

By Daniel W. Rasmus



## The Tens — Chief Knowledge Officer Duties

**1 Drive organizational learning** The Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO) should be responsible for overall organizational learning, including the C-Suite. Too often executives think their experience is enough, but in a rapidly changing world, executives need to learn about more than leadership. The CKO should own executive development, and guide and coach learning throughout the organization.

**2 Define learning and knowledge objectives** Defining what the organization needs to know at all levels is critical. The CKO may not ultimately be responsible for delivery, but should be responsible for defining the organization's learning and knowledge objectives. Objectives should include existing skills and skill levels, industry knowledge, emerging technology, uncertainties and other factors that will affect how the organization executes, and how it navigates the future.

**3 Align learning with strategy** A solid learning program and well-articulated objectives don't mean much if the organization does meet its strategic goals. The CKO needs to avoid the *tactics trap* that recognizes teaching and learning activity as the equivalent of success. The CKO must ensure that knowledge and learning align with, and fulfill, strategic needs of the organization, so that it not only delivers on today's promises, but prepares people for tomorrow's challenges and opportunities.

**4 Break down barriers and dissolve silos** Resistance is not futile. It is, however, often very personal decisions about participation that make or break an organization's knowledge and learning program. The CKO needs to be passionate about crossing boundaries, challenging assumptions and reinforcing failed or failing policies and practices. Most of all, the CKO needs to behave in a way that models the desired behavior with management and other workers. In addition, the CKO needs to understand the outsourcing and contingent staff models so that learning is holistic, and not just focused on employees.

**5 Manage learning and knowledge IT** Knowledge and learning lead inevitably toward systems: from knowledge repositories to enterprise social, from learning management systems to collaboration tools. The CKO needs to work closely with IT as the primary client for these systems. The CKO also needs to act as chief designer for the learning experiences that will make the technology investments payoff. The CKO should also work closely with the CIO to drive learning

within IT, in order to create a sense of agility in what may be the most volatile function within any organization.

**6 Tell stories** Stories transfer knowledge. They also make the case for change and communicate success. The CKO should be a master storyteller, helping the organization recognize and celebrate its success, and envision and strive for its future.

**7 Monitor and record serendipity** Knowledge and learning are as much about serendipity as they are about productivity. The CKO needs to design a knowledge and learning environment that balances between the desire for efficiency and the emergent value that comes from enterprise networks and collaborative environments. Rather than just capture anecdotes, CKOs should strive to quantify serendipity value as much as they do productivity gains.

**8 Learning experience monitoring and improvement** Organizations cannot just rely on good objectives and design—they require solid feedback loops as well. The CKO, as part of learning experience design, should purposefully create feedback mechanisms on learning experiences. This allows the learning experience to learn. The CKO should take an active role in ensuring that learning about learning drives adaptation and quality improvements.

**9 Foster innovation** To some degree, the CKO creates an environment of learning permission. As people get comfortable with the ideas of continuous learning, emergence, change and adaptation, they also become more adept at identifying the need for radical reinvention of products, services or processes. The CKO needs to help the organization avoid overly systemizing innovation, while at the same time, putting instruments in place to capture innovative ideas wherever they arise.

**10 Drive knowledge retention and forgetting** One of the most difficult skills for CKOs is helping organizations discover what they need to remember as employees and partners leave for retirement or new jobs—and in turn, what knowledge they can abandon. The failure to help an organization learn to forget is at the center of many a failed knowledge endeavor. Defining what needs to be known inevitably leads to knowledge that can, perhaps even should be forgotten, lest it hold progress as a ransom for history.