



# Radical Knowledge Management

Learning from artists to  
sustain knowledge in the  
21st Century

White Belt  
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## Table of Contents

1	Introduction to Radical KM .....	4
1.1	Play and Creativity.....	5
2	Neuroscience of art.....	6
2.1	Diffuse versus Focused Thinking .....	9
3	Tactical Interventions .....	11
4	Studio Interventions.....	11
5	Why creativity and art.....	12
6	Implementing Radical KM .....	14
6.1	Back to Basics.....	15
6.2	Creating Time .....	16
6.3	An Open Approach.....	17
7	Organisational Culture .....	17
8	Leadership.....	19
9	Change Management.....	21
10	Innovation and Arts-based Interventions .....	22
11	Ideation .....	24
11.1	But how do you do that? .....	24
11.2	Play Supports KM .....	24
12	Sustainability .....	25
13	Metrics .....	27
14	Conclusion, call to action .....	28
15	Appendix 1: Frequently Asked Questions .....	29
16	Bibliography .....	35

## 1 Introduction to Radical KM

Back in 2011, after more than 10 years working in knowledge management (KM), I recognized a missing piece of the KM puzzle and its importance to creating new knowledge.

The seed of that idea — Radical Knowledge Management — was planted in a leadership workshop when I noticed a shift in my perspective. I had been told I could not do something — make a focal point in an abstract painting I had created — but then did it anyway. I did do it differently than everyone else did, but I achieved the goal: a focal point.

The next ah-ha moment came in a strategy workshop I was conducting. I had decided to try having participants create scribble drawings as a quick icebreaker to start the session off. I was curious to see what would happen and how people would react — and my curiosity was rewarded. People were more engaged and energized and I got better answers to my workshop questions, which resulted in a better strategy for the organization. When I repeated the scribble drawings at the end of the session, people were energized to go back to their desks to face the emails that had piled up while they were with me in the workshop.

From that moment on, I knew there was a link between these activities and knowledge creation, and it spurred me on. I experimented and researched, developing the idea one step at a time. Initially I called it Creative KM but shifted to Radical KM in the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic, after doing more research and experimentation. So, why the change? Why Radical KM?

While traditional knowledge management considers tacit and explicit knowledge, it focuses on capturing, organizing, and sharing that knowledge, by creating documents, procedures, and databases. However, Radical Knowledge Management goes beyond that. It too encompasses both explicit and tacit knowledge, which is the collective expertise, insights, and experiences of individuals within the organization and uses arts-based interventions in order to tap into all of the benefits of art on our brains.

In Radical Knowledge Management, the emphasis is on creating a culture that encourages and supports knowledge sharing, collaboration, and innovation. It involves breaking down hierarchical barriers and fostering a more open and transparent environment, where employees are empowered to contribute their ideas and knowledge freely.

To implement Radical Knowledge Management, you can start by establishing platforms and tools that facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration, such as intranets, social media platforms, or project management software and introducing arts-based interventions as a knowledge management activity. Encourage employees to document their tacit knowledge through journaling, storytelling, mentoring, or communities of practice.

Furthermore, prioritizing continuous learning and development by providing training opportunities, encouraging experimentation, and promoting a growth mindset throughout the organization. Encourage cross-functional teams and diverse perspectives to foster creativity and innovation.

By embracing Radical Knowledge Management, you can unlock the full potential of your organization's intellectual capital, enhance decision-making processes, accelerate problem-solving, and foster a culture of innovation. This holistic approach will ultimately drive your company's success in an increasingly dynamic and competitive business landscape.

## 1.1 Play and Creativity

Historically, “radical” has meant going back to the roots of something. Since KM is about learning, it seemed to make sense to go back to the roots of how people learn: playfully and creatively.

Unfortunately, being playful and creative in our learning have often been educated out of us in the name of efficiency, effectiveness, analysis, logic, and rationality. We have frequently been told they are frivolous and a waste of time, and for many of us the world has killed our inner artist and our creativity. Yet these traits are critical to helping us learn and create new knowledge. Knowledge work and knowledge management demand continuous learning in the world that we live in. Answers change, context changes, the world changes: It is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) and gets more so every day. We need to keep learning and adjusting. We cannot do things the way we have always done them. We can't even do things the way we did them a year ago.

Stores of previously recorded knowledge are not going to save us. Radical KM is about reintroducing creativity and arts-based interventions (ABIs) into our organizations to enable continuous learning, to enable resilience and curiosity, to build better teams, to be more innovative and to build knowledge sharing cultures — cultures where people trust and respect each other, where they collaborate willingly and happily, where their activities are more sustainable and where they understand the interactions between parts and see the whole.

Radical KM asks us to see our humanity — to understand that knowledge workers are humans and not machines. First and foremost, we are asked to consider what we need to do our jobs better in the world we live in and in the world, we want to live in.

There are so many benefits to bringing ABIs into our organizations. They make space for reflection, developing curiosity, critical thinking, and continuous learning. They help us to make space for seeing things differently, to understand the complexity of the world we live in and to make better, more sustainable decisions. Using ABIs in our organizations can be transformational and in a world that is on fire, literally and figuratively, we have some serious work to do transforming the way we live and work — making things sustainable now and for future generations.

Arts-based interventions can help us innovate, creating solutions to problems that have been unsolvable. They can help us break down barriers to collaboration and communication by putting us in a room sharing experiences and materials, so that we learn (again) how to talk and share with each other.

Finally, although it may seem counterintuitive, making space for ABIs can help us be more efficient and effective because doing so gives us the time that knowledge work requires. To do good knowledge work requires time for contemplation and reflection, asking questions and iterating to find a solution. This is how the human brain works; it is not a computer. Knowledge workers need time to think, to reflect, to research, to find right answers. Adding ABIs and space for creativity helps us to build more human organizations.

Do creativity and ABIs sound like a magic bullet? Perhaps. However, when you consider that we have been operating for hundreds of years using only half of our capabilities because we have focused on the logical and analytical, perhaps the act of being more artistic and creative should be expected to have this kind of “magical” effect.

Knowledge is human, and recognizing our humanity in our knowledge processes only makes sense. That’s what Radical Knowledge Management does.

## 2 Neuroscience of art

There are many benefits to including the arts in our lives, everything from wellness and mental and physical health benefits to accelerated learning and community building. We have known these things intuitively and anecdotally and now neuroscience is giving us the data and science behind what we have known all along.

The book “Your Brain on Art: how the arts transform us” by Susan Magsamen and Ivy Ross, which was published in March 2023. gives examples of arts-based interventions being used in the “real world” and quite neatly brings together many of the benefits realised by tapping into our inner artist. The book discusses the neuroscience behind art’s impact and supports the use of the arts in all aspects of life and work, art really is a panacea.

