

INQA-Check "Knowledge and Skills"

Self-assessment of the use of knowledge potential in the enterprise



INQA "Knowledge and Skills" brochure was created and published by Offensive Mittelstand – Gut für Deutschland, an independent network operating under the auspices of Initiative Neue Qualität der Arbeit (INQA) (New Quality of Work Initiative).

Initiative Neue Qualität der Arbeit is a joint initiative which brings together the federal government, federal states, employers' associations and chambers, trade unions, the Federal Employment Agency, enterprises, social security institutions and foundations with the aim to boost the quality work, which is the key to innovation and competitiveness in Germany. The initiative was launched in 2002 and offers inspiring examples from practice, as well as the possibility of obtaining advice and information, exchange of experiences and a support programme for projects related to employment policy.

The **Offensive Mittelstand – Gut für Deutschland** initiative promotes successful employee-oriented business management by creating modern standards and practical tools. It also offers various regional support structures developed in particular for small and medium-sized enterprises. Currently the "Offensive Mittelstand – Gut für Deutschland" initiative comprises approx. 250 partners, including the federal government, federal states, business associations, trade associations, guilds, craft chambers, trade unions, professional business organisations, health insurance companies, research institutes and service providers.



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In the INQA "Knowledge and Skills" brochure an effort was made to use gender-neutral language. We wish to emphasise that in cases where this was not possible, all genders are addressed irrespective of the form used.



**Knowledge and skills:
success factors for
competitiveness**

Knowledge and skills: success factors for competitiveness

Have you encountered a situation in which

key information cannot be found due to data overload?

Searching for the right information in our database is becoming more and more difficult due to many outdated and unsorted pieces of information.

The expectations towards our industry are changing at an ever increasing pace.

Sometimes it is difficult for us to follow the development of technology, work procedures, product development and customer needs and to keep up with them.

We do not always know what skills our company will need tomorrow. In fact, until now we have never systematically defined the skills of all our employees and we do not know exactly what skills we will need tomorrow.

One team always works faster and better than the other.

I often wonder why the results of one team are much better than the other. Apparently, they do not exchange experiences.

If an employee retires, we will no longer be able to benefit from their knowledge.

If an employee retired, so did a large portion of their knowledge, which gave us a hard time.

The shelf-life of knowledge has been significantly reduced due to rapid development in IT. The increasing digitisation of work (i.e. Industry 4.0) will make such changes proceed even faster. Companies need to acquire or develop new knowledge at an increasing pace. At the same time, given demographic developments in Germany, it is increasingly difficult, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises, to quickly acquire competent specialists with future-oriented knowledge and skills required in the company.

Given the fact that knowledge and skills account for more than half of the added value of a company, SMEs are faced with the following tasks: they must be able to acquire new knowledge and skills in a professional and timely manner and at an increasingly fast pace. Furthermore, they have to organise their knowledge and skills intelligently in order to be able to use them in an optimal and efficient way. The companies that master this ability enjoy a competitive advantage.

Therefore, effective business management with regard to the main and at the same time incredibly important resources,

i.e. knowledge and skills, entails:

- >> considering what knowledge and skills are needed to implement the corporate strategy and future products and services in the company;
- >> finding and/or making long-term use of the sources of these resources;
- >> organising the company in such a way that the necessary knowledge and skills are available in the right form and at the right time, safeguarded and constantly updated;
- >> creating working conditions for employees where they will be willing to transfer their knowledge and skills and learn constantly;
- >> creating a corporate culture that fosters lifelong learning.

>> Systematically safeguarding knowledge and skills

The INQA "Knowledge and Skills" brochure helps companies to systematically create, control and develop their knowledge and skills. It is based on basic modules of organising knowledge and skills (see the chart below). These modules correspond to the elements of good knowledge and skills management.

