concept. Hoog et al (2000) advocate for the combination of all three approaches to provide a methodology for knowledge management.

a) Top-Down Approach

The Top-Down approach which is the development of general theoretical frameworks with varying complexity. Ahmed et al (2002:20), have named this approach as Reactive knowledge management. It tends to be efficiency and technically driven. This approach also tends to be reactive to external forces. In addition it has little support from the rest of the firm and is concentrated within the department or group that is working on it. When it succeeds, it can be extended to the rest of the organisation where it gets wider recognition. Since it is applicable in the wider organization, it then requires a more formal management structure.

b) Bottom-Up Approach

The Bottom-Up Approach is based on case studies in specific business environments. This approach is adopted by a company that encourages employees to be innovative and creative in their approach to their work. Ahmed et al (2002) call this approach the organic strategy. It is people driven and places a lot of emphasis on "*communities of practice and support systems like rewards and incentives to induce sharing*". It is also backed by information technology (IT). Its main benefits are recognized as efficiency and effectiveness.

According to Quinne et al (1996:338), "*properly stimulated, knowledge and intellect grow exponentially when shared*". Therefore "*companies that learn from customers, suppliers and specialists..*" in various areas are likely to reap great benefits.

Andersen Worldwide realized that even after setting up hardware, professional training and travel to encourage staff to network, they achieved poor results. They identified that for their electronic system to work - linking 82,000 people in 360 offices in 76 countries - they needed incentives and a culture change. They started considering participation in ANET as part of promotions and compensation reviews.

c) Tool-centred Approach

The Tool-centred approach is also known as Mechanistic knowledge management (Ahmed 2002:21). This approach has the same characteristics as the organic approach but differs on the IT aspect. IT plays a more prominent role in mechanistic knowledge management through processes and systems that have been laid down by top management. The Tool-centred approach places emphasis on the use of particular tools like computer applications. The commonly used application in knowledge management is Lotus Notes.

According to Wiig (1999) use of tools assist to capture, handle and locate knowledge. In time, this strategy becomes integrated with the firm's culture, and structures become more open rather than formal and IT-driven. This leads to a higher level of knowledge creation and competitive advantage.

Rao (2003:14) is adamant that information and communication technologies play an important part in successful Knowledge Management practices. These technologies are connected to form Local Area Networks (LAN), audio and video conferencing, dial-ups, broadbands, wireless fora.

Some of the pioneers of digital KM practices are Buckman Labs who connected their knowledge workers to CompuServe in the early 1990s. There is also the KM system called K-Netix which can be found on the internet as a platform.

Today there is also the increased use of mobile technology to bring knowledge to the seeker. In Kenya, this can be seen when you dial certain digits to mobile phone providers, and information is provided on destinations, on-time football scores, job vacancies, Bible verses, outstanding electricity bills etc.

According to Rao (2003:16), Carlton Hotel managers use iPaq handheld computers that provide current information on the status of hotel rooms and their yield management. Wireless technology helps to connect office/management staff to those in the field. This enables the collection of timely data that can be used for more efficient decision-making.

2.4.1 Successful Implementation of Knowledge Management in Property Management Firms

In order to successfully implement knowledge management in a property management firm, there are 8 aspects that should exist. Firstly, is that the top management should incorporate knowledge management in its broad vision for the firm. This ensures that the key decision-makers are supportive of a knowledge-based firm.

Secondly, the firm should have a "targeted knowledge management focus" which enables the firm to establish a knowledge management culture based on the nature, strengths and weaknesses of the firm's knowledge assets.

Thirdly, a specific professional team should be in the firm to deal with knowledge management. A knowledge management department or team would comprise of highly competent staff who would have a good understanding of 'knowledge' rather than 'information'. They would understand their role as that of "...*eliciting, acquiring, transferring, and organising knowledge...*" (Wiig, 1999). Liebowitz (1999) also recommends that a Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO) be appointed to "*keep the knowledge management strategies and implementations alive...* ".

Fourthly, it's important for the firm to assess the impact and benefit of their knowledge management efforts. These are indirect and happen gradually over time and even the *"the effectiveness and impacts of knowledge management is not simple"* (Wiig, 1999). This is because knowledge management is introduced in most firms as part of a larger restructuring programme. This means that knowledge management efforts or impacts will blend with other initiatives thus making it difficult to measure.

Wiig (1999) recommends some approaches on measuring the impact of knowledge management practices. These include the

- conventional cost-benefit analysis
- economic value added (EVA) assessments
- quantitative informational measures
- enterprise monitoring system with a knowledge focus
- regular knowledge landscape mapping for instance annually
- special studies
- anecdotal feedback based on observation, identification and controllability (Austin, 1996)

Fifthly, firms should have incentives in place to encourage their employees to use the knowledge management systems. These incentives would also assist in the building up of knowledge at both personal and company level.

Sixthly, it's important to ensure that all staff members are familiar with the knowledge management system in the firm. This should be in addition to emphasising the benefits of using the system in their work. Wiig (1999) states that the creation of integrated knowledge transfer programmes within the firm is possible through ..."coordinating training programs, creating expert networks, or communicating expert knowledge such as concept hierarchies and mental strategies.."

Seventhly, a successful knowledge management culture in the firm will be possible when the employees are empowered and motivated to act intelligently. There should be

an environment allowing employees to be creative and innovative. Such an environment also encourages them to share their knowledge and to feel free to request assistance in difficult situations.

Lastly, a firm with a knowledge management vision and strategy should incorporate knowledge management in all aspects of the firm. This will range from the customer service division to the research and development department as well as field operations. Further it will be important for the firm to keep adding to the existing infrastructure, although this is only possible after monitoring the impact and benefits of the existing knowledge management system.

2.4.2 Causes of Failure in Knowledge Management Implementation

There are studies that indicate that some firms that have implemented KM have not realized the benefits. This is mainly due to the various gaps left in their implementation processes. These gaps include the :

- Technology Gap
- Implementation Gap
- Transfer Gap
- Integration Gap

a) Technology gap

The purchase and setting up of fancy technology, websites, intranets and internets and latest software does not guarantee the success of a KM programme (Ahmed et al, 2002:113). It is important to identify the needs of the users - what problems they will be trying to solve, what kind of information the user will be searching for, as well as what type of information will need to be documented.

To close this Technology Gap, various methods can be adopted. Including the holding of regular for a to share knowledge; use of the users' terms when storing knowledge in the databases; encouraging the use of the technology through adequate training and provision of motivating rewards.

b) Implementation Gap

This gap arises in differences between management policy and its implementation by staff vis-a-vis the firm's knowledge and its operation.

c) Transfer Gap

This gap arises when the user of the KM programme does not know what to look for. The user might not even be aware the knowledge exists. Ignorance by either the source or the recipient was found to be the main barrier to knowledge transfer.

d) Integration Gap

This gap arises when the KM programme is not blended or integrated into the firm's operations. The programme has to fit into the strategic vision of the firm. This effort *"...demands continual effort by managers to generate and exploit the knowledge...in an ever-changing world"* (Ahmed et al 2002:126)

2.5 Property Management within the Core Process of Knowledge Management

Property management encompasses all the functions of management, and applies them to property. Property management is also referred to as estate management. According to Syagga and Aligula (1999:8) *"...property management is the direction and supervision of an interest in landed property with the aim of securing optimum returns"*. They quote Stapleton (1986) by stating that *"..returns need not always be financial, but may ...be... social benefits, status, prestige, political power, or some other goal... "*.

As mentioned earlier in this study, business processes are the areas where the core process of knowledge management is applied. The business processes in a property management firm, are the functions carried out, for instance rent-collection, record keeping, marketing, lease preparation.

2-5.1 Functions of Property Management

The primary function of property management is to ensure the property is put to the best use with regard to its physical character, economic condition, legal status and environmental features.

The various activities covered by property management are:

- securing finance for property development
- site identification for new development
- acquisition of plot for new development
- selling of property before or after development
- leasing or letting of property
- administration/management of the property
- collection and accounting of rental payments
- collection and apportionment of service charges
- collection of land rent and local council rates
- maintenance and improvement of property
- provision of insurance cover.

2.5.2 Functions of the Property Manager

The property manager plans, organizes, controls and monitors the maintenance and care of the property and its surroundings in order to:

- preserve the structures in good working order.
- preserve the aesthetic beauty of the environment
- preserve the amenities as required by law
- develop a sound relationship between the landlord and tenants so that the property may give value to both parties.

In order to carry out successful property management practices, the property manager must recognise the diverse nature of property investment. These qualities include:

- low liquidity level
- specific locations or unique locations
- unlimited resources required in carrying out property development
- imperfect market - demand and supply will never be in equilibrium thus prices will always be distorted.
- Varied types of real estate market

Syagga and Aligula (1999:8) have categorised the management of property into 2 phases:

- management prior to the occupancy
- management after occupancy

2.5.3 Management prior to the occupancy

Property managers are crucial in the initial stages of property development. Their input can be a major factor in the reduction of costs in the long-term maintenance of the building; effects of tenants' use; efficient use of the building, reduction of complaints on discomfort for tenants.

a) Designer Assistance

Managers can contribute to the design of a property in numerous ways. Due to their experience in managing property they can:

- Provide insight on the performance of a building in use, for instance recommending finishes that are low maintenance over the long term;
- Locate the lifts, exits and entries in order to control the pedestrian flow and security within the building;
- Locate the water sources for the cleaning of the building or the irrigation of the gardens (Syagga and Aligula, 1999:8)
- Identify the best way to design the layout of the offices or shops;
- Recommend the type of finishes to use on the building, for example durable non-painted material for the exterior of the building to reduce long-term maintenance costs.

b) Letting

Letting is a key activity of the Property management firm. Letting has great impact on the returns of property through rent collection and vacancy levels at any one time.