The book is divided into seven chapters, six of them focused on one of art’s areas of impact and starting with a general overview of the arts and their usage. The six disciplines are well-being, mental health, healing the body, amplifying learning, flourishing, and creating community. Each chapter is supported by a discussion of the neuroscience and case studies that support the fact that using the arts in each of these disciplines has a measurable, positive impact.

So, why is this true? Why is art a panacea? The authors start by explaining what is happening within our bodies and brains when we experience art. They include a survey that you can do now, and again 2-3 months in the future so that you can gauge how you have changed after trying some of the activities suggested in the book. Very simply, it boils down to the fact that our brains are plastic (which is the ability of neural networks in the brain to change through growth and reorganization) and the arts facilitate our brains growing and changing because they have significant impact in the part of our brain that is responsible for saliency. Saliency is the filtering of what our brains determine as important or not important. So, instead of discarding things because our brains think they’re not important, the filter is opened to more information—open mindedness and thus sees more options and possibilities. This

open mindedness impacts everything about how we experience the world; this is how having artistic experiences changes our brain and impacts so many disciplines.

**Well-being:** we are feeling beings who think, not thinking beings who feel, much as our obsession with science and technology would have us believe otherwise. The arts give us a way to express our feelings beyond words, helping us process both positive and negative emotions rather than ignore the complexity of our emotions, which is what caregivers, teachers, coworkers, and society in general wants us to do. Emotions are useful biological communicators that have evolved to help us survive, having them get stuck in our bodies should never be the goal, but that's what happens when we deny them.

**Mental health:** when we deny and ignore our feelings, this is when our mental health is impacted. Arts programs have helped people suffering from mental health issues to access and express the experiences they had locked away. This chapter discusses many examples and case studies, one of the most startling is the use of drawing as a tool for processing the trauma of the refugees of the war in Ukraine. Using drawing as an early intervention to help release the fear, the number of people who qualified for a diagnosis of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) dropped by more than 80%.

**Healing the body:** the combination of art and science combining to heal the body is discussed in this chapter. Art is a powerful addition because while pharmaceuticals work on one channel/pathway, art, through its impact on the brain and our bodies can trigger hundreds of mechanisms to work together. One of the most interesting examples from this chapter is the effect of art on the treatment of pain. Pain is difficult to identify and describe, and everyone's experience is different, but by using drawing, an art therapist was able to work with a child to identify the source/nature of his pain and then the doctors and the child's parents were able to take steps to resolve the issue, which wasn't physical but rather were stress related. Then there's the example of engaging in the arts to prevent dementia and chronic disease that lends more support to the idea of using the arts to heal (or slow the decline of) the body: people who engage in the arts every few months have a 31% lower risk of premature death when compared to those who don't.

**Amplifying learning:** here we start to see the impact that the arts have in ways that are external to ourselves, in how we connect and interact with society. The arts amplify the social, emotional, and cognitive elements of learning, this connects to brain plasticity—creating new connections in the brain. The chapter discusses several studies that were done with children that show the enhancement of learning through incorporating the arts. Describing work that was done by Ellen Winner and Lois Hetland and published in their book, "Studio Thinking: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education" the arts impact an area of learning known as 'executive function'. Executive function is our capacity to manage our thoughts, actions, and emotions to achieve our goals. A quote from a case study of work done at Google discussed in the chapter, sums things up nicely, "The future of learning and leadership development is clearly multi-dimensional and experiential".

**Flourishing:** is about reaching our potential, and about living an authentic and full life. When someone is flourishing, they are curious, creative, and open to new experiences. This chapter discussed five aspects of flourishing: curiosity and wonder, awe, enriched

environments, creativity, rituals, novelty, and surprise. The arts figure in all of these from facilitating curiosity and wonder through activities as simple as looking at art, to inspiring awe by looking at a rainbow or the stars, not to mention larger initiatives like art-making that reconnects us to our creativity.

**Creating Community:** penultimate chapter discusses how the arts impact our communities, how it brings people together and that is part of our biology and one of the things that has facilitated our civilisation—art was a form of communication in prehistoric times, and it was used to express feelings, beliefs, and observations. It evolved from there, to the current times where it is a means of creating new thoughts and ideas and weaving our humanity together to enable a better future together.

This book details the science of how the arts impact us, and why they are a necessary part of our lives, both personally and professionally. The authors explain that the complexity and messiness of the arts is its strength, not a weakness, as many people would have us believe. That oversimplification (of its messiness) is the wrong lens to be using and we need to look at the arts with a different lens that incorporates its complexity, so it really is a panacea.

The chapters on amplifying learning, flourishing, and creating community connect clearly to the ideas of Radical Knowledge Management: adding creativity and arts-based interventions to the way organisations work, to improve all the things talked about in the book: learning, innovation, community, well-being. Art has such a wide impact.

Focusing on the analytical aspects of our being has made us short-sighted, and narrow minded, and has resulted in unsustainable ways of living and existing on the planet because we have lost sight of the big picture and the interconnectedness of everything. This idea is discussed extensively in the book, “The Master and His Emissary” by Iain Mc Gilchrist.

The book, “Your Brain on Art”, demonstrates, that not only are the arts necessary, but they are also an integral part of our being which has been ignored for too long. Our education systems, organisations, and society at large, have told us that the arts are an extra, a nice to have, not a must have. Resulting in our creativity being educated out of us. This book makes clear that that is a lie, that we have done ourselves a huge disservice, and that we are long past due correcting the situation.

As the book, “Your Brain on Art” illustrates, the neuroscience of art holds significant relevance in Radical Knowledge Management, providing organisations with valuable insights into how art can influence and enhance organizational practices. Understanding the importance of the neuroscience of art can empower organisations to leverage artistic principles and techniques to drive innovation, creativity, and overall performance within their organizations.

Art stimulates the brain in unique ways, triggering emotions, promoting divergent thinking, and fostering neural connections. By incorporating art-based practices into knowledge management strategies, organisations can unlock several benefits. Firstly, art-based activities, such as visualizations, can improve memory retention and recall, facilitating the absorption and retrieval of information critical to decision-making and problem-solving.



Secondly, the neuroscience of art highlights the significance of aesthetics in creating engaging and meaningful experiences. By incorporating artistic elements into the workplace environment, organisations can enhance employee satisfaction, motivation, and overall well-being. This, in turn, promotes collaboration, productivity, and a positive organizational culture.

Moreover, the neuroscience of art emphasizes the role of creativity and imagination in knowledge creation and innovation. Artistic endeavors stimulate the brain's creative centers, enabling individuals to think beyond boundaries, explore new perspectives, and generate novel ideas. Organisations can harness this understanding to foster a culture of innovation, where employees are encouraged to embrace imaginative thinking and apply creative approaches to problem-solving.