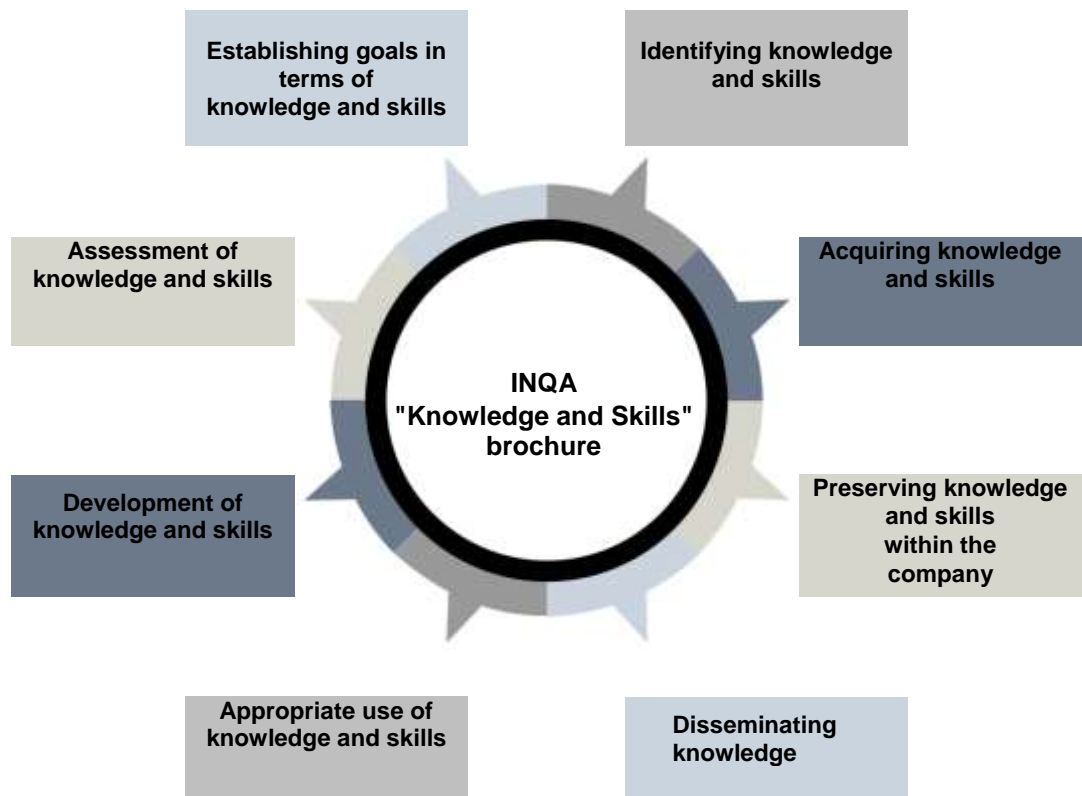
>> About the authors

The INQA "Knowledge and Skills" brochure was created and published by "Offensive Mittelstand – Gut für Deutschland", an independent network operating under the auspices of Initiative Neue Qualität der Arbeit (INQA) (see inside the title page).

The INQA "Knowledge and Skills" brochure presents a standard for systematically addressing topics concerning knowledge and skills, which is implemented by all partners of "Offensive Mittelstand – Gut für Deutschland".



Modular model for systematic organisation of knowledge and skills



Authors of the idea behind the brochure: Dresden University of Technology – CIMTT Centre for Production Engineering and Organisation, RWTH University of Aachen – IAW Department and Institute of Work Sciences; BC GmbH Forschungs- und Beratungsgesellschaft consulting company and conpara Gesellschaft für Unternehmensberatung mbH. The brochure was discussed by all partners of the "Offensive Mittelstand" initiative and adopted as a common standard applicable in practice.

The brochure was financed by the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS).



>> Who is this brochure for?

This brochure allows entrepreneurs, primarily SMEs, to systematically assess their processes and to make better, i.e. more efficient, use of their knowledge and skills. Moreover, the brochure helps department or team managers in larger companies to increase the efficiency of the way in which knowledge is used and skills are developed.

The INQA "Knowledge and Skills" brochure can be used to define optimisation measures for your company.

>> What are the advantages of the INQA "Knowledge and Skills" brochure?

The brochure entitled "Knowledge and Skills" contains many suggestions on how to foster knowledge and skills in your company. The INQA brochure

helps to identify, develop and preserve important areas of knowledge and skills, adapt them to the changing requirements and update them. The brochure allows you to systematically learn and develop the potential of knowledge and skills for your company.

This brochure describes how successful companies deal with knowledge and skills, so you can find many ideas, suggestions and examples to implement in your company. Reading the brochure will motivate you to reflect on your daily work, identify development needs and specify actions to be taken. The brochure encourages the reader to look for solutions for their company to strike a balance between future-oriented development of new projects and the necessary preservation of those that have proved successful, which is not always easy.

>> How to use this brochure?

This brochure contains eight topics. It can be used like a modular toolbox. You can select particular modules or cover all of them from start to finish (time required: 40 to 60 minutes). First of all, it is necessary to define the future skill profile of your employees and teams and to compare them with the current skill profiles. For this purpose use the "Skills in my company" section on page 9.

Further use of the brochure takes place in two stages:

Stage 1: Conduct analysis of the actual situation by assessing the need for action in individual topics using colours (green, yellow, red). This will give you a good overview of the company's structure in various areas and suggest where improvements can be made.

Stage 2: Then identify the measures to be taken, designate the person responsible for their implementation and define the methods of controlling the effectiveness of implementation. All information should be recorded in the action plan on the back cover.

An interactive version of the brochure is available on the Internet at www.inqa-check-wissen.de.

The brochure was written from the perspective of entrepreneurs and managers (hence the "we" form). Not all checkpoints are relevant for each and every company.