Letting affects all the other property management functions and thus should be carefully planned. According to Chomba (1990:56) there are three main aspects to letting, which include:

- Advertising
- Selection of tenants
- Letters of offer

Other aspects to letting include the following:

- Leasing/Rental agreement
- Hand-over process
- Pre-occupancy education

c) Marketing/Promotion

Marketing and leasing space is the property manager's forte. He needs to prepare his marketing and advertising campaign to ensure that the building receives maximum promotional exposure to facilitate the speedy sale or leasing of the shops and offices. Promotion should be aimed at the target market which should be identified through research by the property management firm (Cadman and Topping, 1995:262).

d) Tenant Selection

Selection of tenants ensures the property is occupied by tenants with the ability to pay and use it well. It's not always an easy task, as there are tenants whose credibility cannot be determined until you deal with them. A prudent manager should try to gather as much personal and relevant information from tenants.

All properties have been developed with a particular type of resident in the mind. Some are developed for singles whilst others for families. The property manager plays both an active and passive role in the selection of tenants (Epley and Rabianski 1981:377).

The property manager's role is to identify the characteristics of suitable tenants for the property and then advertise the property to the targeted prospects. This can only be done successfully by formulating policy for tenant selection. According to Epley and Rabianski the following can form the criteria to select tenants:

- Occupancy period whereby tenants require medium or long term leases are more preferable;
- House keeping ability - tenants who can keep a house in a good state of repair;
- Compatibility - tenants who do not antagonize other tenants in the building;
- Credit Rating - ability to pay rent in the most important criteria in Order to meet the owner's investment objectives of profit maximization.

According to Banning (1992:48) some of the criteria used for tenant's selection can include:

- Income standards whereby income should be sufficient to pay the registered rent;
- Credit rating can be obtained from the rates for prove that the tenant will not default by giving a bad cheque;
- Character reference can be obtained from past landlords or banks;
- Those employed in stable and reputable companies are considered better tenants;
- Previous rental history - frequent changes of tenancy can indicate some problems, for example rent defaulters or unsuitable tenants who have a tendency of antagonizing other tenants.

The following additional criteria may also prove valuable in the selection of tenants:

- need to get the tenants is physical, postal and telephone contacts. When someone is looking for premises, but once they move in they begin to withhold the information;
- Employers contact;

- Bank references - personal enquires regard applicants financial position. However it should be noted that a tenant with good financial position is not necessarily a good rent payer. When companies and other organizations are concerned, in addition to having their bank references the manager should establish whether the company is legally allowed to make a contract. In addition, the business should not be detrimental to the well being of the property or a nuisance to other users.

e) **Tenant Allocation**

Once the tenants have been selected they will receive a letter of offer that stipulates the lease terms and conditions. These terms and conditions will form the basis of the final lease document. The potential tenant is expected to sign the letter of offer as a sign of commitment. The tenant also makes the payment that has been specified in the letter of offer.

A letter of offer will include the following details:

- The owner and his contact address
- Name of the tenant
- Name of the premises being let
- Land registration number of the premises
- Measurements or size of the premises being let
- Length of lease period with the commencement date
- Rent payable and when
- Service charge payable and what is included under the payment
- What the premises will be used for
- A clause on sub-letting - whether it is allowed or not
- Guidelines on allowed partitioning, fixtures and fittings
- Guidelines on repairs and maintenance and whose responsibility falls where
- Who pays which insurance payments
- Who pays the ground rents, land rates
- Payments and installation of utilities - telephone, water, electricity
- Bearer of the legal costs

Once letter of offer is formally accepted, the property manager should prepare the final leases or tenancy agreements through the Landlord's lawyers. A letter of offer, in law, does not constitute a contract in itself, but it forms the basis of one and is legally binding. Therefore its contents should be clear and well thought out, as trying to amend it or alter it, is formally accepted as tantamount to a breach of contract. A letter of offer should only be signed by a registered estate agent.

f) Pre-occupancy education

This is the education of the tenants on the rules and regulations governing their use of the premises as well as their interaction with the management. After the signing of the letters of offer, lease documents and in the handing-over, preoccupation education should be incorporated.

Some of the rules and regulations are already outlined in the lease document. The tenant is required to understand his responsibilities as per the lease document. The property manager is expected to clarify any issues the tenant does not understand. The manager will also educate the tenant on the use of the property's equipment, for example any lifts, fire equipment, security arrangements located in the building. Tenants should also be shown the fire fighting equipment, washrooms, heaters.

g) The Lease Document

The property manager liaises with the lawyers regarding the preparation of the lease document. Since the lease document is not identical for all the tenants, the property manager is expected to furnish the lawyers with the varying details. The preparation of the leases is based on the letter of offer.

The lease document specifies the terms and conditions between the Landlord and the tenant. It contains all the details in the letter of offer e.g. rent payable and rent review clauses, repairs and maintenance more detailed and at times appears repetitive.

A lease should be developed for each unit or property so that it accommodates the property's peculiarities. This is because every phase of a building's operations is affected by the administration of the lease document. Few decisions can be made without consideration of the existing leases.

h) Handing over the Premises

After the pre-occupancy education, the property manager will conduct handing-over procedures whereby hand-over notes are signed. The hand-over notes will indicate the:

- Actual condition of the premises, for instance mention of any missing window panes, how many keys are on each door;
- Number of lighting fittings, sockets, switches;
- The existing decor for instance the colour of paint on the walls, furniture, floor

According to Banning (1992:73), the handing over of the premises can include the following procedures:

- a) Pre-move inspections to ensure that all repairs or replacements have been carried out.
- b) Move in inspection and checklist whereby the pm and the tenant walk through the premises with a checklist that should be signed by both parties and a copy retained by each.
- c) Move - in kit which might comprise of:
- d) a brochure with a map of the surrounding area, local shopping, churches, schools and local shopping:
 - a list of local hospitals, doctors, and dentists.
 - forms for installation of utilities for instance a new electricity and/or water account
 - copies of the signed tenancy agreement if it was not given earlier
 - operating instructions for appliances and equipment in the case of finished premises.

- e) Keys: Its important to ensure the tenant gets all the copies available of the keys to ensure they feel secure. It possible locks on the premises should be changed to ensure there is no security breach by previous tenants.

2.5.4 Post-occupancy Management

After the premises are occupied by the tenants, the management will be concerned with:

a) **Rent collection**

This is the collection of payment by the landlord or his agent from the tenant for the premises they occupy. According to the agreed terms in the lease document, rent payments can be made monthly, quarterly or annually. Rent will be inclusive of water, electricity, and telephone or exclusive of these utilities. The property manager also instructs the tenant on the method of rent payment. For instance the manager can request his tenants to pay rent in the following ways:

- Delivering it to the management office in cash or cheque
- Giving a representative of the management who will move from door to door
- Depositing the rent in the owner's bank account through banker's orders, cash or credit transfers. When making the bank transfers, the tenants will have to provide evidence to the management indicating he has paid his rent before he can get a receipt.

b) **Lease administration**

The lease is a legal document that confers the tenant the right to use the leased premises for a specific period of time and for an agreed amount of rent. Syagga and Aligula (1999:14) have classified leases into building leases, occupational leases and subleases.

A property manager has the responsibility of administering the lease on behalf of the owner. He ensures the tenant and the landlord maintain their respective responsibilities as agreed in the lease.

c) Maintenance and repair

The property manager ensures the building is maintained in good and working condition. According to the lease the tenant is responsible for the interior of the building or the space which he has leased. The landlord is responsible for the maintenance of the building structure.

A property manager is expected to maintain records for the repair and maintenance of a building. This enables budgeting for short-term and long-term types of maintenance which is crucial to prevent building failure.

d) Security and fire protection

Security is an important function of property management since tenants are encouraged to lease space when they know their property will be safe. In addition customers or shoppers in a building will be reassured to know that they can shop or conduct their business in a secure environment.

Security also includes protection of the building from fire. This can be in the form of precautionary measures like providing fire equipment. Fire equipment can be extinguishers, alarms, hose reels and smoke detectors

e) Insurance

Buildings need to be insured against fire, floods, theft, and third parties. In Kenya buildings are "insured by landlords ...at the rate of 0.3 per cent of the capital cost of the building" (Syagga and Aligula, 1999:20). This ensures that there will be compensation to the landlord should anything happen to the building which is his source of income and has taken up a lot of resources in terms of investment.

f) Record keeping and Accounting

The property manager needs to maintain numerous records. These include maintenance records, employee records, tenant records and landlord records. Accounting records are also important in order to keep track of the rent collected, commissions earned, salaries paid and what the return on investment is on the building.