Additionally, the neuroscience of art reveals the power of storytelling in knowledge sharing and communication. Artistic mediums, such as visual arts, music, and storytelling, engage multiple sensory channels, making information more memorable and impactful. Organisations can leverage storytelling techniques to convey complex concepts, inspire collaboration, and facilitate the effective transfer of knowledge across the organization.

In summary, the neuroscience of art provides organisations with a scientific foundation for incorporating artistic principles and practices into Radical Knowledge Management. By leveraging the power of art, organisations can enhance memory retention, create engaging work environments, foster creativity, and facilitate effective knowledge sharing. Embracing the neuroscience of art empowers organisations to drive innovation, boost employee engagement, and achieve sustainable organizational growth and decision making.

## 2.1 Diffuse versus Focused Thinking

There are two types of thinking, both are necessary and useful, although our society has focused on focused thinking. We have been taught that focus is the key to everything, from getting good grades, to doing well in our lives and careers. We need to be focused on our goals and logical and analytical in the execution of our plans to achieve them. However, if we are going to be innovative and creative in our approach to life and work and solve the problems that being overly analytical has caused, we need to be more balanced in our approach and make space more space for diffuse thinking.

Diffuse thinking is stepping back, letting your mind wander and do other things, while it subconsciously works on the problem, making those connections that are necessary for creativity and problem solving. It is called diffuse thinking because it happens all over your brain, not just in one hyper-focused part of it, like in focused thinking.

Focused thinking, then, is focused on a particular topic. In focused thinking your brain processes very specific information deeply. This is good for details, and doing singular tasks, like studying or a something we are really focused on.

Neither is better or worse than the other, they are just different, and necessary depending on what we're doing. Radical KM is, in part, about making more space for diffuse thinking in

our organisations using arts-based interventions, so that we can make more connections and solve the problems we're facing as organisations, and society.

In Radical Knowledge Management, the balance between diffuse and focused thinking is crucial for promoting creativity, problem-solving, and knowledge acquisition within an organization. Understanding the importance of these thinking modes can help organisations optimize knowledge management practices and drive innovation.

Focused thinking involves concentrated, deliberate attention on a specific task or problem. It is essential for deep analysis, logical reasoning, and detailed planning. Focused thinking enables individuals to break down complex challenges into manageable parts, identify patterns, and develop structured solutions. It is particularly useful for executing well-defined tasks and achieving short-term goals.

On the other hand, diffuse thinking involves a more relaxed and expansive state of mind. It allows for creative insights, making connections, and synthesizing diverse information. Diffuse thinking encourages exploration, open-mindedness, and the generation of novel ideas. It is particularly effective in tackling complex, ambiguous problems and fostering innovation.

In Radical Knowledge Management, striking a balance between diffuse and focused thinking is critical. Here's why:

1. **Creativity and Innovation:** Diffuse thinking encourages out-of-the-box thinking, enabling individuals to come up with innovative ideas and solutions. By encouraging employees to engage in activities that promote diffuse thinking, such as taking breaks, engaging in hobbies, or exploring unrelated fields, organisations can foster a culture of creativity and support the generation of ground-breaking knowledge.
2. **Problem-solving:** Focused thinking helps in analyzing problems and developing specific solutions. However, solely relying on focused thinking may limit the exploration of alternative approaches. By integrating diffuse thinking, employees can step back, gain fresh perspectives, and consider unconventional solutions, leading to more effective problem-solving and better decision-making.
3. **Learning and Knowledge Acquisition:** Diffuse thinking facilitates the assimilation and integration of new knowledge. By providing opportunities for reflection, brainstorming sessions, and open-ended discussions, organisations can encourage employees to engage in diffuse thinking, allowing them to connect diverse pieces of information and build a more holistic understanding of complex subjects.
4. **Flexibility and Adaptability:** In today's dynamic business environment, organizations need to be adaptable. Balancing diffuse and focused thinking allows for flexibility, as employees can shift between deep analysis and creative exploration as needed. This agility enables organizations to respond to changing circumstances, identify emerging opportunities, and adapt their knowledge management strategies accordingly.

In summary, Radical Knowledge Management recognizes the importance of both diffuse and focused thinking. By encouraging a healthy balance between these thinking modes, organisations can nurture creativity, foster innovation, enhance problem-solving capabilities, support continuous learning, and promote organizational adaptability.

### 3 Tactical Interventions

Tactical Interventions for Radical KM are small interventions that can be done with the materials and equipment that people have on hand, in some cases the facilitator may need to do some work to organize the logistics, but a minimal amount of extra equipment or materials are needed. These small interventions often take less than 5 minutes, although some may take a bit longer. They are icebreaker-type activities that involve the arts, so can include improvisation and storytelling games, drawing, building sculptures, music, anything that is playful and gets people out of their heads and comfort zones, and into diffuse thinking.

The benefits of these small interventions include the fact that they can be done at the beginning of a meeting or event, to help bring focus to what is about to take place, and to shift people's thinking from what or wherever they just came from. They give a break from focused thinking for a few moments so that when people turn to something new to focus on, they can truly focus.

### 4 Studio Interventions

Studio interventions are bigger interventions that may take place in a studio or other location and require more planning and facilitation. They may involve facilitators from the knowledge management team or elsewhere, or professional artists to lead and conduct the session. These larger sessions normally take place over a series of days or weeks and are focused on a particular topic or problem that is being solved. Some examples of studio interventions are strategy workshops that are held to plan and develop a new strategy and uses ABIs to get participants thinking differently and considering different aspects of what is needed for a new strategy; team building workshops to improve team collaboration, communication, and trust with ABIs; or a workshop that uses ABIs to problem-solve an intractable problem. ABIs can be used in all these cases to build trust, communication, and collaboration, not to mention get people out of their boxes and thinking about a problem or situation differently. Having a shared experience helps build trust and community among the participants, something that will continue beyond the current activity.

The use of a studio space for arts-based interventions in Radical Knowledge Management can provide a dedicated environment for creativity, collaboration, and knowledge sharing within an organization. A studio space offers a physical setting that supports artistic expression, experimentation, and the exploration of new ideas. Here are some ways a studio space can be utilized for arts-based interventions in Radical Knowledge Management:

1. **Creative Workshops:** The studio space can be used to conduct creative workshops, where employees can participate in various artistic activities like painting, sculpting, or collage-making. These workshops provide an opportunity for individuals to engage in hands-on creative experiences, unleash their imagination, and tap into their artistic potential. Creative workshops can foster collaboration, build relationships, and promote innovative thinking.

2. Idea Generation Sessions: The studio space can serve as a dedicated area for idea generation sessions, where employees can come together to brainstorm and generate innovative ideas. The open and relaxed environment of the studio can inspire free thinking, encourage unconventional approaches, and promote out-of-the-box solutions to challenges. It provides a physical space where individuals can break away from traditional office settings and engage in creative ideation.