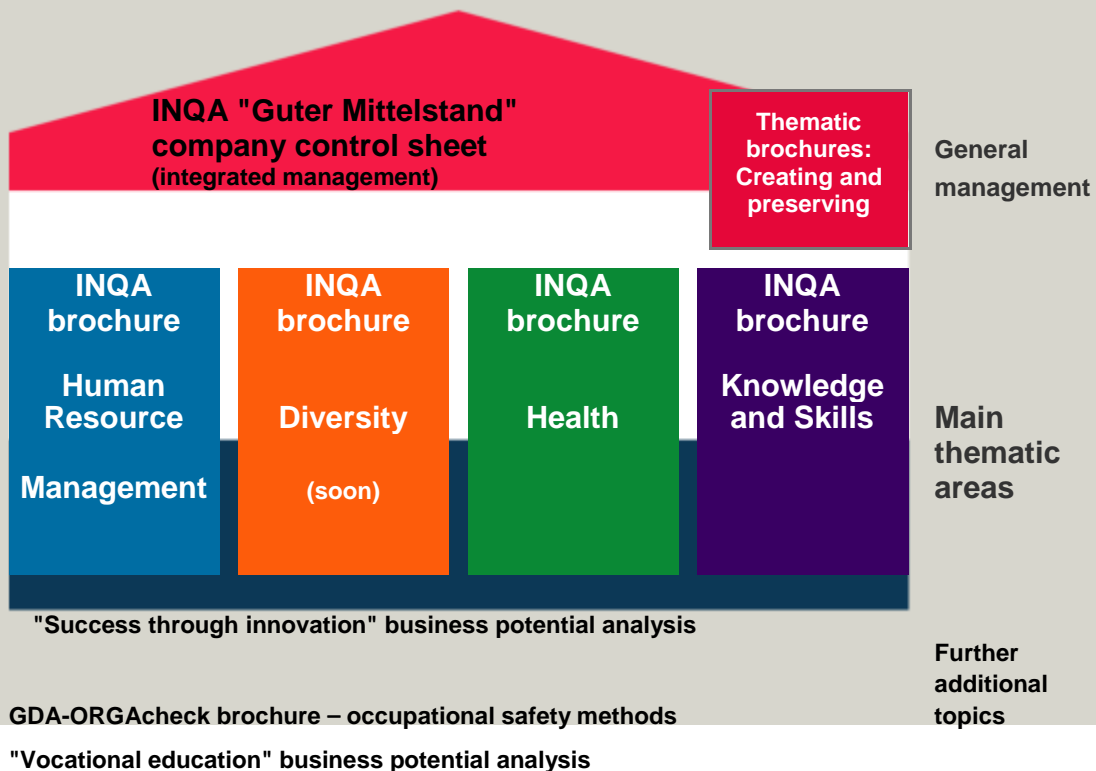
"Guter Mittelstand" company control sheet by INQA and INQA toolkit

The "Guter Mittelstand" company control sheet by INQA is a part of INQA toolkit comprising practical standards and instruments for self-assessment. In addition to the INQA company control sheet used for analysis of good practices in integrated management, each thematic area is covered in a separate INQA brochure. Moreover, other tools for self-assessment are available on other specific topics.

Characteristic features of the tools:

- >> >> They were developed as a common **practical standard** and a **self-assessment tool** for all partners associated under the Offensive Mittelstand initiative and other partners active in a given thematic area.
- >> >> They follow a **uniform classification and methodology** (based on the process of value creation, continuous improvement, description of good practices/state of the work sciences, each topic described on two pages, in print and online).
- >> >> They constitute a **template for systematic assessment and an accessible introduction** to the relevant topic (also an introduction to certified systems, such as the INQA, QM, AMS, ÖKO audit, and quality mark awarded by competent authorities).
- >> >> **Specification of further practical assistance from INQA network partners.**

The "Guter Mittelstand" company control sheet by INQA and brochures on specific topics were developed by the "Offensive Mittelstand" initiative under the auspices of the Initiative Neue Qualität der Arbeit (INQA). The use of all tools is free of charge.



Definitions

"Knowledge" and "skills" as well as many related terms are often understood in very different ways. Therefore, the definition of these terms is given in the context in which they are used in the INQA "Knowledge and Skills" brochure.







Term	Description
Knowledge	Knowledge means inter-related pieces of information that enable making decisions in a specific context and taking action in a target-oriented manner. Knowledge may be implicit or explicit.
	>> Explicit knowledge Explicit knowledge is the knowledge that can be consciously acquired. It may be represented in the form of documents, statements, it may be impersonal and generally applicable (e.g. work instructions, contracts, books).
	>> Implicit knowledge Implicit knowledge is the knowledge that a person derives from their experience, practice and studies. It is difficult or impossible to describe implicit knowledge. However, such knowledge is effective (for example a child who knows how to ride a bike, but doesn't know how he or she does it.)
>> Organisational knowledge Organisational knowledge is the sum total of all knowledge in a company. It provides insight into how decisions are made and what actions are taken within the organisation. Entire body of knowledge is greater and different than the sum of the knowledge of individual persons within the organisation. Organisational knowledge may also be explicit (e.g. textbooks, patents) and implicit (e.g. corporate culture, working procedures).	
Skill	A skill is the ability and readiness to use knowledge to solve problems. It depends on personal characteristics (predispositions such as motivation, knowledge, physical and mental conditions). Skills are applied only on the basis of existing organisational requirements (for example corporate culture, management, scope of responsibilities). Skills include: professional skills, experience and the so-called "key skills" (methodological skills, social communication skills, personal skills).
Qualification	Qualification is a formal confirmation of skills and/or knowledge.
Information	Information is characters, symbols, language/text, images, sensory impressions to which a person assigns some meaning (interpretation). The meaning perceived by each person depends on individual ideas, expectations and requirements. There is therefore no "objective" information which would be immune to interpretation by individuals. This means that: "the same" piece of information can mean something different to different people (it's even typical).
Skill for change	Ability to perceive and implement changes and adapt to work-related changes using one's own existing skills (professional skills, experience, key skills).
Digitisation of work (Industry 4.0)	The future of work will be shaped by the miniaturisation of computer technology, communication between different types of software and increasingly fast network connections. This will enable connecting machines, equipment, products and people with the use of software (Internet of things, Internet of Services). This, in turn, will translate into acceleration and changes in work processes and will create links between the reality and the virtual world. This development is often referred to as Industry 4.0 although it concerns all areas of work and life.



