

Generative AI: What It Means For Knowledge Management

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Summary

Generative AI (genAI) has the ability to transform complex or abundant data into human-friendly forms, such as text or images. That ability has significant implications for knowledge management, as genAI can address some of knowledge management's perennial challenges and offers a viable way to incorporate AI into everyday workflows. Technology leaders and knowledge managers can use this report to determine best first steps in their genAI journey.

The Impact Of Generative AI On Knowledge Management

In its most basic form, generative AI (genAI) and large language models (LLMs) transform data that is too complex or abundant for humans to conceptualize into another form, such as human-friendly text or images. The implications of this promising technology for the knowledge management (KM) domain are immense. Harnessing genAI to address the perennial challenges that enterprises face around capturing, storing, finding, and transferring knowledge could fundamentally change our thinking about handling information across the organization. Technology leaders and [knowledge managers](#) can expect generative AI to:

- **Accelerate agile KM transformation.** Waterfall approaches to knowledge management hinder innovation. Adopting an agile knowledge management approach improves the delivery of knowledge to the consumer quickly and iteratively. With genAI, the benefits of an agile approach are amplified as [knowledge is generated](#) from the information entered into a system of record during a transaction with an end user or customer (ITSM, ESM, CRM, etc.), prior LLM training on ticket data, and prior curated knowledge articles. Real-time knowledge transfer is possible in the flow of work.
- **Create a compelling pull for the customer.** The conversational capabilities of genAI change the way end users interact with knowledge. Instead of searching through a long list of answers or solutions, end users pose questions and get responses in a much more intuitive way that connects with the user's level of understanding. The interaction becomes a real, conversation-like experience. Additionally, the ability to apply a tone to the responses — for example, with empathy or in easy-to-understand terms — can change the context of knowledge from difficult-to-understand technical jargon to easy-to-understand terms.
- **Enrich the knowledge worker experience.** Knowledge work can be tedious as knowledge workers face the [daily grind of searching for information](#) across multiple platforms, interrupting coworkers, or reaching out to subject matter experts (SMEs) to find what they need to get the job done. Autonomy is important to the employee experience, and genAI enables a purposeful and meaningful employee experience that can deliver measurable results. Organizations must assess and design an employee experience that leverages genAI to minimize application switching, the endless search for knowledge that workers face, and tedious and repetitive tasks.

Early Benefits Of Implementing Generative AI

Knowledge managers have been eagerly awaiting a viable way to incorporate AI into their workflows. With the introduction of genAI, there's potential to make that dream a reality by:

- **Giving knowledge workers a boost.** GenAI can uplevel knowledge workers to have more autonomy and become creators of knowledge. Through the analysis of a wealth of data and curated knowledge, genAI can create draft solutions for knowledge workers to review and approve, eliminating the need for extensive creation from scratch. Even newly hired knowledge workers can generate responses without needing to wait for a subject matter expert to step in. The transformative capabilities of genAI also enable knowledge workers to create knowledge articles from bullets, summarize complex documents into actionable steps, and extract relevant information from diverse formats such as product manuals, troubleshooting guides, chat logs, policies, FAQs, etc.
- **Spurring continuous, automated improvement.** Traditional methods of knowledge maintenance often fall short, leading to outdated and unreliable information and poor UX. GenAI can remedy this issue by synthesizing information from various sources to generate relevant responses based on key concepts, relationships, and preexisting information. Knowledge workers can then provide feedback, contributing their experiences to improve the surfaced knowledge for future interactions. Once trained on both internal and external content, including publicly available articles and internally created knowledge, genAI can enhance the relevancy and effectiveness of the organization's knowledge base, improving support experiences and streamlining knowledge transfer.
- **Enabling end-user self-service.** The ultimate goal of the ideal knowledge management practice is self-service. The conversational component of genAI changes the interaction between users and the knowledge interface. Instead of users needing to sift through a static repository of information, they can instead engage in a conversation-like experience that's far more intuitive. Making content easier to find and connect to in an understandable vernacular can empower users to [seek](#), [solicit](#), and [speak](#) information more readily and confidently.

Act Now: Take These First Steps In Your Generative AI Journey

Introducing genAI into knowledge management workflows doesn't need to be a zero to sixty event. Technology leaders and knowledge managers interested in unlocking the value of genAI to improve the efficacy of their knowledge management strategies and architectures should:

- **Start small.** Identify a few specific use cases within the knowledge management domain where genAI can add value. Whether it's content creation, knowledge organization, search and retrieval, recommendations, or knowledge gap analysis, experiment with genAI in a few areas to see what resonates with the team and works toward achieving business goals. By understanding the specific needs and pain points within the organization, technology leaders can define and prioritize knowledge management use cases that will see the most benefit from genAI technology. Connect with your current platform providers and embrace early experimentation and adoption — be part of the journey and provide feedback as new genAI features are developed, tested, and released.
- **Prioritize the data.** When it comes to AI, the output will only be as good as what you input into the algorithm — garbage in, garbage out. For knowledge management, it's especially crucial to ensure the information that's collected, aggregated, and disseminated is accurate and high quality. Your knowledge management practices should involve collecting and organizing relevant data sources, including existing knowledge repositories, documentation, and user feedback. It may even be worth exploring partnerships with external data providers or other data SMEs to enhance the diversity and comprehensiveness of the data.
- **Pilot projects and iterate.** To test and evaluate the feasibility of genAI for the knowledge management use cases of your choice, develop pilot projects and define measurable objectives and key results. Select a specific use case with a manageable scope to assess the capabilities of different genAI models, their integration with existing systems, and their impact on user experience. Monitor the quality of outputs from a given set of prompts and measure the technology's effectiveness against specific metrics. Adopt an iterative approach to learn from each pilot project, refine their strategies, and make informed decisions about scaling up genAI initiatives in the knowledge management domain.

Don't Get Trapped By These Critical Mistakes

As new and exciting as the prospect of genAI-powered knowledge management can be, don't be too hasty to overhaul your organization's knowledge management strategies and architectures. Be aware that:

- **Quality control and accuracy of training data can impact results.** Most organizations struggle with knowledge base integrity issues, and those problems can become exaggerated with the introduction of AI. While genAI might seem like an attractive method for easily hacking agile knowledge management, ensuring the reliability, validity, and correctness of the generated knowledge is a critical first step. Technology leaders must keep the human in the loop to ensure that the generated content aligns with organizational standards and compliance guidelines and accurately reflects the intended message or meaning.
- **Ethical and legal considerations are still up in the air.** [Regulators](#) are struggling to keep up with the evolving landscape of genAI, creating gray areas around proper and ethical usage of this mushrooming technology. As with other AI technologies, genAI may inadvertently generate biased or inappropriate content, leading to potential reputational and even legal risks. Technology leaders must be aware of these pitfalls and implement safeguards across the AI lifecycle to mitigate biases, ensure fairness, and adhere to privacy regulations. Before leveraging genAI too heavily, be sure to establish and adequately communicate guidelines and governance frameworks for the responsible use of genAI to avoid any unintended consequences.
- **Knowledge capacity building is required.** As with most technology advances, technology leaders must ensure that they acquire or develop the right talent to support the adoption of genAI. The [required skills take time to develop](#) and competition in the markets is fierce. Take a people-first approach and get your staff trained on genAI, AI, and machine learning concepts and techniques. Building trust and acceptance among users will require effective communication, transparency, and education about the capabilities and limitations of genAI. Consider involving knowledge managers in the development and integration process to demonstrate the value of AI-generated knowledge to encourage adoption.



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