TECH mahindra

Knowledge as a Strategic Asset in **IT Service Transitions**

Scale at Speed™

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Organizational knowledge is central to every IT transition, encompassing both explicit and tacit knowledge. The way teams manage this knowledge directly influences the outcomes of the transition program. While technical and operational risks are typically addressed in these initiatives, knowledge-related risks are often overlooked.

Technical assets such as infrastructure, applications, and documentation are tangible and can be systematically transferred; however, tacit knowledge and experiential expertise are inherently embedded within individuals and are therefore often ignored or undervalued.

This whitepaper presents a conceptual shift from traditional, transactional knowledge transfer toward a model of co-creation. Based on the premise that knowledge is 'embedded' and practice-based, the proposed approach extends beyond static documentation to create a living, dynamic pool of knowledge. These mechanisms enable the systematic acquisition of contextual and operational understanding, reflecting the lived realities of service delivery.

Drawing on rich references from multiple transition programs conducted at Tech Mahindra, the paper focuses on formalizing intangible operational insights into structured digital knowledge assets. By doing so, transition processes move beyond continuity assurance toward enhancing organizational intelligence, thereby establishing a robust foundation for post-transition automation, adaptive capability, and continuous service improvement.

Knowledge as a Human-Embedded Capability

Human capital is an integral part of enterprise knowledge. The workforce embodies years of contextual insights, nuanced problem-solving experience, and unwritten operational norms.

As the primary carriers of knowledge, employees bridge the gap between documentation and effective execution. Therefore, when experienced subject matter experts (SMEs) exit, the team loses the understanding of complex system configurations and insights that cannot be obtained through reverse engineering or automated analysis.

By taking a human-centric approach to knowledge transfer, the focus shifts to tacit, unwritten knowledge rather than explicit documentation alone. This helps retain operational nuance that is typically lost during transition.

Figure 1: Human-Embedded Operational Knowledge

The Knowledge Management Lifecycle During Transition Programs

The transition of complex IT services is not a single event but a series of interdependent activities through which knowledge moves from incumbent providers to the new provider.

The Knowledge Transfer Framework (KTF), followed by Tech Mahindra, addresses this through four distinct phases:

- **Mobilization:** Captures tribal knowledge through deep-dive workshops/sessions/interviews.
- **Shadowing and Co-Creation:** Converts tacit information into explicit standard operating procedures (SOPs) and system understanding documents (SUDs).
- **Validation:** Ensures the right amount and right type of knowledge is captured for current and future use.
- **Steady - State:** Where AI and feedback loops sustain long-term efficiency.

This approach moves beyond the view that a transition ends with document handover; instead, it asserts that real transformation occurs when intangible knowledge is integrated into the existing knowledge base.

Figure 2: Knowledge-Centric Transition

Deep Dive: Capturing Invisible Knowledge

Effective knowledge management begins with identifying what is not explicitly documented. A successful transition program requires distinguishing among explicit, tacit, and tribal knowledge.