**INQA "Knowledge
and Skills" brochure**

Skills in my company: first assessment

The main skills from the perspective of the company are presented below. The following matrix is helpful in identifying existing and required skills in your company. Before you start working with the matrix, you should determine which position/area of work and which employees or teams you would like to analyse. The use of matrices can be equally interesting for company managers.

Position/area of work:			
Employee/team			
Skills	What knowledge and skills are required to perform tasks at work? (Desired state / future skills profile)	What knowledge and skills are used to perform tasks at work? (Current state / present skills profile)	Need for action
■ No action currently needed ■ Action needed ■ Urgent action needed			
>> Professional skills Knowledge and skills in a particular area			
>> Personal skills Ability to assess and reflect upon one's skills and values (e.g. loyalty, personal responsibility, ability to express and accept criticism)			
>> Social communication skills Ability to communicate and cooperate with others and understand others' point of view (for example openness, assertiveness, empathy)			
>> Methodological skill ability to deal with problems based on methodological knowledge (e.g. process-oriented thinking, identifying complex causes that give rise to a particular situation and finding solutions)			
Individuals who combine and systematically use different skills increase the likelihood of responding quickly and appropriately to change (skill for change).			

1 Establishing goals concerning knowledge and skills

Goal:

We know the level of knowledge and skills necessary to effectively implement our corporate strategy.
We create conditions conducive to effective development of knowledge and skills in the company in order to achieve corporate goals.



Successful practice

Compare the described practice and examples with your own situation and decide whether you see a need for action.

In larger entities, the word "company" may also mean the scope of responsibilities.

Need for action

■ No action currently needed ■ Action needed ■ Urgent action needed

>> 1.1 Knowledge and skills for achieving corporate goals (external strategy)

We are able to define the level of knowledge and skills necessary to effectively implement our corporate strategy.

For example:

- >> We are able to define the essential knowledge that distinguishes us from our competitors (key skills) and/or makes us stand out on the market.
- >> We are able to define the skills required to achieve our corporate goals (see "Skills in my company" on page 9).
- >> We know our customers, markets and suppliers.
- >> We have knowledge on technology, development and trends.
- >> We can describe our knowledge advantage over our competitors.
- >> We have knowledge on the specificity of the industry (clusters, entrepreneurial networks, regional specificity).
- >> We know the legal requirements (such as occupational and environmental safety, product safety).

→ See also INQA "Guter Mittelstand" company control sheet (www.inqa-unternehmenscheck.de)



>> 1.2 Knowledge and skills for achieving corporate goals in the company (internal strategy)

We are able to define the level of knowledge and skills necessary to effectively implement our corporate strategy within the company.

For example:


- >> Employees' knowledge and skills
- >> Knowledge on basic processes and management
- >> Knowledge on management methods
- >> Knowledge on efficiency and readiness to achieve results
- >> Knowledge on relevant laws, regulations and standards
- >> Knowledge on processes in a "learning organisation"



Establishing goals concerning knowledge and skills

Successful practice Compare the described practice and examples with your own situation and decide whether you see a need for action. In larger entities, the word "company" may also mean the scope of responsibilities.	Need for action
■ No action currently needed ■ Action needed ■ Urgent action needed	

>> 1.3 Establishing goals concerning knowledge and skills of individual employees

<p>We regularly explain personal goals and perspectives of each employee in terms of the development of knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Opportunities to improve the process of establishing goals in terms of knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> Communication skills >> Strategic knowledge >> Problem solving skills >> Planning skills >> Professional skills >> Project management skills >> Advisory skills >> Computer literacy <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> Regular interviews with employees >> Individual development plans / establishing goals (for example on the basis of perspective coaching, skill balances) >> Definition of education and training activities >> Formal qualifications, qualifications enabling professional advancement >> Team meetings <p>→ See also the INQA "Good office work" brochure, module 2.4 "Development and further training opportunities".</p>	
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2

Identifying knowledge and skills

Goal:

We know the level of internal and external knowledge and the skills we can use.



Successful practice

Compare the described practice and examples with your own situation and decide whether you see a need for action.

In larger entities, the word "company" may also mean the scope of responsibilities.

Need for action

■ No action currently needed ■ Action needed ■ Urgent action needed

>> 2.1 Identifying employee knowledge and skills

We have an established procedure (measures, methods, system) allowing us to identify our employees' current level of knowledge or skills.

For example:

- >> Qualification needs analysis
- >> Qualification/skill matrix taking into account different age groups and functions
- >> Interviews with employees

→ See "Skills in my company" on page 9.