3. Collaborative Projects: The studio space can facilitate collaborative art projects that involve multiple individuals or teams working together to create artwork or installations. Collaborative projects encourage cross-functional collaboration, communication, and the sharing of diverse perspectives. They allow employees to collectively generate knowledge, co-create solutions, and leverage the collective intelligence of the organization.

4. Exhibitions and Showcases: The studio space can be used to display and exhibit artwork created by employees. Regular exhibitions and showcases provide a platform to celebrate creativity, recognize talent, and inspire others. It creates a sense of pride and accomplishment among employees, fostering a culture that values artistic expression and creative contributions.

5. Reflection and Relaxation: The studio space can also serve as a space for reflection and relaxation. It can be designed to provide a calm and peaceful environment where employees can take breaks, recharge their creative energy, and engage in personal artistic endeavors. This can help reduce stress, enhance well-being, and promote a healthy work-life balance.

By providing a dedicated studio space, organizations demonstrate their commitment to fostering creativity, collaboration, and innovation. The studio becomes a hub for artistic expression, knowledge creation, and sharing within the organization. It serves as a physical manifestation of the organization's support for arts-based interventions in Radical Knowledge Management, promoting a culture that values diverse perspectives, embraces creativity, and encourages continuous learning.

## 5 Why creativity and art

Why do we need to relearn creativity? Why does it need to be reactivated? The simple answer is because it's been educated out of us, and we can go back a bit more than 100 years and trace that to the production line that was developed with Ford's manufacturing of automobiles at the turn of the last century and how the education systems in many countries were set-up to facilitate a flow of labour to the factories that developed towards the end of the industrial age. However, our loss of creativity goes back further than that, further back than the Enlightenment, further back than the Dark Ages. The roots of our loss of creativity in the West started with the Romans 2500 years ago this split between the arts and science goes back at least that far.

Relearning creativity enables a variety of behaviours: curiosity, passion, confidence, and resilience, which are also known as having an artistic attitude as well as perception, reflection, play, and performance. This second set of behaviours come from having an artistic practice and all these activities together enable the sustainable behaviours that were

mentioned earlier in this article. Relearning creativity also brings with it the reanimation of the behaviours that support sustainability which were mentioned earlier.

Without creativity organisations are siloed and stagnating. KM is reduced to content graveyards focused on technology rather than people. It does not consider the whole person or the whole knowledge lifecycle. People do not have the knowledge they need to do their jobs, and yet, that is exactly what knowledge management is meant to facilitate.

We need to reactivate our creativity and playfulness because our survival depends on it, focusing on optimising specific specialised activities has led us down an unsustainable path, we need the benefits of all parts of our brain, all types of thinking (focused and diffuse) to take us to a more balanced, sustainable way of living and being in our world.

Creativity and art are crucial elements for organizational success due to their numerous benefits and contributions. Key reasons why creativity and art play a vital role in fostering organizational success include:

1. **Innovation and Adaptability:** Creativity is the driving force behind innovation. It enables organizations to develop new products, services, processes, and business models. By encouraging employees to think creatively and embrace artistic approaches, organizations can unlock innovative solutions, stay ahead of the competition, and adapt to changing market demands.
2. **Problem Solving and Decision Making:** Creativity and art foster critical thinking and enhance problem-solving skills. By encouraging employees to approach challenges from different perspectives and think outside the box, organizations can identify novel solutions to complex problems. Creative thinking also improves decision-making processes by considering diverse options and evaluating risks and opportunities more effectively.
3. **Employee Engagement and Satisfaction:** Incorporating creativity and art into the workplace environment boosts employee engagement and satisfaction. Engaging in creative activities and expressing oneself artistically fosters a sense of autonomy, purpose, and fulfillment among employees. This, in turn, leads to increased motivation, productivity, and loyalty.
4. **Collaboration and Teamwork:** Creativity and art promote collaboration and teamwork. When individuals engage in creative processes together, they exchange ideas, build upon each other's contributions, and develop shared ownership of projects. Artistic activities create a supportive and inclusive atmosphere where diverse perspectives are valued, leading to enhanced collaboration and synergy within teams.
5. **Communication and Expression:** Artistic mediums provide powerful tools for communication and expression. Visual arts, storytelling, and other creative forms enable individuals to convey complex ideas, emotions, and experiences in a compelling and memorable manner. Effective communication fosters shared understanding, facilitates knowledge sharing, and strengthens relationships within the organization.

6. Organizational Culture and Branding: Creativity and art contribute to shaping a distinct organizational culture and branding. Organizations that embrace creativity and artistic expression attract and retain top talent, as they are seen as dynamic, innovative, and inspiring places to work. A strong brand built on creativity and artistry also resonates with customers, setting the organization apart from competitors.

7. Adaptability to Change: In today's fast-paced and unpredictable business landscape, organizations must be adaptable. Creativity and art provide the mindset and tools necessary to navigate change successfully. By embracing creativity, organizations foster a culture of curiosity, resilience, and continuous learning, allowing them to embrace new opportunities and overcome challenges.

In summary, creativity and art are integral to organizational success as they drive innovation, enhance problem-solving capabilities, boost employee engagement, foster collaboration, improve communication, and cultivate an adaptable and inspiring organizational culture. Embracing creativity and artistry enables organizations to thrive in a rapidly evolving business environment and differentiate themselves in the marketplace.

## 6 Implementing Radical KM

The hardest part about integrating arts-based interventions into our work isn't logistics; it's the stories that we tell ourselves about why we can't. We don't want to look silly! What will our colleagues think? Are the benefits there? We've been told for a long time, in many ways, that work should be logical, practical, rational and things should go from A to B to C in that order in a straight line to maximize efficiency and effectiveness. But what if that's not true?

So how do we bring ABIs into our work activities? We plan and prepare. We anticipate and address factors such as: How long is the meeting? What are we trying to accomplish? How many people will be attending? Is the meeting virtual, in-person, hybrid, synchronous or asynchronous? All those things matter and will have an impact on the activity or activities you choose.

Implementing Radical Knowledge Management (RKM) requires a strategic and systematic approach to transform how knowledge is managed, shared, and utilized within an organization, it's important to start small and iterate. Some steps to guide the implementation process:

1. Assess Current Knowledge Management Practices: Start by conducting a thorough assessment of the organization's current knowledge management practices. Identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. This assessment should include an analysis of existing systems, processes, and cultural factors that impact knowledge sharing and collaboration.

2. Define Vision and Objectives: Develop a clear vision and set specific objectives for implementing RKM. Define what you aim to achieve with RKM, such as fostering innovation, improving decision-making, or enhancing organizational learning. Ensure alignment with the organization's overall goals and strategies.

3. Cultivate a Knowledge-Sharing Culture: Create an organizational culture that values and promotes knowledge sharing, collaboration, and continuous learning. Encourage open communication, create forums for sharing ideas and experiences, and recognize and reward knowledge sharing behaviors. Foster a safe and supportive environment that encourages employees to contribute their expertise and insights.