The property manager might generate accounting statements on a weekly, monthly or quarterly basis depending on what arrangement they have with the landlord. Tenants will usually receive invoices on when their rent is due. In addition they will receive notices or reminders when their rent is in arrears.

Record keeping and accounting is especially important when a property manager is handling numerous tenants and buildings.

In conclusion, this chapter provides in-depth information on Knowledge, the process of Knowledge Management and how to implement KM in the PM firm. The in-depth examination of the functions of property management firm, in this chapter, is extensive as it emphasizes that knowledge is the basis of most of the functions carried out in property management firms. This brings to the fore, the need to examine how implementation of KM can be carried out successfully in a property management firm, to harness and exploit the available knowledge.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Thus the research was based on the 4 steps of the knowledge management process proposed by Mertins et al, (2001:3). These steps provide the Knowledge Management framework as follows:

- creation of new knowledge.
- storage of knowledge.
- distribution of knowledge
- application of knowledge

STEPS	PROCESS	CRITERIA
1.	Create knowledge	Merger, consultant, recruiting patent acquisition, inter-disciplinary team that includes customers, methods that elicit tacit knowledge, application of lessons learned.
2.	Store knowledge	- manual database reports, employee knowledge in the brains
3.	Distribution of knowledge.	- if application e.g internet, intranet, common language, training on the job, mentoring or coaching
4.	Knowledge application	Lack of prejudice barriers

- a) Creation of new knowledge will require an assessment of what new knowledge the firm acquires, what procedures are used to acquire the new knowledge , where is it acquired from and whom, within the firm, has the responsibility to acquire the new knowledge.

- b) An assessment of the storage of knowledge in the property management will establish what kind of knowledge is stored, where it is stored, what methods are used to store the knowledge, whether there is a process applied in the storage of knowledge.

- c) An investigation into the distribution of knowledge will be carried out to establish where the knowledge is distributed, when is it distributed, what methods are used to distribute the knowledge, what tools are used to distribute the knowledge, who distributes the knowledge, whether there is a process for the distribution of knowledge in the firm/department.

- d) Determination of the application of knowledge in the property management firm will be carried out in the property management firms to establish in which business processes the knowledge is applied, whether the company encourages the use of the knowledge, and what methods are used to encourage knowledge application.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Research Design

This was an exploratory design to establish the extent of the practice of knowledge management in Kenyan property management firms. The outcome of the study was to provide an insight on policy, procedures and processes regarding knowledge management in Kenyan property management firms.

The research was based on the 4 steps of the knowledge management process (Mertins et al, 2001:3). These steps provide the Knowledge Management framework against which to measure the existing practices in Kenya property management firms.

3.1 Population and Sample

3.1.1 Population

The target population of the study was all the registered property management firms practicing in Kenya. The Estate Agents Registration Board renewed certificates of registration for 131 estate agents by 2nd April 2002 according to the gazette notice no. 2528 (Appendix II).

However due to financial and time constraints, the study was confined to property management firms practicing in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. The majority of registered property management firms are located in Nairobi. There were 104 registered estate agents located in Nairobi according to gazette notice no. 2528 (Appendix II). This is approximately 80% of the total registered estate agents.

In addition, the decision to confine the study to this accessible population is that the firms are operating in:

- (a) A highly competitive business environment where numerous property firms are performing similar tasks and offering the same services.
- (b) An environment providing a large market for property services, due to an active property development sector.
- (c) Majority of the property firm's principals have the same level of education.
- (d) The property management firms have been registered by the Real Estate Registration Board using the same criteria.
- (e) The property management firms offer services to a broad range of clientele, for instance residential owners, non-profit owners, low-income properties, high-income properties.

3.1.2 Sample Size

The sampling frame was the list of all estate agents registered by the Estate Agency Registration Board (EARB) in gazette notice no. 2528 (Appendix II). The sample size comprised of the 104 registered estate agents practicing in Nairobi. These agents were traced to their firms, and it was found that there was more than one (1) registered agent in the firms. Therefore this study is based on 42 property management firms, where the agents were located, rather than the individual agents.

3.2 Data collection

Data was collected through the survey method using personal interviews and a structured questionnaire (Appendix I). The property management firms were required to complete structured questionnaires that were posted or delivered to the principal of the firm or the head of the property management department.

The respondents were encouraged to complete the questionnaire (Appendix I) within a 2-week period, after which the questionnaire was collected for analysis. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix I.

To ensure a high response rate the questionnaire (Appendix I) was sent with a copy of the government-issued research permit, as well as an introductory letter describing the

nature of study and its significance to the property management sector. After expiry of the 14-day period for returning the questionnaires, the sample was followed up by telephone. For those who had not returned the questionnaires, 39 personal interviews were scheduled.

When the personal interviews were conducted during the follow-up of respondents, it was noted that the first questionnaires had been misplaced in most cases, and new ones had to be issued.

3.3 Data analysis

Data and information collected from the survey questionnaire and personal interviews was coded. The main form of analysis was through descriptive statistics like frequencies and cross-tabulation.

3.4 Variables

The research study had 5 independent variables that were used to measure the level of knowledge management in PM firms. These variables were the type of firm, Age of the Firm, organization structure, and the annual turnover within the PM firm.

The research study was based on the 4 core processes of knowledge management proposed by Mertins et al (2001), as outlined below:

- creation of new knowledge.
- storage of knowledge.
- distribution of knowledge
- application of knowledge.

However the intervening and background variables could not be ignored or their impact in the study could not be under-estimated as they form an integral part of the dependant variables. Examples of intervening variables are the age of the respondent. Examples of background variables include the level of education.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.0 General

The research commenced with distribution, by post, of 104 questionnaires to registered estate agents. Out of these questionnaires only 3 were returned by post, representing approximately 3% of the questionnaires sent out. This, however, could not form the basis of this research.

A second attempt to collect data was carried out through personal interviews with the same questionnaire forming the basis of the research. Out of this process the research got 42 questionnaires completed successfully.

From the analysis, it is evident that the respondents of the questionnaires were qualified based on their professional qualifications to perform the tasks assigned to them. Approximately 70% of the respondents were graduates indicating the highest probability that they understood the questions and responded with understanding. Table 4-1 presents the education level of the respondents.

Table No. 4-1 Education level of respondents

Education level of respondents	frequency	%	Cumulative %
O'level	1	2	2
A'level	6	14	16
Diploma	6	14	30
Graduate	29	70	100
Total	42	100	

Source: *Field survey, 2006*

In addition the study concluded that since 84% of the firms also employ Diploma and graduate level employees in the property management department, any KM policy and procedures would easily be understood within the firms.

The questionnaires were administered to those who were either owners, or in senior management positions that included general managers, heads of departments, and property managers (see Table 4-2).

Table No. 4-2 Positions of Respondents in the Firm

	Position in the firm	frequency	%	Cumulative %
1	Principal	16	39	38
2	Head of department	15	37	76
3	General Manager	1	2	78
4	Property officers/manager	6	15	93
5	Valuer	1	2	95
6	Others	2	5	100
	Total	41	100	

Source: *Field survey, 2006*

From the analysis, 39% of the respondents, in the firms surveyed, were the principals. 37% were Heads of Department and 15% were Property Officers or managers. Thus approximately 90% of the respondents were senior personnel with in-depth knowledge of property management and its related activities, and therefore qualified to respond to the questionnaires. In addition, being in senior management, they would also be involved in the implementation of KM policy and procedures within the firm.

4.1 Age of the firm

The firms sampled were established at various periods. Table 4-3 shows that 46% of the firms came into existence between 1990 and 1999. This means that the firms are between 7 - 16 years old, thus having an established knowledge base. This was evident from the presence of company policy and procedures manuals where all company strategy, policy and procedures are recorded.

Table No. 4-3:

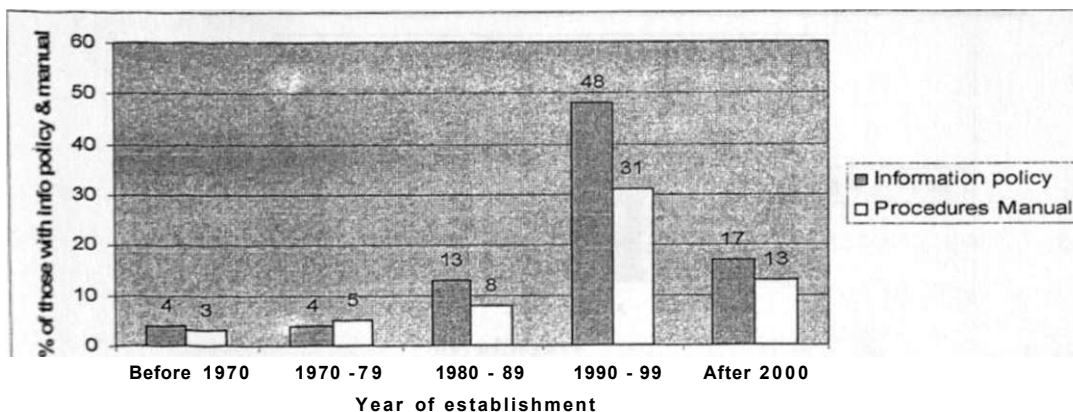
Age of the Firm

Age of the Firm	frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative %
Before 1970	1	2	2
1970- 1979	6	15	17
1980- 1989	8	20	36
1990- 1999	19	46	81
2000 - 2006	7	17	100
Total	41	100	

Source: Field survey, 2006

The study established that 48% of the firms established in the 1990s had an information policy by the time of the study. These firms have been in operation for more than 7 years and have established their businesses. Newer firms established after 2000 tend to be in a state of flux, and have not established firm policies. Policies are still being created as per the internal and external environmental factors affecting the new business. Out of the firms established from 2000 onwards, only 17% had an information policy. Therefore it can be concluded that the existence of an established KM practice requires a firm to be in operation for at least 5 years.

