

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ATTITUDES AND COMPETENCIES

AN INTRODUCTION

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There are different types of learning outcomes and HR Professionals frequently use the acronym KSA. KSA stands for Knowledge, skills and attitude. In this article, I will elaborate these three terms which are central to all learning and development activities.

KNOWLEDGE:

Knowledge: It is called as the facts and information that an individual learns over time. These facts and information are those that we learn and store in our memory.

Knowledge, is of three types: declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge and strategic knowledge.

- a) Declarative Knowledge: It is the knowledge that we store in our memory, the facts and information.

A Project Management Context Example: I Project Scope Management in PMBOK, I can describe the activities and I know the inputs, tools and outputs of all processes of Project Scope Management in PMBOK. I have stored these facts and information in my memory.

- b) Procedural Knowledge: I know when and how to apply the facts and information that I have learned.

A Project Management Context Example: I should be able to use the Project Scope Management activities, inputs, tools and techniques in my project. I should use it and also be aware of the result of using these activities. I cannot apply the steps of Project Scope Management (Procedural Knowledge) if I do not know the steps (Declarative Knowledge).

- c) Strategic Knowledge: I should be able to plan, monitor and control an activity or project based on the goal of the activity or project. It is my awareness of what procedures I have to use and apply to achieve the goal.

A Project Management Context example: I am aware of Project scope Management in PMBOK. I also know how to apply it in project context. I should know what tools and procedures in Scope Management I should use to get the best possible result for this project in the organization. The better the strategic knowledge the better the chances of achieving the goals.

SKILLS:

Skills: A persons proficiency at doing something is called skill. A person's skill level is demonstrated by how well he or she executes and completes a task, such as creating a work breakdown structure (WBS).

Skill are demonstrated at two levels: Compilation (Lower Level) and Automaticity (Higher Level). When a person has learned a skill recently, he is in the compilation stage. He needs to think about every step and do it slowly when he is performing the skill. After some practice when the person has mastered the skill then he has reached the automaticity stage.

A Project Scope Management Context Example: I have just completed learning Project Scope Management in PMBOK. I started applying the concepts in my project. As it is my first project I have to be careful about each and every activity, every tool and technique that I use in scoping the project. I also have to be careful about the documents I create for Project Scope Management.

After, three years and seven projects later, I can apply and use the Project Scope Management tools and techniques faster and efficiently because I have reached the automaticity stage. This automaticity is the result of “practice”, through practice the behaviour becomes automatic.

ATTITUDE:

Attitude is a state of mind of a person towards someone or something. Attitude is an important element of training as it effects the motivation of the individual. Attitudes that motivate employees to learn more effectively need to be addressed through training.

Example: QTech IT Services was concerned about their customer satisfaction rating. They realised that there is a need to either recruit new and experienced customer service staff or include customer service experience in the job descriptions of all employees. They chose the second approach, implementing customer service training to bring about a change in the service culture. The training was designed to change attitude of entire staff about their jobs and bring about a total change in their attitude towards a customer service culture.

COMPETENCIES:

Competency is combination of KSAs that are required for a person to do a job well and be successful. The competencies required for a job is determined through a process called Job Analysis. Competencies is the ability to integrate and use the KSAs to do that task well.

Example: An IT Support Engineer has knowledge about ITIL activities and how it can be used to improve the quality of IT services. This knowledge alone will not make the IT Support Engineer a good ITSM professional. The Support Engineer might also have skills such as implementation of ITIL and measuring the performance of process and also to take up IT Service Improvement Programs and complete them. These skills alone will not make him a good IT Support Engineer. The Support Engineer might like working in IT services industry and have a passion for delivering quality IT services. Therefore, competencies are very useful in understanding how KSAs combine to influence employee performance.

The KSAs will determine what are types of training courses will improve the competencies which in turn will lead to improved job performance.



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