>> 2.2 Identifying company knowledge

We identify the organisational knowledge (see glossary) in our company and record it.

Examples of organisational knowledge:


- >> Vision
- >> Quality management instructions
- >> Established working procedures
- >> Work instructions
- >> Establishing goals
- >> Patents
- >> Occupational health and safety instructions
- >> Balancing knowledge and skills
- >> Company success stories




Identifying knowledge and skills

Successful practice Compare the described practice and examples with your own situation and decide whether you see a need for action. In larger entities, the word "company" may also mean the scope of responsibilities.	Need for action
■ No action currently needed ■ Action needed ■ Urgent action needed	

>> 2.3 Establishing goals concerning knowledge and skills

<p>We are able to tap into unused knowledge and hidden skills of our employees to the benefit of our company and make them useful.</p> <p>Examples of undeveloped knowledge and hidden skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> Previous work experience >> Special qualifications >> Experience from different cultures >> Skills resulting from leisure activities (such as associations, politics, initiatives, culture, social engagement) >> Special interests (such as environment protection, technology, blogging) >> IT skills >> Knowledge about work safety (first aider, health and safety officer, fire fighter) <p>Identifying skills, for example through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> A system of information derived from curriculum vitae / personal information >> Interviews with employees >> Rumours >> Private conversations >> Conversations during breaks <p>→ Tip: Data protection regulations must be observed</p>	
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>> 2.4 Awareness of knowledge deficits

<p>We know where our knowledge deficits are and where there is a need to deepen our knowledge given our current and future development needs (e.g. new technologies, work procedures, customer needs).</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> Analysis of customer feedback >> Analysis of customer requirements >> Exchange of ideas with other companies >> Knowledge on competitors' offer 	
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3 Acquiring knowledge and skills for the company

Goal:

We know the areas of knowledge and skills that we need to acquire and use to achieve our corporate goals.



Successful practice

Compare the described practice and examples with your own situation and decide whether you see a need for action.

In larger entities, the word "company" may also mean the scope of responsibilities.

Need for action

No action currently needed
 Action needed
 Urgent action needed

>> 3.1 Acquiring external knowledge and skills

We have a systematic procedure (measures, methods, strategy) to acquire the necessary knowledge. We also know external sources that have the necessary knowledge and required skills.

For example:

- >> Searching for information published on the Internet, blogs
- >> Analysis of customer contacts (customer requests, customer complaints, complaint management)
- >> Fairs and congresses
- >> Using training institutions' offers
- >> Acquisition of knowledge from expert groups, suppliers, partners, network members, service providers, expert bodies
- >> Acquisition of knowledge products such as patents, licenses (e.g. software, ERP system, product licenses)
- >> Specialist journals




One of our strengths that we consciously want to communicate in our marketing activities is the desire to be attractive in the eyes of customers and/or employees.


Acquisition of knowledge and skills for the company

Successful practice Compare the described practice and examples with your own situation and decide whether you see a need for action. In larger entities, the word "company" may also mean the scope of responsibilities.	Need for action
■ No action currently needed ■ Action needed ■ Urgent action needed	

>> 3.2 Cooperation with external entities

<p>We identify the organisational knowledge (see glossary) in our company and preserve it.</p> <p>Examples of organisational knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> Vision >> Quality management instructions >> Established working procedures >> Work instructions >> Setting targets >> Patents >> Occupational health and safety instructions >> Balancing knowledge and skills >> Company success stories 	
One of our strengths that we consciously want to communicate in our marketing activities is the desire to be attractive in the eyes of customers and/or employees. <input type="checkbox"/>	

>> 3.3 Project-related staff recruitment

<p>In order to broaden our knowledge and/or skills, we recruit specialists for specific areas/individual projects.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> Engaging specialists for specific projects >> Use of part-time workers >> Temporary work >> Staff exchange for a specific project >> Retired employees <p>➔ Your potential for systematic recruitment of trainees and new employees can be analysed using the INQA "Human Resource Management" brochure. (www.inqa-check-personalfuehrung.de).</p>	
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4 Development of knowledge and skills in the company

Goal:

We create new knowledge and skills based on the knowledge and skills we already have in order to remain competitive.



Successful practice

Compare the described practice and examples with your own situation and decide whether you see a need for action.

In larger entities, the word "company" may also mean the scope of responsibilities.

Need for action

■ No action currently needed ■ Action needed ■ Urgent action needed

>> 4.1 Integrating employees' existing knowledge

We give employees the opportunity to pitch their ideas.

For example:

- >> Item on the agenda at team meetings
- >> Composition of teams which is conducive to knowledge exchange (e.g. young and older workers, culture, gender)
- >> Project groups (e.g. health circle, working groups)
- >> Book of proposals, continuous improvement process (CIP)
- >> Employee survey
- >> Time (freedom to develop ideas)
- >> Rooms (e.g. coffee corner)
- >> A positive error culture

→ See also INQA "Guter Mittelstand" company control sheet (www.inqa-unternehmenscheck.de)

→ See also the INQA "Human Resource Management" brochure (www.inqa-check-personalfuehrung.de)



>> 4.2 Employee education and training

We take care of the skills of employees of all ages (skills, key skills, knowledge). We value the personal responsibility of our employees.