Figure 4-1 Information Policy and Procedures Manual in the Firms

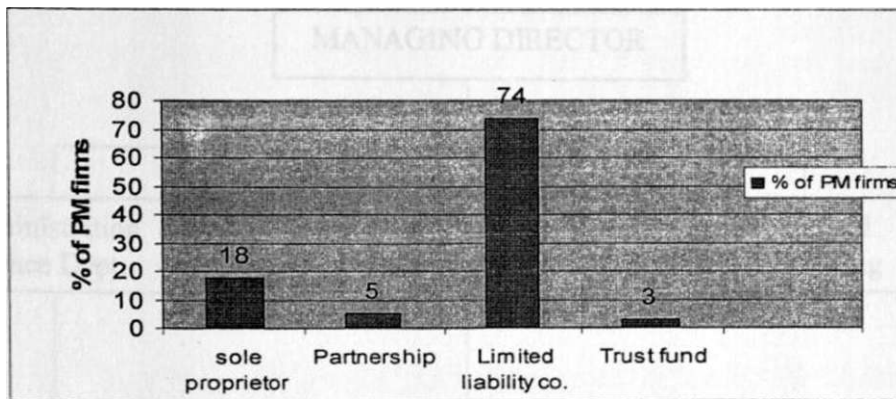


Source: Field survey, 2006

4.2 Type of firms

Whilst 74% of the respondents were limited liability companies, 18% were sole proprietorships and 5% were partnerships. Majority of the firms were limited liability companies.

Figure 4-2 Type of Property Management Firms (%)

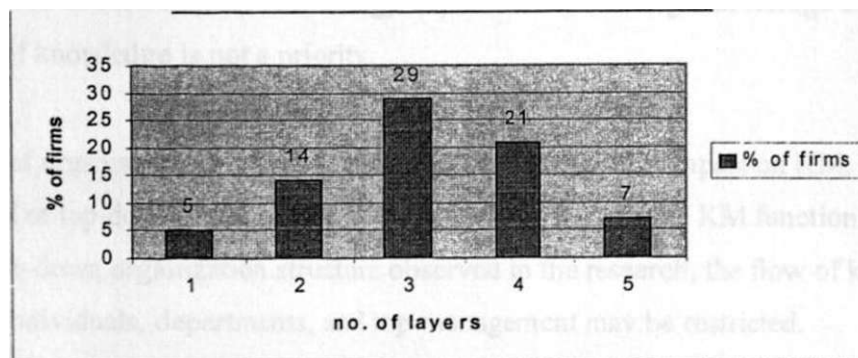


Source: Field survey, 2006

4.3 Organisation structure

Figure 4-3 depicts the number of layers within the organizational structures of Property management firms. Of the firms surveyed, 76% of the companies had an organizational structure. The majority (29%) of respondents had 3 layers to their structure whilst 21% had a 4 layer structure.

Figure 4-3 Property Management Firms with Organisation Structures (%)

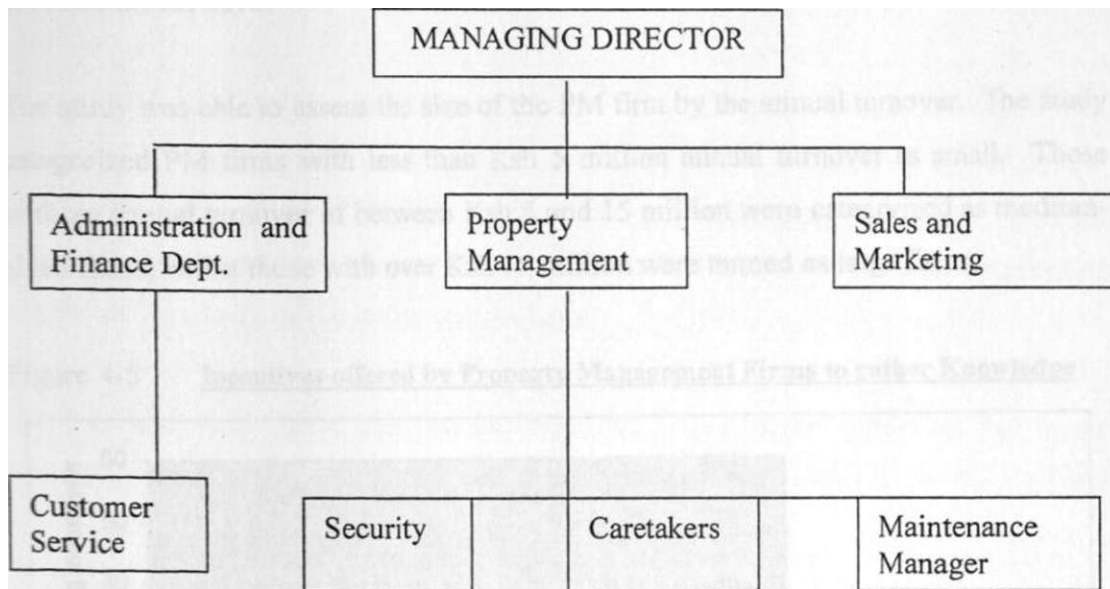


Source: Field survey, 2006

The 3-layer structure includes the managing director/chief executive officer on the top level, followed by various departments like property management,

administrative/accounting staff; at the bottom level were the caretakers and property assistants. This is the traditional hierarchical structure with information or instructions flowing top-down.

Figure 4-4 Traditional Hierarchical Organisation Structure



Source: *Field Survey, 2006*

The majority (29%) of the respondent firms had 3 departments of which the main ones were Property Management, Accounts, and Property Sales. Only 2% of the firms surveyed had an Information Technology department indicating that storage and retrieval of knowledge is not a priority.

The type of organisational structure in a PM firm will have an impact on KM. The traditional or top-down organisation is more likely to neglect the KM function. With the type of top-down organization structure observed in the research, the flow of knowledge between individuals, departments, and top management may be restricted.

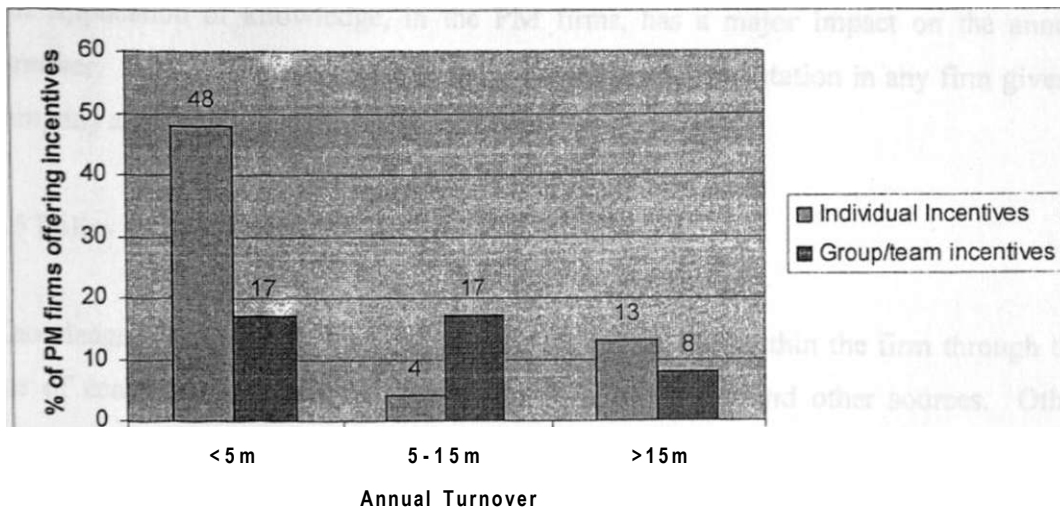
The top-down organization structure may cause top management to feel that they are the fountain of all knowledge. Therefore any knowledge received from the lower ranks

may not be considered valuable for the firm's knowledge bank. In addition, knowledge flow may be restricted by the underdog mentality of junior staff, who just act on orders. Thus, junior staff may feel that any knowledge they possess, is of no use to the company.

4.4 Annual turnover

The study was able to assess the size of the PM firm by the annual turnover. The study categorized PM firms with less than Ksh 5 million annual turnover as small. Those with an annual turnover of between Ksh 5 and 15 million were categorized as medium-sized firms, whilst those with over Ksh 15 million were termed as large firms.