4. Establish Knowledge Management Processes: Design and implement knowledge management processes that facilitate the capture, organization, dissemination, and application of knowledge. This may include defining knowledge sharing protocols, implementing technologies and systems to support knowledge management, and establishing mechanisms for capturing tacit knowledge.

5. Provide Training and Support: Offer training and development programs to equip employees with the necessary skills and knowledge for effective knowledge management. This can include training on information retrieval, critical thinking, collaboration, and using knowledge management tools and platforms. Provide ongoing support and resources to ensure employees are empowered to participate in RKM initiatives.

6. Encourage Experimentation and Innovation: Foster a culture of experimentation and innovation by encouraging employees to explore new ideas, take risks, and challenge existing practices. Create opportunities for employees to engage in creative problem-solving, participate in cross-functional projects, and collaborate across departments.

8. Monitor, Evaluate, and Iterate: Continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of RKM initiatives. Gather feedback from employees, measure key performance indicators, and assess the impact of RKM on organizational outcomes. Use this information to refine and iterate on the implementation approach and make necessary adjustments.

9. Leadership Support and Commitment: Leadership support is crucial for the successful implementation of RKM. Leaders should champion knowledge sharing, allocate resources, and lead by example in practicing and promoting RKM principles. Ensure that RKM is integrated into the organization's strategic priorities and regularly communicate its importance to all stakeholders.

10. Foster Continuous Improvement: RKM is an ongoing journey of continuous improvement. Regularly revisit and refine knowledge management processes, address emerging challenges, and incorporate feedback from employees. Encourage a culture of learning and adaptability, where the organization continuously evolves and embraces new approaches to knowledge management.

By following these steps, organizations can lay the foundation for successful implementation of Radical Knowledge Management, fostering a knowledge-driven culture, promoting innovation, and maximizing the value of intellectual capital within the organization.

## 6.1 Back to Basics

The hardest part about integrating arts-based interventions into our work isn't logistics; it's the stories that we tell ourselves about why we can't. We don't want to look silly! What will

our colleagues think? Are the benefits there? We've been told for a long time, in many ways, that work should be logical, practical, rational and things should go from A to B to C in that order in a straight line to maximize efficiency and effectiveness. But what if that's not true?

So how do we bring ABIs into our work activities? We plan and prepare. We anticipate and address factors such as: How long is the meeting? What are we trying to accomplish? How many people will be attending? Is the meeting virtual, in-person, hybrid, synchronous or asynchronous? All those things matter and will have an impact on the activity or activities you choose.

Generally, I suggest people seeking to add ABIs to their work start with something small: a guided visualization, a scribble drawing or perhaps making a sculpture out of things on their desk. Do it at the start of a team meeting! In some cases, it's just a different form of icebreaker that many teams started doing during the pandemic.

Make sure you debrief the activity afterwards. See what people thought: Did they like it? Did they have any insights or things they would like to share (they may, or they may not; either is fine).

Bringing these quick activities into regular meetings helps start to build the culture around creativity and reflection. These activities also help to build trust and psychological safety, both of which are key to being successful in the world we live and work in.

## 6.2 Creating Time

Knowledge work requires time for reflection and diffuse thinking. We spend much of our time doing focused thinking and trying to solve problems by crunching more data, but the magic happens in the white space between the boxes. Innovation and novel ideas come from diffuse thinking — taking the focus away and letting our minds wander and do different things.

Albert Einstein was a big proponent of this approach. He called it Image Streaming, as author Win Wenger described in "The Einstein Factor." One of the things Einstein did to encourage diffuse thinking was playing the violin. In a 1931 interview, he wrote, "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution. It is, strictly speaking, a real factor in scientific research." Arts-based interventions fuel imagination.

Now, back to the hardest part of adding arts-based interventions: they're new, different and — in many cases — uncomfortable for people to facilitate. I encourage starting with a team or group that is already friendly or familiar and to frame it as an experiment — something you're trying just to see what happens. It's a learning experience, for the facilitator and the participants, so keep that in mind and be curious about potential outcomes. If your experience is like mine was, the first time I tried scribble drawings with a group that were providing input in a knowledge management strategy and technology requirements workshop I was leading, you will be pleasantly surprised. The energy and engagement will



shift, you will get responses that are more thoughtful and detailed, and you will be glad that you tried the experiment.

### 6.3 An Open Approach

Some other tips for starting out:

**Feel the fear and do it anyway.** In all the times I've led arts-based activities, I've never had a bad outcome. I've never had anyone get mad and leave a workshop over it. If anything, I've gained credibility for being brave enough to try something that goes against the norm and people have been happy and surprised at the outcomes.

**Be curious and playful.** Remember when you were young, and just did stuff to see what would happen? Cultivate that sense of wonder again. What are you afraid of? Share it with the group if it's a group that you know and/or are comfortable with. People will appreciate your honesty, which not only helps build psychological safety but also gives them permission to try and do something different or share some thoughts or questions they may have been hesitant to share.

**Start with an easy activity.** I've mentioned scribble drawings a few times. They're my go-to activity when I need something quick and easy to do. Everyone has a piece of paper and a pen/pencil, and that's all it takes. The idea is to get people out of their heads for a few minutes. I've had people solve problems they had been struggling with for months because they did a scribble drawing.

Scribble drawing instructions, online version:

1. Put your drawing tool on your paper.
2. Scribble for about 5 seconds with your eyes closed.
3. Open your eyes. What do you see?
4. Add something to your scribble.
5. Spend five minutes finishing your scribble drawing. Bring out shapes or objects you see — it's like laying on your back and looking at clouds.
6. Make a list of the first five thoughts or words that come to you when you look at your drawing/scribbles. No censoring.
7. Write for five minutes, stream of consciousness style. consciousness.
8. Debrief.

If you're crunched for time, you may want to skip steps 6 and 7. Or, if you're in a physical space together, you can pass the pieces of paper around the room a half-dozen times and have each person add something to the drawing. (When you do the in-person version, make sure everyone writes their names on their papers, because they won't recognize them when they get them back.)

It really is that easy to get started! The hardest part is getting past the stories we tell ourselves about why we can't.

## 7 Organisational Culture

In trying to create a knowledge sharing culture we are trying to create a culture that people trust and respect each other, where they feel it is safe to share their knowledge their experiences, their failures, and their successes without penalty. Arts based interventions allow people to have a shared experience and to get to know each other in a different way than just working on a spreadsheet or project together. Arts based interventions are fun and engaging and help people get to know each other on an informal basis, without pressure, this builds trust and psychological safety. These experiences and trust relationships extend beyond the project or department and influence the rest of the organization.