Examples of methods used:

- >> Learning while working (learning in tandem, training on the job)
- >> Workshops
- >> Seminars
- >> Fostering self-study
- >> E-learning, on-line seminars (webinars)
- >> Participation in seminars offered by organisations (such as chambers, guilds, accident insurance companies/professional associations, health insurance companies)




Development of knowledge and skills in the company


Successful practice Compare the described practice and examples with your own situation and decide whether you see a need for action. In larger entities, the word "company" may also mean the scope of responsibilities.	Need for action
■ No action currently needed ■ Action needed ■ Urgent action needed	

Examples of content: >> IT skills >> Languages >> Communication skills >> Ability to operate specialised machines >> Safe and healthy behaviour	
One of our strengths that we consciously want to communicate in our marketing activities is the desire to be attractive in the eyes of customers and/or employees.	<input type="checkbox"/>

>> 4.3 Culture of questions and gaps

<p>We support our employees and managers in gaining knowledge by asking questions. We do not see this as an admission of weakness or incompetence, but as openness and productive curiosity.</p> <p>Support is expressed for example through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> Taking the 'openness to questions' approach during meetings >> Accepting and encouraging questions and expressions of concern >> "Asking questions actively": discussions on issues which may be unclear >> Joint agreement within the team that asking additional questions will be perceived in a positive way >> Developing a procedure for dealing with annoying questions that are asked at the wrong time <p>→ See also INQA "Guter Mittelstand" company control sheet (www.inqa-unternehmenscheck.de)</p>	
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>> 4.4 Continuous development of knowledge and skills

<p>We make sure that the development of knowledge for the company and the development of skills for each employee takes place in a continuous and systematic way (it is integrated with the process of continuous improvement of the company).</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> Regular assessment of the skills matrix >> Interviews with employees >> Establishing goals >> Mentoring (experienced employees as contact persons for inexperienced employees) >> Subject discussed during team meetings >> Subject discussed by the management >> Subject discussed by the Occupational Health and Safety committee 	
The desire to be perceived as attractive by customers and/or employees is one of our strengths that we consciously want to communicate in our marketing activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>

5

Disseminating knowledge

Goal:

We provide information to the places in the company where it is needed. Not everyone needs to know everything, but everyone needs to know what they need to know to do their job in a productive and rewarding way.



Successful practice

Compare the described practice and examples with your own situation and decide whether you see a need for action.

In larger entities, the word "company" may also mean the scope of responsibilities.

Need for action

■ No action currently needed
 ■ Action needed
 ■ Urgent action needed

>> 5.1 Sufficient information about work tasks

We make sure that our managers actively provide employees with all the information they need to perform their tasks at work. Our employees know where to find such information.

For example:

- >> Familiarising employees with new work tasks – work instructions and guidance
- >> Instructions for safe and healthy work, procedures
- >> Clear rules on how to behave and how information is to be communicated at interface points (e.g. between work areas, teams and shifts)
- >> Descriptions of activities
- >> Manuals



>> 5.2 Disseminating information about news in the company

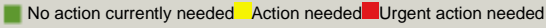
We have a procedure which enables providing our employees with new information and/or sharing experiences. We know who we can reach, which channels of communication to use and who should receive relevant information.

For example:


- >> Wiki platforms available on the Intranet
- >> Databases
- >> Groupware systems
- >> E-mail distribution list
- >> Bulletin/notice board




Disseminating knowledge

Successful practice Compare the described practice and examples with your own situation and decide whether you see a need for action. In larger entities, the word "company" may also mean the scope of responsibilities.	Need for action
	


>> 5.3 Fostering knowledge sharing

<p>We developed methods to promote the exchange of knowledge and experience between our employees and teams (for example between different levels in hierarchy, departments, cultures, age groups).</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> Educational tandems >> Workplace rotation >> Creating opportunities to get to know each other in person (e.g. company trips, company sports groups) >> Introductory seminars for new employees <p>→ See also INQA "Human Resource Management" brochure, module 7 (www.inqa-check-personalfuehrung.de)</p>	
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>> 5.4 Creating a knowledge promoting corporate culture

<p>In our company there is an atmosphere in which employees like to look for new solutions and ideas to use them to achieve our corporate goals.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> Opportunities for informal knowledge sharing >> Our premises are conducive to communication >> Openness to (unusual) ideas >> Organising the so-called "silent hour", consciously taking time to concentrate >> Taking breaks >> Planning time buffers to react to unforeseen events 	
<p>The desire to be perceived as attractive by customers and/or employees is one of our strengths that we consciously want to communicate in our marketing activities.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

>> 5.5 Avoiding information overload

<p>We make sure not to flood each other with information.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> Together with the employees, we determine which information is collected and which information is communicated >> Possibilities of using the software (e.g. anti-spam filters, sorting functions, special search and filtering functions) >> Further training on software, time management and employee self-organisation skills >> Creating the company's own email culture/ etiquette (meaningful subject lines, avoiding unnecessary attachments, not using the CC function too often, email-free days/hours) >> No unnecessary newsletters and information 	
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>> 5.6 Too much information may be distracting

<p>We made it clear that too much information can distract and hinder action ("all knowledge creates ignorance"). We focus on knowledge which is conducive to achieving our goals and we accept the fact that we cannot know everything.</p>	
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6 Appropriate use of knowledge and skills

Goal:

We create conditions where our knowledge and skills can be used to the fullest extent possible, where they effectively translate into productivity, satisfaction and quality for our company.