Figure 4-5 Incentives offered by Property Management Firms to gather Knowledge



Source; *Field Survey, 2006*

Figure 4-5 depicts the level of incentives offered to individuals in Property Management firms.

The study found that 48% of the PM firms with an annual turnover of less than Ksh 5 million offered their staff individual incentives to gather knowledge, in comparison with

4% of those earning Ksh 5-15 million; and 13% of those with an annual turnover of more than 15 million. This is a clear indication that the smaller firms were keen to give incentives to individuals, possibly with the aim of getting individuals to give the firm their knowledge for storage. In addition the individual incentives may also be an indication of the desire of the firm to get their staff to collect more knowledge, and avail it to the firm.

The larger firms seemed more interested in promoting the group or team rather than the individual. This is clear from Figure 4-5 which depicts the annual turnover of the PM firms and their desire to reward performance through group incentives. We can conclude that this was to encourage staff to use the knowledge available for maximizing the firm's competitiveness in the marketplace.

The application of knowledge, in the PM firms, has a major impact on the annual turnover. It is widely accepted that successful KM implementation in any firm gives a company a competitive edge.

4.5 Policy on Knowledge Creation

Knowledge creation is the acquisition of new information within the firm through the use of consultants, databases, networking with employees and other sources. Other sources of knowledge include mentoring, seminars, training, internet searches and the library.

Data was collected and analyzed with the knowledge that the success of KM in a firm is highly dependent on the support of top management. For the success of KM practices in the firm, the directors/partners must incorporate KM as policy in the vision and strategy of the firm.

The study revealed that 60% of the total respondents had policy and procedure manuals. Policy and procedure manuals provide secondary knowledge and are also indicative of

the level of knowledge in the firm. In addition the firms' KM policy would also be incorporated in such a manual. This is a good sign as manuals guide company staff on the vision, mission, policy and procedures of the company. In addition, the policy manual gives guidelines on how various tasks are to be carried out, and where the necessary tools are to be found.

Limited liability companies comprised 45% of the total respondent firms that had a policy and procedures manual. Sole proprietors were 10% whilst partnerships and the Trust funds were 2.5% each.

In addition limited liability companies represented 39% of the companies with a specific policy on the kind of knowledge to gather. There were no partnerships with a record of what knowledge to gather. Sole Proprietorships and Trust Funds represented 3% each.

Table 4-4 Methods of collecting Information

METHODS OF INFORMATION COLLECTION	FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES	(%) of responses
(1) Meetings	22	54
(2) External networking	16	39
(3) Internal networking	17	41
(4) Telephone	18	44
(5) Email and internet	15	34
(6) Informal meetings	20	49
(7) Daily reports	1	2
(8) Questionnaires	1	2
(9) Press searches	1	2

Source: Field survey, 2006

According to the study the main methods of knowledge gathering (see Table 4-4) are through formal meetings (54%) whilst 49% used informal meetings. Other preferred methods of information collection included, the telephone (44%), external networking (41%), and internal networking (41%). This is characteristic of efficient and faster

methods of knowledge creation and gathering. Furthermore, these techniques are subtle and provide a forum where knowledge is freely exchanged and shared without restraints. On average only about 2% of the respondents acquired knowledge from formal methods like daily reports, questionnaires and press searches.

For successful knowledge gathering and analysis, a good knowledge worker needs social skills to elicit information from those in possession of relevant knowledge. There is also need for good analytical skills to assess what knowledge is of use to the firm. From the study, property management skills scored highly at 73%, yet property management skills can be acquired when gathering and auditing knowledge from the relevant departments.

Table No. 4-5 Relevant skills for the knowledge worker

Qualifications	Frequency of responses	(%) of responses
1. Social skills	10	24
2. Computer skills	30	73
3. Secretarial skills	36	88
4. Property management skills	30	73
5. Analytical skills	1	2
6. Accounting skills	2	5
7. Valuation	1	2
8. Construction	1	2

Source: Field survey, 2006

The skills that were preferred when recruiting staff were secretarial skills (88%) and computer skills (73%), which probably indicates the respondents' need for the ability to type and file documents efficiently. Social skills scored poorly at 24% whilst analytical skills were at the bottom of the list at 2%.

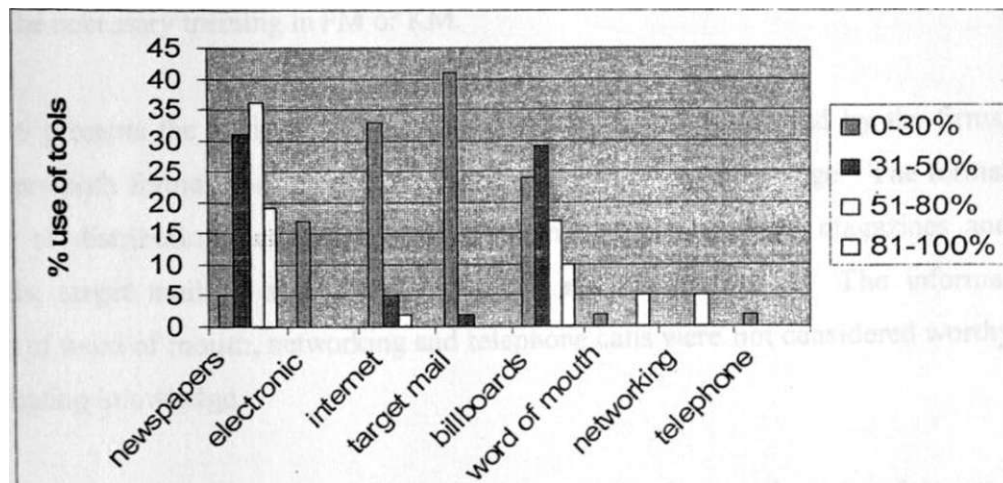
An analysis of the required employment skills indicated that the firms are not aware that good analytical and social skills are important to collect and analysis knowledge. Social skills scored poorly at 24% whilst analytical skills were at the bottom of the list at 2%.

These two types of skills are important for a professional Knowledge Officer. Knowledge officers also require highly developed social skills to elicit information from even the most reticent staff, as well as being analytical enough to decide whether its relevant for the company's knowledge base.

4.6 Methods of communication

This study helped to assess the level of knowledge collection and distribution within the firm by identifying the methods and tools of communication.

Table No. 4-6 Methods of Knowledge Distribution



Tools for knowledge distribution

Source: Field survey, 2006

It was also noticed during the survey that besides the listed methods of promotion in the questionnaire, respondents were willing to list additional methods that included word of mouth, networking and telephone calls. These methods are considered significant in the distribution of knowledge by experienced KM practitioners, but they seem to be insignificant from this research study. It is also possible that the respondents did not recognize the use of the telephone as the same as word of mouth, and decided to single it out.

4.7 Types of Knowledge Distribution Methods

The study revealed that the task of classifying and recording knowledge is left to the secretary, as the secretary has the necessary typing skills and is the main user of the storage equipment (computers, filing cabinets) in the firm. In addition the duties of secretaries in most firms usually include filing all types of information, thus are also responsible for the retrieval and distribution of information - especially in small firms.

Larger firms have a filing clerk whose sole duty is to retrieve and store files in a filing room. Therefore it can be concluded that not much importance is placed on the duty of classifying and recording knowledge since it is delegated to support staff members without the necessary training in PM or KM.

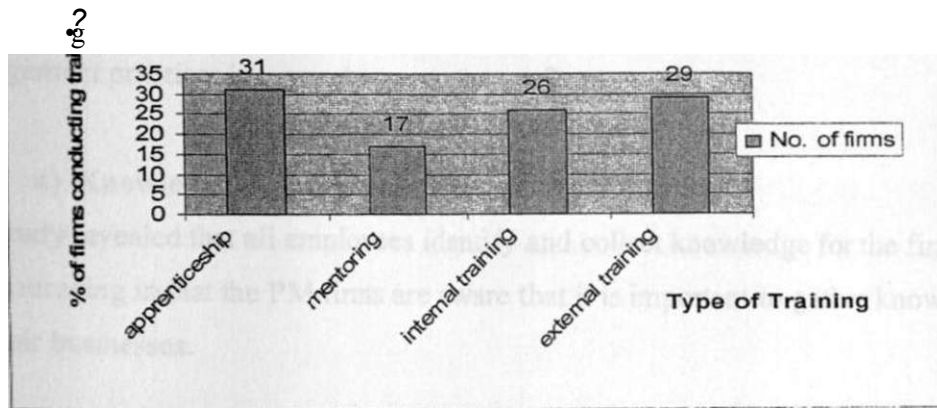
Table 4-6 presents the various methods of knowledge distribution used by the firms. There were both formal and informal methods of distributing knowledge. The formal methods of distributing knowledge were through newspapers and magazines and billboards, target mailing and internet websites and notice boards. The informal methods of word of mouth, networking and telephone calls were not considered worthy of distributing knowledge.