RKM can have a profound impact on organizational culture by influencing the values, behaviors, and norms related to knowledge sharing, collaboration, and learning. Here are some ways in which RKM impacts organizational culture:

1. **Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration:** RKM encourages a culture of knowledge sharing and collaboration. It emphasizes the importance of open communication, sharing expertise, and leveraging collective intelligence. As RKM practices are adopted, employees are encouraged to contribute their knowledge and experiences, fostering a culture that values collaboration and teamwork.
2. **Learning and Continuous Improvement:** RKM promotes a culture of continuous learning and improvement. It emphasizes the importance of leveraging knowledge for innovation and staying abreast of evolving trends and best practices. This culture of learning encourages employees to seek new knowledge, experiment, and embrace a growth mindset.
3. **Trust and Psychological Safety:** RKM relies on trust and psychological safety to thrive. Employees need to feel comfortable sharing their knowledge, ideas, and insights without fear of judgment or negative consequences. By fostering a culture of trust and psychological safety, RKM encourages open dialogue, constructive feedback, and risk-taking.
4. **Innovation and Creativity:** RKM stimulates a culture of innovation and creativity within an organization. By encouraging employees to explore diverse perspectives, think critically, and challenge existing assumptions, RKM supports the generation of innovative ideas and approaches. This culture of innovation promotes creative problem-solving and a willingness to experiment with new solutions.
5. **Collaboration across Hierarchies:** RKM challenges traditional hierarchies and promotes collaboration across all levels of the organization. It encourages employees to contribute their expertise and insights, irrespective of their position or rank. This inclusive culture fosters a sense of shared ownership and enables a more holistic and comprehensive approach to knowledge management.
6. **Appreciation of Tacit Knowledge:** RKM acknowledges the value of tacit knowledge, which is often embedded in individuals' experiences, skills, and intuition. This recognition fosters a culture that appreciates and respects diverse expertise and encourages employees to share their tacit knowledge. It promotes an environment where employees feel valued for their unique contributions.

7. Flexibility and Adaptability: RKM promotes a culture of flexibility and adaptability in the face of changing circumstances. As organizations embrace RKM, they become more responsive to emerging knowledge and external factors. This culture of adaptability enables organizations to quickly learn, unlearn, and relearn in order to stay relevant and competitive.

8. Leadership Support and Role Modeling: The impact of RKM on organizational culture is greatly influenced by leadership support and role modeling. When leaders actively promote and participate in RKM practices, it sends a powerful message to employees about the importance of knowledge sharing, collaboration, and continuous learning. Leadership support helps embed RKM principles into the fabric of the organizational culture.

In summary, RKM has a transformative impact on organizational culture by promoting knowledge sharing, collaboration, learning, innovation, and adaptability. By fostering a culture that values these principles, organizations can create an environment where knowledge flows freely, creativity thrives, and employees are empowered to contribute their expertise and insights for the collective success of the organization.

## 8 Leadership

Radical KM helps develop leadership because it helps you learn to look at the big picture and to be curious and to consider what you are trying to achieve. Arts based interventions help us to see the interconnectedness of things and to iterate and learn and be curious and consider other ways of looking at situations--all skills that are required for good leadership. Good leadership also requires confidence in yourself and others. Tapping into your inner artist helps to develop confidence, it helps to develop resilience, so that when things do not go the way that you think they should or the way that you want them to you can recover and try again or to reassess and make a new decision, take a new direction based on the information you have now.

Radical Knowledge Management (RKM) is important for leadership development and execution as it provides leaders with a framework and tools to effectively manage and leverage knowledge within their organizations.

Radical KM helps develop leadership because it helps you learn to look at the big picture and to be curious and to consider what you are trying to achieve. Arts based interventions help us to see the interconnectedness of things and to iterate and learn and be curious and consider other ways of looking at situations--all skills that are required for good leadership. Good leadership also requires confidence in yourself and others. Tapping into your inner artist helps to develop confidence, it helps to develop resilience, so that when things do not go the way that you think they should or the way that you want them to you can recover and try again or to reassess and make a new decision, take a new direction based on the information you have now.

Additional reasons why RKM is crucial for leadership development and execution:

1. Strategic Decision Making: RKM equips leaders with the knowledge and information they need to make informed and strategic decisions. By implementing RKM practices, leaders have access to a wealth of organizational knowledge, best practices, and insights from

diverse perspectives. This enables them to make more informed decisions, mitigate risks, and identify opportunities for growth.

2. Innovation and Adaptability: RKM fosters a culture of innovation and adaptability, which are essential for effective leadership. Leaders who embrace RKM encourage their teams to think creatively, challenge the status quo, and explore new ideas. This mindset promotes innovation, encourages experimentation, and enables leaders to adapt to changing market conditions and emerging trends.

3. Continuous Learning: RKM promotes a culture of continuous learning and development. Leaders who champion RKM understand the importance of ongoing learning and encourage their teams to acquire new knowledge and skills. They facilitate knowledge sharing, provide learning opportunities, and model a commitment to personal and professional growth.

4. Collaboration and Teamwork: RKM emphasizes the importance of collaboration and teamwork. Leaders who implement RKM practices create an environment where knowledge sharing, and collaboration are encouraged and rewarded. They foster cross-functional collaboration, break down silos, and promote a sense of shared ownership and collective responsibility. This enables leaders to build high-performing teams and drive successful execution of organizational goals.

5. Knowledge Transfer and Succession Planning: RKM facilitates knowledge transfer and succession planning within an organization. Leaders who embrace RKM ensure that knowledge is captured, documented, and shared across teams and generations. This helps in developing future leaders, ensuring a smooth transition of knowledge and expertise, and minimizing knowledge gaps during leadership transitions.

6. Effective Communication: RKM enhances leaders' communication capabilities. Leaders who practice RKM understand the importance of effective knowledge sharing and communication. They use various communication channels and techniques to disseminate knowledge, align teams around shared goals, and foster a culture of transparency and open communication.

7. Organizational Alignment: RKM helps leaders align their teams and departments towards common goals and objectives. By implementing RKM practices, leaders ensure that knowledge is shared and leveraged across the organization, promoting consistency and alignment in decision-making and execution. This alignment drives organizational effectiveness and enhances the execution of strategic initiatives.

8. Agility and Resilience: RKM enables leaders to navigate uncertainty and build organizational agility and resilience. Leaders who embrace RKM are better equipped to respond to rapidly changing environments, make quick and informed decisions, and leverage the collective knowledge of their teams. This agility and resilience are critical for effective leadership in dynamic and unpredictable business landscapes.

In summary, Radical Knowledge Management is important for leadership development and execution as it empowers leaders with the knowledge, skills, and tools to make strategic

decisions, foster innovation, promote collaboration, drive continuous learning, and effectively communicate within their organizations. By embracing RKM, leaders can enhance their leadership capabilities and drive successful execution of organizational strategies.