Successful practice

Compare the described practice and examples with your own situation and decide whether you see a need for action.

In larger entities, the word "company" may also mean the scope of responsibilities.

Need for action

■ No action currently needed ■ Action needed ■ Urgent action needed

>> 6.1 Avoiding barriers to the organisation's knowledge and skills

We make sure that the use and promotion of knowledge and skills is not hindered by barriers in the organization and corporate culture.

Examples of organisational barriers that may prevent the use of knowledge and skills:

- >> Habits in the company ("We always did it this way"), blindness of individual departments to what is happening around, rigid thinking patterns
- >> Secret rules of the game (e.g. informal hierarchies)
- >> Wrong role models/behaviour of managers
- >> Difficulties in accessing information
- >> Use of unintelligible language
- >> User-unfriendly software (attention to software ergonomics)
- >> Fear of losing the job



>> 6.2 Preventing barriers to employee knowledge and skills

We make sure that the use and promotion of individual employees' knowledge and skills is not hindered by personal barriers. We try to overcome employees' personal barriers through good Human Resource Management.

Examples of personal barriers that may prevent the use of knowledge and skills:

- >> Fixed work routine
- >> Forgetting how to learn
- >> Convenience
- >> Lack of trust
- >> Self-complacency
- >> Lack of motivation
- >> Prejudices
- >> Fear of change
- >> "Lone wolf strategy"
- >> Defending an alleged monopoly of knowledge
- >> Professional aspirations (using your advantage to make a career)



→ **Methods of good Human Resource Management are presented in the INQA "Human Resource Management" brochure (www.inqa-check-personalfuehrung.de).**

Appropriate use of knowledge and skills

Successful practice Compare the described practice and examples with your own situation and decide whether you see a need for action. In larger entities, the word "company" may also mean the scope of responsibilities.	Need for action
■ No action currently needed ■ Action needed ■ Urgent action needed	

>> 6.3 User-friendly software

We make sure that the software used in everyday work is user-friendly (good ergonomics of software).

Examples of software usability criteria:

- >> Intuitiveness
- >> Controllability
- >> Tolerance of mistakes
- >> Compliance with expectations
- >> Customisability
- >> Encouragement to learn
- >> Information is presented in a structured form (navigation through menus/dialogue boxes)
- >> Visual design
- >> User-friendly system information and messages

Examples of ways to increase user-friendliness are the following:

- >> Define criteria the software should meet
- >> Consider the criteria when purchasing the software; if necessary, consult a software specialist
- >> Regularly ask employees if there are any problems related to software operation
- >> Regularly seek information on new software



>> 6.4 Work organisation conducive to learning

Workplaces for our employees are created so as to encourage the use of work-related knowledge and learning and effectively contribute to skills development (freedom in the working environment).

For example:

- >> Ergonomic organisation of the working environment (e.g. noise, light, air, temperature, workplace equipment, sufficient space)
- >> Areas of communication
- >> Possibilities of applying new knowledge
- >> Comprehensive task assignment (e.g. transfer and assumption of responsibility, planning, organisation)



The desire to be perceived as attractive by customers and/or employees is one of our strengths that we consciously want to communicate in our marketing activities.



7

Preserving knowledge and skills

Goal:

We preserve what has been noticed, learned and experienced beyond a particular moment and beyond individual people. We maintain this information within the company so that it can be used in the process of creating value regardless of time or people.



Successful practice

Compare the described practice and examples with your own situation and decide whether you see a need for action.

In larger entities, the word "company" may also mean the scope of responsibilities.

→ **Preservation and safeguarding the necessary skills is further guaranteed by good Human Resource Management. You will find detailed information on this topic in the INQA "Human Resource Management" brochure (www.inqa-check-personalfuehrung.de)**

Need for action

■ No action currently needed ■ Action needed ■ Urgent action needed

>> 7.1 Knowledge preservation criteria

We developed criteria to define what knowledge should be preserved and what information is no longer needed.

Examples of criteria:

- >> Suitability / documentation for processes
- >> Suitability / documentation for customers
- >> Statutory storage periods

Substantive (strategic) criteria for the information to be stored are, for example, the following:

- >> Success/profit/viability/liquidity
- >> Market/customer needs
- >> Ideas for new products and/or processes
- >> Patents, industrial property rights, recipes, procedures and other important confidential information
- >> Improving productivity
- >> Attractiveness in the eyes of recognised specialists
- >> Trouble-free and safe processes



>> 7.2 Documenting the level of knowledge

We document the existing level of knowledge. The documentation is available in a structured form and is accessible to any employee if necessary (the need to respect data protection regulations and rights of use).