From the study, it was observed that the Information Technology tools such as internet and intranet were not used widely. Yet IT tools are the platform of successful knowledge management practices of collecting, analyzing, categorizing, storing and distributing knowledge.

4.8 Employee Training

Employee training is a major way of communicating within any firm. Training is also a form of knowledge distribution, where the older employees transfer their knowledge to the new and inexperienced employees. This is a fast way of communicating company policies and expectations.

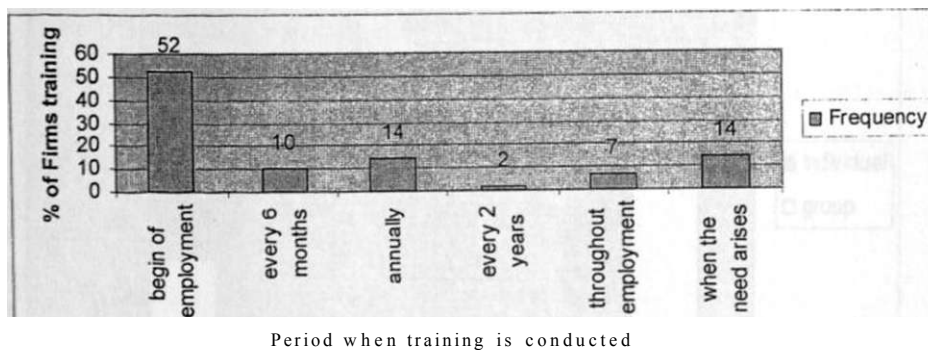
Figure 4-7 Type of Training by Property Management Firms



Source: Field survey, 2006

Figure 4-7 demonstrates the type of training carried out by Property Management firms. The majority of PM firms have training programmes for their employees. The type of training provided included mentoring (17%), apprenticeship (31%), internal (26%) and external training (29%).

Figure 4-8. Frequency of Training in the Property Management Firm



Source: Field survey, 2006

Table 4-8 presents the frequency of training in Property Management firms. The prevalent frequency of training was immediately after recruitment (52%). Training was also provided when the need arose or on demand (14%), and every 6 months (9%). Some of the firms provided training both at the beginning of employment and then annually (14%) or when the need arose (14%).

4.9 Extent of KM Practice in PM Firms

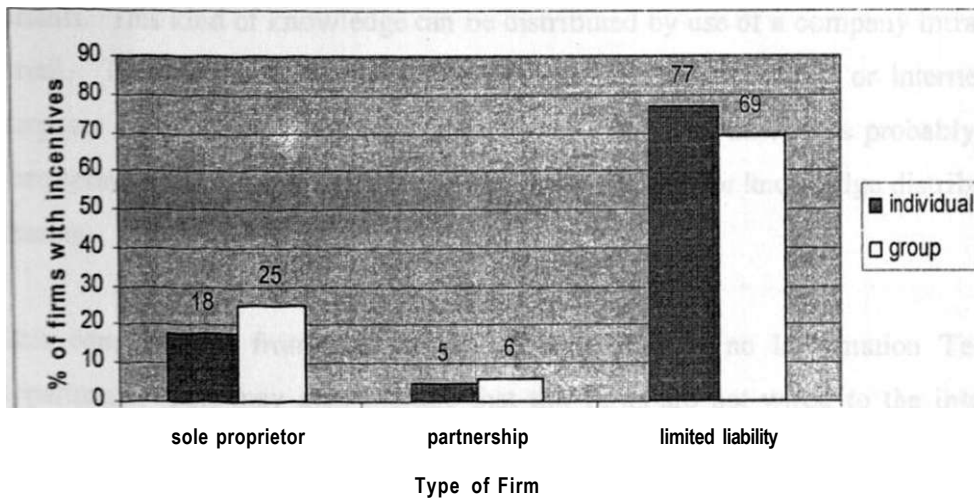
The second objectives of this study was to determine the extent of knowledge management practices in property management firms.

a) Knowledge Creation and Storage

The study revealed that all employees identify and collect knowledge for the firm. This is encouraging in that the PM firms are aware that it is important to gather knowledge for their businesses.

The firms participated in encouraging their staff to create and gather knowledge through company policy as well as group and individual incentives. Table 4-9 indicates that sole proprietors (25%) tended to use individual incentives to get staff members to gather as much knowledge as possible. By gathering and using the knowledge within the firm,

Figure 4-9 Incentives according to Type of Firm



Source: Field survey, 2006

staff are rewarded individually and encouraged to continue with the process. Individual incentives are probably through commissions that are the prevalent form of remuneration in the Kenyan property management and property sales industry. Limited

liability companies tend to encourage the whole team of staff by providing group **incentives (77%)**. This **may** be through awards, bonuses to all staff members.

b) Knowledge Sharing and Distribution

The study indicates that majority of the respondents have access to the stored knowledge, but that knowledge is distributed through the secretary and the property manager. It can be concluded that sharing is limited to what the management determines should be accessible.

Of all the respondents, only one of the respondent firms had an Information Technology Department. It can be concluded that the level of computer technology use in the Kenyan property management industry is low. Information technology is probably used for administrative and support activities. Yet information technology is the backbone of knowledge management processes in any KM savvy firm.

Knowledge distributed within the PM firm is mainly on properties, landlords and tenants. This kind of knowledge can be distributed by use of a company intranet or by email. The study revealed that there is not much use of email or internet for the purposes of knowledge distribution within the firm. The internet is probably used for correspondence to people outside the PM firms, but not for knowledge distribution and sharing.

This conclusion is from the observation that there is no Information Technology department. This may also indicate that the firms are not wired to the internet and intranet, and that they do not host company websites on this communication medium. It may also be concluded that knowledge distribution and sharing is not a key issue in the firm.

c) Knowledge Application

The study indicated that the different types of knowledge gathered in the firms were for short-term use - mainly to carry out the tasks at hand. The knowledge was not gathered for analysis and application to increase business and profits.

The lack of an IT department indicates that there is not much analysis of the information available in the firm. In fact only 1% of the respondents indicated the need for any analytical skills for the staff members recording the firm's information (see Table 4-5). Analytical skills are important in a KM setting. The staff member in charge of KM within the firm, is expected to analyze and decide what knowledge is needed in order to have a competitive edge.

4.10 Constraints of Knowledge Management Practices in Property Management Firms

The third objective of the research study was to identify any constraints on the practice of knowledge management within property management firms.

From the research study, there was no evidence of a dedicated KM department or staff member. KM cannot succeed in a company that has not incorporated it in its vision and strategy policies. This is a constraint when attempting to implement KM practices, since there are no company resources (human, financial, material) allocated. In addition if there is no director, partner or other top-ranking personnel appointed to oversee the implementation of KM in a firm, successful implementation of KM becomes constrained within the PM firm.

The research study indicated that most of the PM firms have top-down organizational structures. A top-down organization structure causes top management to feel they are the fountain of all knowledge. Therefore any knowledge received from the lower ranks will not be considered valuable for the firm's knowledge bank. In addition, knowledge flow will be restricted by an underdog mentality of junior staff, who just act on orders. Thus, junior staff will feel that any knowledge they possess, is of no use to the company.

The fact that social skills scored poorly at 24% (Table 4-5) whilst analytical skills were at the bottom of the list at 2%, when selecting staff, indicates that KM is not a priority in PM firms. These two skills are important for a professional Knowledge Officer, who is expected to decide what knowledge is required to have a competitive edge in the PM industry. In addition if there is no link person (knowledge officer) to network between departments and individuals, the level of KM within the firm is constrained. The smaller the firm, the less likelihood of a specialized Knowledge officer being employed, to ensure that KM practices are carried out in the firm.

The research study indicated that, although majority of the PM firms have some form of company policy to use the available knowledge, each individual is left to seek their own sources of knowledge. This can be internally - from the secretary - or externally. The reliance on the secretary or property manager as the centralized point of knowledge retrieval in the PM firms, indicates that the firm's organizational culture is not too keen on sharing. Staff do not have access to the firm's knowledge on an open platform, for example, through a company intranet or website. There may be efforts within the management ranks to keep most of the company's knowledge secret, in a bid to maintain competitiveness - which is contrary to the main focus of Knowledge Management of availing knowledge for profit.

Lack of company investment in an Information Technology department and a Knowledge Management specialist may also be a constraint to successful KM practices. Furthermore, lack of KM computerized systems in majority of the firms is an indication that knowledge sharing and distribution is constrained. Information technology is the backbone of knowledge management processes in any KM savvy firm. It is important to the functions of distribution, storage and also analysis of any knowledge within the firm.

Evidence of the minimal technological interaction amongst staff, in the property management firms, is a **sign** that they do not really apply themselves to seek knowledge **within the firm**. Technological interaction in a firm is represented by intranet, company websites, and emails amongst staff members.

The data findings and analysis brought out the core business of each firm in property management. In addition the study identified a wealth of knowledge that is important to property management firms, which has also allowed the identification of areas for improvements as well as further study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 General Conclusion

This study revealed that levels of knowledge are high in property management firms. The study also revealed that whilst, effective knowledge management is dependent on the level of skill and practice; these two factors are non-existent or low in property management firms. The study also revealed that whilst there may be established KM procedures and processes within the PM firm, KM practices are either implemented poorly or not implemented at all.