## 9 Change Management

Change management for Radical KM and arts-based interventions is not any different than any other change management that you would do for your knowledge management program or any other change initiative. There is lots of communication, lots of storytelling, lots of education, lots of iteration, lots of pilots, and starting small. Find the people who are interested and supportive and start with them, building out from there, a kind of a guerrilla approach to implementation. Find your change agents and your supporters who will help you communicate and educate and get the word out, the people who will help you facilitate the sessions and provide leadership. Make sure, as with KM, that you have visible support from those in senior management supporting this approach. As with knowledge management, radical knowledge management and arts-based interventions requires a top-down and bottom-up approach this does not change and is, in fact, as critical as ever.

For clarity, change management for Radical Knowledge Management (RKM) requires a systematic approach to plan and execute the transformation within an organization. Here are key steps to consider when implementing change management for RKM:

1. **Define the Vision:** Clearly articulate the vision and objectives for implementing RKM. Communicate why RKM is important, the benefits it will bring to the organization, and how it aligns with the organization's strategic goals. Engage key stakeholders, including leaders, managers, and employees, to build understanding and support for the change.
2. **Assess Readiness:** Conduct a thorough assessment of the organization's readiness for RKM. Evaluate the current culture, capabilities, and infrastructure related to knowledge management. Identify potential barriers, challenges, and areas that require improvement to support the implementation of RKM effectively.
3. **Develop a Change Management Plan:** Create a comprehensive change management plan that outlines the steps, timelines, and resources required for implementing RKM. Define the key activities, roles and responsibilities, and communication strategies to engage and involve employees throughout the process.
4. **Communicate and Engage:** Effective communication is essential for successful change management. Develop a communication plan that provides regular updates, explains the rationale for RKM, and addresses any concerns or questions from employees. Engage employees at all levels by involving them in the decision-making process, seeking their input, and addressing their feedback and concerns.
5. **Build Awareness and Capability:** Educate employees about RKM and its benefits. Offer training programs and workshops to build awareness and develop the necessary skills and capabilities related to RKM practices and tools. Provide ongoing support and resources to ensure employees feel confident and equipped to adopt RKM.

6. Pilot and Test: Start with a pilot project or a small-scale implementation of RKM. Select a department or team that is open to change and can serve as a role model for others. Monitor the progress, gather feedback, and assess the effectiveness of RKM practices. Use the pilot phase to identify any adjustments or refinements needed before scaling up.

7. Foster Champions and Change Agents: Identify and empower champions and change agents within the organization who can advocate for RKM and drive its adoption. These individuals should be enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and capable of influencing and inspiring others. They can help build momentum, provide guidance, and support others during the change process.

8. Provide Support and Celebrate Success: Offer ongoing support and resources to employees as they adopt RKM practices. Provide coaching, mentoring, and additional training as needed. Recognize and celebrate successes, both big and small, to reinforce positive behaviors and create a culture of appreciation and recognition.

9. Monitor and Adjust: Continuously monitor the progress of RKM implementation. Collect feedback from employees, assess the impact of RKM on knowledge sharing, collaboration, and organizational outcomes. Use this feedback to make adjustments, refine the implementation plan, and address any challenges or resistance that arise.

10. Embed RKM in Organizational Culture: As RKM becomes ingrained in the organization, work to embed it within the organizational culture. Update policies, procedures, and performance management systems to reflect the importance of knowledge sharing, collaboration, and continuous learning. Recognize and reward behaviors that align with RKM principles.

By following these steps, organizations can effectively plan and execute change management for Radical Knowledge Management. It involves engaging employees, building awareness and capabilities, piloting initiatives, fostering champions, and continuously monitoring and adjusting the implementation to create a culture that embraces and leverages knowledge for organizational success.

## 10 Innovation and Arts-based Interventions

Radical Knowledge Management (RKM) plays a significant role in facilitating innovation within an organization. Here are some ways in which RKM enables and fosters innovation:

1. Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration: RKM promotes a culture of knowledge sharing and collaboration, which are essential for innovation. By sharing knowledge and insights across teams and departments, employees can build on each other's ideas, challenge assumptions, and generate new perspectives. Collaboration allows for the cross-pollination of ideas and facilitates the emergence of innovative solutions.

2. Access to Diverse Knowledge: RKM provides access to diverse knowledge sources within and outside the organization. It encourages employees to tap into external knowledge networks, engage in communities of practice, and explore interdisciplinary approaches. By

accessing diverse knowledge, organizations can gain fresh perspectives, leverage different expertise, and identify novel solutions to complex problems.

3. Leveraging Tacit Knowledge: RKM recognizes the value of tacit knowledge, which is often difficult to codify and share explicitly. Tacit knowledge includes employees' experiences, skills, and intuition. RKM encourages the capture and sharing of tacit knowledge through storytelling, mentoring, and collaborative practices. Leveraging tacit knowledge helps organizations unlock hidden insights and unlock innovative ideas.

4. Learning from Failures: RKM embraces a learning-oriented culture, where failures are seen as opportunities for growth and improvement. Organizations practicing RKM encourage employees to share their failures and the lessons learned from them. This openness to learning from failures fosters a culture of experimentation, risk-taking, and innovation. It encourages employees to try new approaches and learn from both successes and setbacks.

5. Continuous Learning and Development: RKM promotes continuous learning and development, providing employees with the tools and resources to enhance their knowledge and skills. By investing in employee development, organizations foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. Employees are empowered to explore new ideas, acquire new knowledge, and apply their learning to innovate in their respective roles.

6. Innovation Networks and Communities: RKM facilitates the establishment of innovation networks and communities within the organization. These networks bring together individuals with diverse expertise and perspectives to collaborate on innovative projects. RKM provides platforms for these communities to connect, share ideas, and co-create innovative solutions. These networks become a catalyst for innovation by fostering collaboration, learning, and the exchange of novel ideas.

7. Agile Decision Making: RKM supports agile decision-making processes that are critical for innovation. By providing access to timely and relevant knowledge, RKM enables leaders and teams to make informed decisions quickly. RKM ensures that decision-makers have access to the right information, expertise, and insights needed to respond effectively to emerging opportunities or challenges.

8. Feedback and Continuous Improvement: RKM encourages feedback loops and continuous improvement cycles. It provides mechanisms for capturing feedback from customers, employees, and other stakeholders. This feedback helps identify areas for innovation and improvement. RKM fosters a culture of listening and responding to feedback, driving iterative innovation and enhancing products, services, and processes.

In summary, Radical Knowledge Management facilitates innovation by promoting knowledge sharing, collaboration, access to diverse knowledge, leveraging tacit knowledge, learning from failures, continuous learning and development, fostering innovation networks, enabling agile decision making, and encouraging feedback and continuous improvement. By implementing RKM practices, organizations create an environment that nurtures creativity, fosters innovation, and empowers employees to drive meaningful and transformative change.

## 11 Ideation

What do you do when you're out of ideas?