Examples of documentation:

- >> Management instructions
- >> Instructions/descriptions of procedures
- >> Job descriptions
- >> Customer data
- >> Supplier data
- >> Occupational health and safety manuals (such as risk assessments, training certificates)
- >> Case descriptions



Preserving knowledge and skills

Successful practice Compare the described practice and examples with your own situation and decide whether you see a need for action. In larger entities, the word "company" may also mean the scope of responsibilities. → Preservation and safeguarding the necessary skills is further guaranteed by good Human Resource Management. You will find detailed information on this topic in the INQA "Human Resource Management" brochure (www.inqa-check-personalfuehrung.de)	Need for action
■ No action currently needed ■ Action needed ■ Urgent action needed	

>> 7.3 Preserving knowledge in the company independently of the employees

We make sure that the existing knowledge, even in case of change or loss of individual employees in the company, is preserved.



For example:

- >> Checking which people have the critical knowledge and/or necessary knowledge for the company
- >> Written record of individual employees' knowledge of particular processes/contact persons in their area of work and updating it regularly
- >> Mentoring (experienced employees act as contact persons for inexperienced employees)
- >> Making entries concerning individual employee's knowledge in company records (in the form of check-lists, instructions for use, operating instructions, contact lists, risk assessments)
- >> Ensuring that alternates can take over work at any time (replacement procedures)
- >> Implementation of new employees in good time before employees leave the company

>> 7.4 Safeguarding hidden knowledge of employees leaving the company

We try to act in advance to safeguard the hidden knowledge (implicit knowledge) and skills of employees leaving our company.



Some examples of hidden knowledge:

- >> Special approach for specific customers
- >> Individual routines within work procedures and processes
- >> Individual filing/storage systems
- >> Detailed agreements with customers and suppliers
- >> Problem solving strategies (advice and guidance)

Examples of how to discover hidden knowledge:

- >> Temporarily accompanying an employee who is about to leave the company (tandem work)
- >> A meeting to discuss the transfer of knowledge in detail
- >> Requesting employees to document processes (knowledge map, work map)
- >> Continuous rotation of work tasks to keep hidden knowledge as low as possible
- >> Mentoring (experienced employees as contact persons for inexperienced employees)

>> 7.5 Safeguarding documented knowledge

Documents in which we gathered the company's knowledge are sufficiently secured.



For example:

- >> From unauthorized access (firewall)
- >> From data loss, e.g. due to fire, flooding (backup)
- >> Through fire protection

8

Assessment of knowledge and skills

Goal:

We check and evaluate the knowledge and skills in the company in order to introduce improvements and effectively implement the appropriate strategy for the company.



Successful practice

Compare the described practice and examples with your own situation and decide whether you see a need for action.
In larger entities, the word "company" may also mean the scope of responsibilities.

Need for action

■ No action currently needed ■ Action needed ■ Urgent action needed

>> 8.1 Assessment and development of our employees' skill profiles

We review existing skill profiles and determine required actions to be taken



→ Go to "Skills in my company" on page 9.

>> 8.2 Evaluation of the achievement of knowledge-related objectives in the company

We check and evaluate the achievement of objectives to see if there is a need to introduce modifications/changes.



For example:


- >> By consistently and systematically applying the information in this brochure
- >> At management meetings
- >> At team meetings with employees
- >> At meetings of the Health and Safety Committee
- >> Using system-based analytical tools such as knowledge measurement (knowledge balance), skill portfolio update or the so-called Balanced Scorecard

→ See also Module 1 "Establishing goals concerning knowledge and skills" on page 10.


Assessment of knowledge and skills

Successful practice Compare the described practice and examples with your own situation and decide whether you see a need for action. In larger entities, the word "company" may also mean the scope of responsibilities.	Need for action
■ No action currently needed ■ Action needed ■ Urgent action needed	

>> 8.3 Continuous updating and development of knowledge

<p>We developed procedures for continuous evaluation, update and development of our knowledge resources. We make sure that the knowledge resources required to implement our corporate strategy are further developed and improved.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> Appointing a person responsible for managing the process and controlling its results >> A process whereby our knowledge resources can expand to create a more extensive network and new knowledge resources can be combined with existing resources (e.g. certification, INQA "Human Resource Management" brochure, "Success through innovation" business potential analysis, customer files, service barometer, GDA-ORGcheck brochure) >> Where necessary, set up working groups with representatives of different generations to combine the existing knowledge potential <p>→ The procedure consists, for example, in consistent implementation of modules 1-4 of this brochure from the point of view of further development and improvement.</p>	
<p>The desire to be perceived as attractive by customers and/or employees is one of our strengths that we consciously want to communicate in our marketing activities.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

>> 8.4 Data input and evaluation

<p>We established a procedure for entering new data and deleting outdated data, taking into account criteria on obsolete knowledge.</p> <p>What to consider when planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> Defining the scope of responsibilities and dates for checking the relevance of data >> Allocating time resources for data input and maintenance >> Creating opportunities for appropriate data disposal <p>→ See also module 7.1 "Knowledge preservation criteria" on page 22.</p>	
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IMPRESSUM

INQA "Knowledge and Skills" brochure

Self-assessment of the use of knowledge potential in the enterprise

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