The general conclusion is that there is low awareness of the need to manage the PM firm's knowledge. It was concluded there are systems of gathering knowledge and storing it. Indicators are that respondents identified the methods for gathering and storing the information, as well assigning specific staff to do the tasks.

There is a plethora of data and information gathered and stored by the respondent firms. However there is a distinct lack of analysis of the knowledge gathered, lack of regular monitoring and evaluation as well as lack of focus on critical company knowledge. In addition the skills relevant for a professional Knowledge Officer are not considered of importance when recruiting staff in the PM firms.

It was also observed in Figure 4-1 that firms established before 1970s upto the end of the 1980s were not really keen on their information policy and the policy and procedures manuals. This may be an indication that they are not keeping up with the rapidly changing information and communication trends. It may also be an indication of slow business growth, whereby they maintain the same methods of conducting business since their inception.

It can be inferred that knowledge is gathered for the purpose of what it can do for the company here and now. The emphasis is not on gathering to anticipate or predict future events or trends.

In conclusion, whereas property management firms have the established procedures and processes for knowledge management to be effective, they still do not have successful KM practices within their firms.

5.1 Recommendations

- 5.1.1 Property management firms with established KM procedures and processes require to conduct knowledge audits, analysis, and monitoring and evaluation to ensure that their knowledge management programmes are effective. These analyses will allow them to monitor the progress of their firm's performance.
- 5.1.2 PM firms have a lack of awareness of the importance of implementing KM practices in their businesses. Thus awareness campaigns need to be formulated to stress the importance of KM within PM firms. This KM awareness campaigns can be carried out through the keen review of this research study, other industry newsletters, and seminars on KM practices.
- 5.1.3 PM firms can ensure their KM policies and procedures are implemented incorporating them into their company vision and strategy. In addition, all PM firms should engage KM specialists to formulate systems for the day-to-day implementation of KM in every department.
- 5.1.4 PM firms should incorporate KM training within their staff training programmes. They need to keep reminding staff of the importance of KM to the business, by increasing the regularity of their staff training, staff meetings and motivational functions.

- 5.1.5** To encourage implementation of KM within the PM firms, management can also give awards and other incentives more frequently. Those PM firms without incentive programmes should incorporate reward-giving for KM implementation practices by staff. This would motivate staff participation.
- 5.1.6** PM firms are encouraged to invest in information technology, for instance, websites, internet subscriptions and office networking facilities. In addition there reward schemes can be incorporated to encourage staff to access the knowledge stored in the databases. This will encourage staff to keep abreast of the PM industry developments.
- 5.1.7** Employee skills and duties can be audited to identify what knowledge is available in the current employed staff. The current staff members in a PM firm could have the potential to be knowledge workers within the firm. They could be trained further in the skills of knowledge management processes, instead of recruiting a knowledge specialist from outside the firm.

5.2 The Study Limitations

- 5.2.1** Time constraints: This was especially evident on the part of the respondents who spend a lot of their time in the field. Most of the respondents spend their time outside their offices inspecting premises, sourcing new clients and marketing properties. They did not have much time to spend on the questionnaire.
- 5.2.2** Financial constraints: These constraints restricted the research from covering the whole country, and it was confined to firms practicing in Nairobi.
- 5.2.3** Secrecy: This was a restraining factor on the respondents. It prevented them from answering the complete questionnaire. For others, they were only willing to respond to part of the questionnaire. The secrecy arose from not wanting to divulge company policy and practices as well as company finances. There was

the general mistrust that government agencies and competitors would use the information against them.

5.2.4 Data collection period: The data collection period for the research was initially two weeks, but due to the difficulty of getting the questionnaires back from respondents, the period extended over six months.

5.2.5 Data collection: The first round of questionnaires was sent out by mail to the sample group. This set of questionnaires had a very poor response, in fact only 3 no. questionnaires were received out of a total of 104 sent out. When follow-up by telephone and personal visits was conducted after the first mailing, it was found that:

- Questionnaires were misplaced within the offices and could not be located later.
- Other questionnaires ended up in firms that had ceased to practice property management, and were now doing other business.
- Others had been sent to firms that had closed down business.
- Some questionnaires had been delegated to the wrong people in the firm, and thus were not completed.
- Some were simply discarded as junk mail.

Data collected was the result of personally delivering a second questionnaire to the remainder of the sample group.

5.2.6 Follow-up: Although the questionnaires were sent out by mail with an introductory letter, it was still considered impersonal by the recipients. However, follow-up telephone calls produced results in the form of personal interviews to complete the questionnaire together or to provide reassurance to the respondents that it was a genuine research study. The research permit also helped to provide authenticity to the data collection process in some cases.

GLOSSARY

EARB	Estate Agents Registration Board
ISK	Institution of Surveyors of Kenya
KM	Knowledge Management
PM	Property Management

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Survey Questionnaire

APPENDIX II: List of Registered Estate Agents in the The Kenya Gazette
No.24 page 957-958, 19th April 2002, Republic of Kenya
Nairobi, Kenya. G.O.K 2002.

QUESTIONNAIRE -

GENERAL

L What year was your firm established?

1 What type of firm is it? Please tick the relevant box below.

- a) Sole proprietorship
- b) Partnership How many partners?
- c) Limited Liability company How many directors?
- d) Other (please specify) _____

Briefly describe your organisational structure, and include a brief sketch in the space provided

7V? " ' *

Does your firm have branches in other parts of the country or region?

YES NO

if yes, where are they located? _____

Please list the departments in your business and the number of employees; in each department below

Name of departments	No. of employees in each department			
	0 - 5	5 - 15	15 - 30	Above 30

Please tick your firm's annual turnover over the last 5 years in the table below:

Annual Turnover (Ksh)	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Less than 5 million					
5 - 15 million					
More than 15 million					

8. What is the percentage contribution of the following business processes in your company⁰

Business Processes	Percentage contribution to the business (%)			
	0 - 30	31 - 50	51 - 80	81 - 100
Valuation				
Property Management				
Property letting				
Property Sales				
Other (please specify)				

9. What percentage of the properties listed below make up your management portfolio?

Type of properties	Percentage of properties in the portfolio (%)			
	0 - 30%	31 - 50%	51 - 80%	81 - 100%
Commercial				
Residential				
Industrial				
Other (please specify)				

10. What is the average tenancy period of your tenants? Please tick the relevant box below:

Type of Property	Length of Tenancy (months)			
	1 - 12	12 - 24	24 - 36	36+ months
Commercial				
Residential				
Industrial				
Other (please specify)				

II. Using the different promotion methods below, please indicate the percentage response received by your firm.

Promotion Methods	Percentage responses from the promotion methods (%)			
	0 - 30	31 - 50	51 - 80	81 - 100
Newspaper/ magazines				
Electronic media (TV, radio)				
Internet website				
Targeted mailing				
Billboards/ noticeboards .			i	
Other (please specify)				

KNOWLEDGE CREATION

Knowledge creation is the acquisition of new information within the firm through use of consultants, office records, employees etc.

12. Does your firm have a policy and procedures manual? Yes No

13. If yes, does the policy and piocedures manual incorporate the types of i lformation to be collected?

Yes , • NO •

14. If yes, what are the recommended methods of collecting information within your firm?

- a) Department/company meetings ●
- b) Networking with other companies ●
- c) Networking between departments ●
- d) telephone conversations ●
- e) email communications ●
- f) Informal meetings
- g) Other, please elaborate

15. How does your firm encourage information gathering in the firm?

- a) Company policy
- b) Individual incentives
- c) Departmental/group incentives •
- d) Other, please specify_

16. Tick the types of information gathered in your firm, below. Please tick in the space provide; at each type, and use the vacant boxes to add any other type of information in your firm.

	Market knowledge	Client knowledge	Tenant knowledge	Property knowledge	Employee knowledge	ta iKi
	Prevailing interest rates	Number of properties owned	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contact address	/	Location	/ Education level
	Prevailing.. market values	Type of property services required	Place of employment		Size of property	Age
	Present demand	Future development plans	Residential/ Commercial use		Ownership	Marital status
	Present supply	Institution/individual ownership	Size of family/business		Leasehold or freehold tenure	Future ambitions
1 1	Special sector demands		Budgetary allocation for rent		Available services (water, sewerage etc)	Training required
	Future supply i	i			Rates & rents	1
		i			Design team (consultants)	
					Zoning & planning details	
					Structural specifications	J
	i	J			Maintenance requirements	!
					Property use	N
					Market value	
						J

17. In which departments are the different types of information located in your firm (see given - . example?)

Company Department (name below)	Market knowledge	Client knowledge	Tenant knowledge	Property knowledge	Employee knowledge	Other
Engineering department	/	v'				
	i					

18. Please tick in the table below the percentage of information provided by different sources.

Sources	Percentage of firm's information from the given sources (%)			
	0 - 30	31 - 50	51 - 80	81 - 100
Tenants				
Employees				
Clients				
Media				
Specialist/Consultants				
Other (please specify)				

19. Please tick below the main forms of communication used by your firm:

Mode of communication	Tenants	Clients	Employees	Suppliers	Consultants	Other
Correspondence						
Newsletters						
Meetings/Seminars						
Suggestion boxes						
Questionnaires						
Social events						

20. How often do you use the given methods of communication in your firm? Please, tick the relevant box.

Period	Correspondence	News-letters	Meetings/Seminars	Questionnaires	Social events	Suggestion boxes
Daily						
Weekly						
Even-Fortnight						
Monthly						
Every 3 months						
Other (please specify)						

KNOWLEDGE STORAGE

Knowledge storage is the recording and accumulation of information created/collected within the firm.