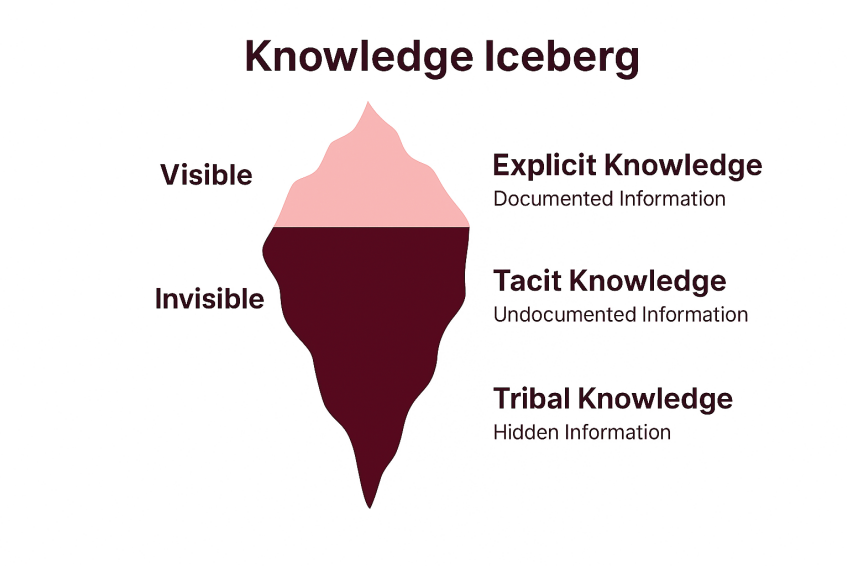

Figure 3: Knowledge Iceberg

Explicit knowledge is represented in manuals, procedures, and code stored in repositories. It represents only the visible tip of the iceberg. Under this layer lies tacit knowledge: the internalized expertise developed through experience, judgment, and repetition. Closely intertwined with it is the tribal knowledge: the unwritten norms, informal workflows, and contextual shortcuts required to operate within organizational environments. If left unaddressed, these invisible knowledge layers are at the greatest risk of loss during transitions.

Capturing this knowledge takes more than traditional workshops or interviews. In practice, we employ think-aloud protocols, where SMEs explain their reasoning as they perform complex tasks, with screen capture used to create a searchable library of video SOPs.

Additionally, we use cognitive mapping to understand how teams make decisions during high-impact incidents. These methods convert individual expertise into durable institutional assets that incoming support teams can rely on.

Transforming Expertise into Digital Assets: The Co-Creation Model

Traditional knowledge transfer (KT) commonly relies on a watch-and-learn approach. It depends on the incumbent's teaching ability, a skill that many technical experts might lack. Tech Mahindra's Co-Creation Model shifts the responsibility of documentation from the outgoing SMEs to the incoming teams. Instead of relying on outdated manuals, the incoming employees actively develop Digital Knowledge Assets in real time under the guidance of experts. This collaborative, hands-on process ensures knowledge is immediately synthesized and validated.

In this setup, SMEs serve as the "source of truth," while the incoming team becomes the "architect" of the knowledge base. This reduces interpretation gaps and allows teams to begin operations using material they developed during the transition.

The process follows a three-step technical workflow, focusing on human expertise as the primary engine for co-creation:

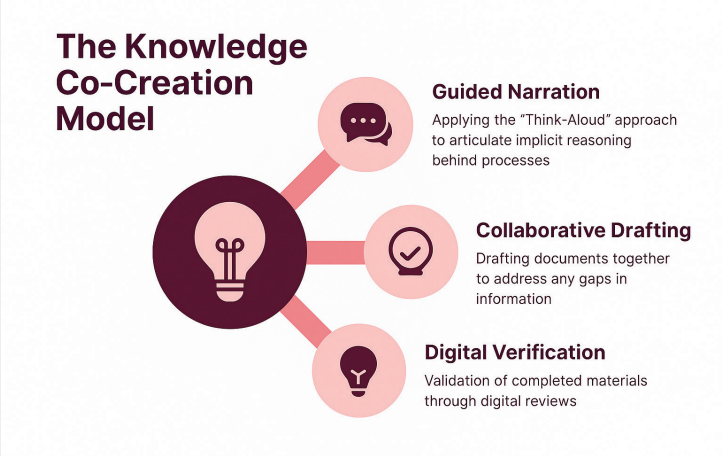

Figure 4: The Knowledge Co-Creation Model

To track progress during co-creation, a milestone tracker is used. It shows which knowledge has been successfully converted into digital assets and which remains pending as the transition progresses.

The integrated timeline of the co-creation journey is as follows:

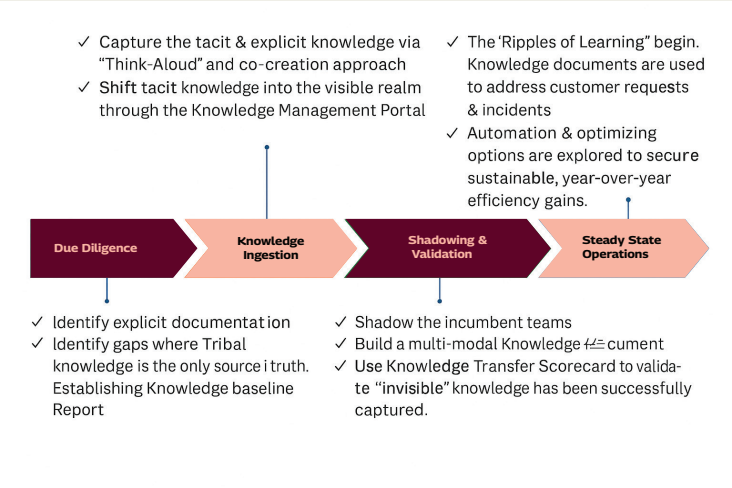

Figure 5: The Co-creation Journey

Sustaining Knowledge Assets in Steady State Operations

The value of knowledge management extends beyond the transition handover. During steady-state operations, the knowledge base must be actively maintained and updated to remain relevant. Rather than relying on static documents, the KTF captures intelligence into daily workflows through integrated wikis and AI-driven tools, transforming the knowledge base into a living ecosystem. Ongoing feedback from the operational team further helps refine the repository over time.

When tacit and tribal knowledge is retained during transition, steady-state teams spend less time responding to avoidable issues and more time improving service stability. This, in turn, provides a reliable knowledge base for automation initiatives, including the use of genai agents, which depend on current and accurate operational information.

Reducing Time-to-Productivity: The ROI of Knowledge Management

One of the most important factors to consider is the rapid onboarding and ramp-up of resources during transition. Teams can measure this through time-to-productivity (TTP), which can be depicted in the following formula.

$$TTP = T_{FP} - T_{O}$$

Where T_{FP} is the date of full productivity, and T_{O} is the start date

TTP depends on the quality of knowledge transfer. When organizations invest in a structured knowledge management framework, incoming teams gain clearer guidance during transition and reduce reliance on informal learning. With this structure in play, teams reach stable operating levels sooner, supporting service continuity during changes.

KTF creates a ripple effect across the transition lifecycle. Accelerated onboarding lowers costs by reducing requirements and improving how teams use resources. Knowledge management also plays a central role in managing transition risk, particularly the risk of service disruption caused by knowledge gaps.

Ultimately, Knowledge management delivers ROI by helping organizations build resilient operations and maintain a competitive edge.

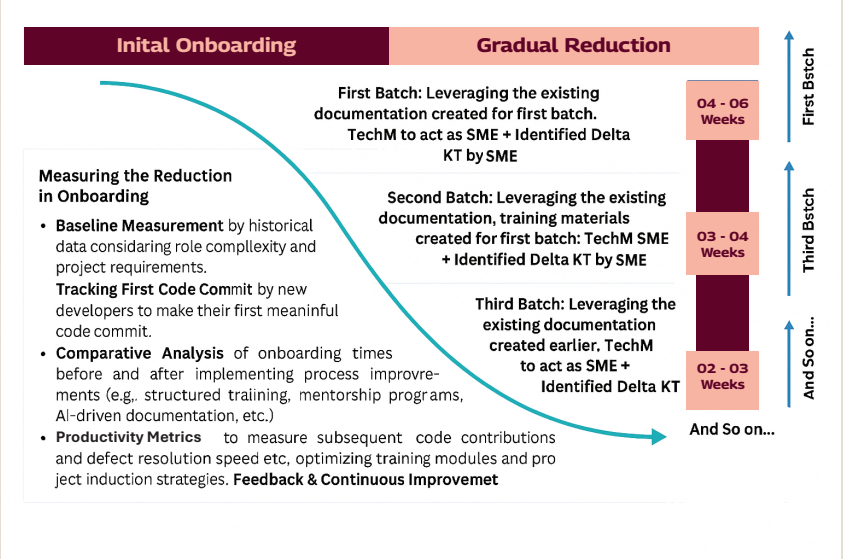

Figure 5:
Phased onboarding with progressive knowledge transfer

Conclusion:
Future-Proofing through Knowledge Excellence

IT transition is not defined by mere asset handover but by the seamless transfer of knowledge—the “heart” of any enterprise. Recognizing that people carry much of this knowledge allows organizations to move beyond static documentation toward a dynamic, collaborative model of Knowledge Co-Creation.

The knowledge management lifecycle brings operational understanding into view and retains it as part of the transition output. Especially through two outcomes that matter most in practice: faster time to productivity for incoming teams, and reduced risk of knowledge loss over time.

Finally, a knowledge-centric transition does more than just maintain the status quo; it creates a resilient, future-proof foundation. When knowledge is treated as the pulse of the enterprise, it can become a strategic asset and a competitive advantage that secures the organization's legacy while accelerating its path toward operational excellence.

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