21. Where is the firm's information recorded/stored? Please tick the relevant boxes below.

- a) Manual filing system
- b) Computer files/databases
- c) case studies
- d) Intranet/Internet
- e) Minutes of meetings
- f) company reports
- g) Other, please specify.

22. What are the qualifications of the staff member who records your firm's information?

- a) social skills
- b) computer skills
- c) secretarial skills
- d) property management skills
- e) Other

23. Please tick the tasks concerned with storage/ recording of the information in your firm?

- a.) filing company documents
- b) entering data in the computer
- c) interviewing clients/tenants/employees
- d) conducting information searches
- e) training staff members on the use of the firm's information
- f) provide summarised information for each department
- g) help staff members to retrieve and use the firm's information
- h) Other, please specify _____;

'KNOWLEDGE DISTRIBUTION

Knowledge distribution is the transfer of information to the right people t:t the right time.

24. Which of the tools below are used to distribute information in the firm, and how frequently are they used?

Type of Tools	Frequency of use				
	Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	monthly	Other (please specify)
1. Telephone					
2. Internet/Intranet					
3. Email/Internal Memos					
i. Use of formal written requests to knowledge keeper					
i. Company Newsletters					
6. Other (please specify)					

25. Is there a training programme for employees to use the tools? Yes No

26. If yes, what methods are Used for training employees?

- a) apprenticeship
- b) mentoring
- c) internal training courses

32. How are employees encouraged to use the available knowledge?

- a) Company policy
- b) Individual incentives
(cash awards, medals, certificates, etc)
- c) Departmental/group incentives
(cash awards, medals, certificates, etc)
- d) Other, please specify

GENERAL REMARKS

33. Please tick the relevant space provided below:

Activity	Principal	Secretary	Property manager-	All employees	Other - please specify
Who is responsible for identifying and collecting knowledge in your firm?					
Who is responsible for classifying and recording/storing the knowledge in your firm?					
Who has access to the Firm's stored knowledge?					
Who distributes the Firm's knowledge to those who request it?					
Who are the main users of the Firm's knowledge?					

34. Is there a specific department in your firm where knowledge collection has made an impact?

Yes No

35. If yes, which department has received the most impact?

36. What kind of benefits have been observed in that department?

37. Does your firm intend to introduce the knowledge processes in other departments?

Yes No

38. If yes, which particular departments are targeted for knowledge management implementation?

39. What is your position/role in your firm (please tick the relevant box below)?

Principal Head of Department Other (please specify)

40. Please indicate by ticking the relevant box below, your education level:

O'Level A'level Diploma Graduate

41. Are you a member of any of the following professional bodies (please tick the relevant box):

a) Institution of Surveyors of Kenya

b) Architectural Association of Kenya

c) Estate Agents Registration Board

d) Institute of Quantity Surveyors of Kenya

e) Other (please specify) _____.

APPENDIX II – KENYA GAZETTE NOTICE NO. 2528

GAZETTE Nona No. 2528

SCHEDULE—(Conid.) —

THE ESTATE AGENTS ACT

(Cap. 533)

REGISTERED ESTATE AGENTS

Notification

IN ACCORDANCE with section 9 of the Estate Agents Act, it is notified for general information that the following Registered Estate Agents have renewed their certificates of registration as at 2nd April, 2002. Those whose names do not appear in the schedule below should liaise with the Registrar, Estate Agents Registration Board at Ardhi House, room 618 A.

SCHEDULE

*Home**Add res:*

Agili Daniel O.	P.O. Box 66331, Nairobi
Agumbi Tom M.	P.O. Box 2155, Kisumu
Bendali Husein M.	P.O. Box 82801, Nairobi
Bhanj Bhagwant S.	P.O. Box 48906, Nairobi
Bhan D. S.	P.O. Box 85799, Mombasa
Btioyo Peter K.	P.O. Box 52122, Nairobi
Burns Scamus J.	P.O. Box 14347, Nairobi
Butt Khurshid A.	P.O. Box 84138, Mombasa
Diemolgut Joshua K.	P.O. Box 74845, Nairobi
Dicsyna Biiha C.	P.O. Box 67847, Nairobi
Daux Y. C.	P.O. Box 87496, Mombasa
Datoo Zahid H. Y.	P.O. Box 87496, Mombasa
Devgun Sandu S.	P.O. Box 39603, Nairobi
Gachoki Kinyua.	P.O. Box 21211, K.N.H., Nairobi
Gibbs Vivien M.	P.O. Box 15377, Nairobi
Gitari Bmadette M.	P.O. Box 45733, Nairobi
Gitonga Geoffrey M.	P.O. Box 38715, Nairobi
Citonga Velzian G.	P.O. Box 16525, Nairobi
Harber David M.	P.O. Box 48209, Nairobi
Holmes Derek	P.O. Box 30835, Nairobi
Ileri Karingi	P.O. Box 56599, Nairobi
Jiwa Naushad H. M.	P.O. Box 98284, Mombasa
Jiwa Ywuf M. N.	P.O. Box 8391, Mombasa
<agiri Joel N.	P.O. Box 54025, Nairobi
Sakai Edward L. W.	P.O. Box 79487, Nairobi
kmakia Edwin W.	P.O. Box 6840, Nairobi
(anja Norma F.	P.O. Box 48854, Nairobi
fonyari Irene G.	P.O. Box 72199, Nairobi
tinvi Cyrus K.	P.O. Box 341, Thika
uranja Stephen M.	P.O. Box 72308, Nairobi
Kariuki Catherine W.	P.O. Box 17594, Nairobi
<arundu George K.	P.O. Box 38715, Nairobi
<riasek Clement S.	P.O. Box 73744, Nairobi
Wiosla Atur K.	P.O. Box 46995, Nairobi
Oiosla Pradeep K.	P.O. Box 46995, Nairobi
tiarie Joseph M.	P.O. Box 1140-00606, Nairobi
(iarie Pauline W.	P.O. Box 48025, Nairobi
'Jbuchi Daniel M.	P.O. Box 43848, Nairobi
<ibui Michael S.	P.O. Box 50996, Nairobi
(ilonzo Charles M.	P.O. Box 7597, Nairobi
Cragu James	P.O. Box 10169-00100, Nairobi
tin ma Anne W.	P.O. Box 79487, Nairobi
Cthikii Sammy J.	P.O. Box 87496, Mombasa
Sunga Peter M.	P.O. Box 30024, Nairobi
(oech Wilson K.	P.O. Box 868, Thika
-wrcne Michael J.	P.O. Box 15097, Nairobi
-oyd John R M.	P.O. Box 45733, Nairobi
*jusa K. P. K.	P.O. Box 48030, Nairobi
-siman Christian	P.O. Box 63136, Nairobi
"Mugambi Daniel K.	P.O. Box 40707, Nairobi
'ichua David K.	P.O. Box 45733, Nairobi
-guta Joyce W.	P.O. Box 58624, Nairobi
*neki George M.	P.O. Box 84760, Nairobi
'kika David W.	P.O. Box 45733, Nairobi

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Mbindah Christopher	P.O. Box 56188, Nairobi
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Mwachala Hannington M. H.	P.O. Box 621, Mombasa
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Mwangi Maitha	P.O. Box 110169-00100, Nairobi
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Mwaniki Joseph B. K.	P.O. Box 74620, Nairobi
Mwaniki Joseph M.	P.O. Box 432, Kerugoya
Mwinzi Johnstone K.	P.O. Box 455, Athi River
Nderitu Francis	P.O. Box 13088, Nairobi
Ndungu Samuel	P.O. Box 3750, Nakurti
Ndunjngi Eliud N. W.	P.O. Box 1727, Thika
Nganga John K.	P.O. Box 75, Nyeri
Ngotho Paul G.	P.O. Box 40076, Nairobi
Njenga J. R.	P.O. Box 14947, Nairobi
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Njuguna George N. (Dr.)	P.O. Box 26442, Nairobi
Njuguna Kimani H.	P.O. Box 67959, Nairobi
4 Nyabande Gordon O.	P.O. Box 52637, Nairobi
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Nzioki Nicky M.	P.O. Box 30197, Nairobi
Ogola Daniel O.	P.O. Box 53296, Nairobi
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Okwirry Christine J.	P.O. Box 14027, Nairobi
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Wahome Ejidio N.	P.O. Box 57262, Nairobi
Wainaina Daniel M.	P.O. Box 74194, Nairobi
Waithaka Margaret W.	P.O. Box 66264, Nairobi
WaJtaba Grace K. K.	P.O. Box 11787, Nairobi