We all know that when it comes to innovation, the more ideas, the better. Not every idea is going to stick when you throw it against the wall like spaghetti — so the more ideas you have, the more you can throw against the wall, and the higher chance one sticks. It's just about the numbers. Once you have an idea or two or three that have some stickiness to them, you must see which ones can make it through the various hurdles on the way to production.

But how do you generate more ideas when you're stuck? When you've had those conversations with your team and generated everything you can think of, but none of the ideas are really jumping out at you? None of them are "the idea," the one to go forward with. What do you do? Take a break? Do something different? Do something that shifts the energy and shifts everyone's brain for a little while? Do something that distracts you, that gets you thinking outside of the box, letting things percolate in your brain while you figure out what the right idea to go forward with is?

Yes, to all those things!

### 11.1 But how do you do that?

If you need to realign your thinking, it's time to tap into your inner child. Look for your inner artist! Be playful, be curious, have fun. Go for a walk and collect things to make a sculpture with. Get out the paints and paint or get out a piece of paper and doodle or just scribble. We're not creating the next Mona Lisa; this is about the process, not the painting or the sculpture. We want to get out of our heads for a while, make some space, do something different. We're here to re-energize our brains by giving them a break from being analytical and rational, to let our subconscious minds work on the problem while we do something completely different.

Radical Knowledge Management is about bringing this idea into your organization and day-to-day activities. Arts-based interventions (ABIs) do not need to be big like painting or theater; they can be something smaller and easier like, drawing, word games, poetry, or storytelling. Something that engages different parts of your brain rather than the logical, process-oriented parts that we tend to overuse when we do our work.

ABIs open possibilities, helping us to see things from a different perspective. They help raise new questions: What if this, or how about that? What if we did this? What happens if we do this other thing? We develop lots of questions, each building on something each person has said. Playing and having fun take some of the stress off so that our brains can do what they do best: be creative, be innovative and solve problems.

### 11.2 Play Supports KM

Knowledge Management is about learning, and yet the field has traditionally ignored how we learn best: playfully and creatively. We know from research that the arts impact an area



of learning known as executive function. Executive function is our capacity to manage our thoughts, actions, and emotions to achieve our goals — so that’s even more reason to include the arts in our KM activities, supporting our continuous learning, in this ever-evolving world.

As we grow, we are often told that having fun, playing and arts-based activities are not serious — but the truth is, they’re deadly serious and necessary if we are going to flourish and reach our potential. ABIs transform the way we work together, the way we live in the world and the way our organizations run.

That can be frightening! It’s unpredictable, outside our comfort zones. No wonder so few people and organizations want to do it. It is like being afraid of success: You would rather stay in your comfort zone, rather than take that step outside and dare to be different —to take the risk of failure even though you might also dare to be great, dare use all the skills and abilities you have at your disposal. Maybe you’ll dare to ask different questions. Dare to propose different solutions. Dare to do the unexpected. That is innovation, and the arts facilitate that.

The arts help us reach our potential because they help us build our curiosity, and to be open to new experiences. The arts enable the six aspects of flourishing: curiosity and wonder, awe, enriched environments, creativity, rituals, and novelty and surprise. Arts activities can be as simple as looking at art, or inspiring awe by looking at a rainbow or the stars. Then there are larger initiatives, like artmaking, that reconnect us to our creativity, the creativity that has been educated out of us because it was not logical and analytical, because it did not “make sense.” Thanks to neuroscience, we now know that art and creativity are critical to our development and flourishing, even if it does not “make sense.”

So, when you need to replenish your well of ideas, do something that “does not make sense,” do something that goes against everything you have been told, do something playful, fun, artistic and see what happens.

## 12 Sustainability

Radical KM and arts-based interventions facilitate sustainability through activating a sustainable mindset. In focusing on details, data, labeling, and putting everything in boxes we have lost sight of the interconnectedness of things, we have lost sight of the bigger picture. Adding creativity and arts-based interventions back into the equation helps us see the interconnectedness of things, and the importance of those relationships; it helps us maximize the value of the whole system rather than one box in the system. In optimizing the boxes, we cannot optimize the system there are tradeoffs that are necessary between boxes to optimize the system. That interconnectedness of all things has been missing for hundreds if not thousands of years. Arts-based interventions in our knowledge management activities and in our organizations in general aim to bring that balance back. It aims to make us more sustainable leaders and more sustainable decision makers. That's good for us in our work life balance, it is good for us and our organizations and our interactions and connection with the wider world.

Arts-based interventions play a significant role in enabling sustainability by promoting awareness, engagement, and transformative action. Here are some ways in which arts-based interventions contribute to sustainability:

1. **Raising Awareness:** Arts have the power to evoke emotions, capture attention, and communicate complex issues in a relatable and accessible manner. Through various art forms such as visual arts, theater, music, and film, artists can raise awareness about environmental and social issues related to sustainability. Artistic expressions can effectively convey messages, spark conversations, and engage audiences, creating a deeper understanding of sustainability challenges.
2. **Fostering Empathy and Connection:** Arts-based interventions promote empathy and emotional connection with sustainability issues. They can inspire individuals to connect with nature, understand the impacts of their actions, and empathize with affected communities. Through storytelling, visual representations, and performances, arts encourage individuals to reflect on their values, beliefs, and responsibilities, fostering a sense of connection and a desire to contribute to sustainability.
3. **Encouraging Creative Problem-Solving:** Sustainability challenges require innovative and creative solutions. Arts-based interventions cultivate a creative mindset and encourage out-of-the-box thinking. Artists often approach problems from unconventional perspectives, pushing boundaries, and challenging the status quo. By integrating arts into sustainability initiatives, organizations and communities can tap into diverse perspectives and promote creative problem-solving.
4. **Engaging Stakeholders:** Arts-based interventions provide a platform for engaging various stakeholders, including communities, policymakers, and businesses, in sustainability efforts. Collaborative art projects and participatory activities enable stakeholders to contribute their insights, experiences, and ideas. By involving diverse voices and fostering inclusive participation, arts-based interventions promote collective ownership and shared responsibility for sustainability.
5. **Behavior Change and Action:** Arts have the potential to inspire and motivate individuals to take action towards sustainability. Artistic experiences can evoke emotions, shift perspectives, and lead to personal transformation. Through interactive installations, performances, and public art projects, arts-based interventions encourage behavioral changes that promote sustainability. They motivate individuals to adopt sustainable practices in their daily lives and advocate for sustainable policies and actions.
6. **Transforming Spaces and Systems:** Arts-based interventions can transform physical spaces and systems to align with sustainability principles. Public art installations, urban design projects, and community-engaged arts initiatives can reimagine spaces and promote sustainable practices. By integrating artistic elements into urban planning, architecture, and infrastructure projects, arts contribute to the creation of sustainable and vibrant communities.

7. Building Resilience and Cultural Preservation: Arts-based interventions can contribute to resilience-building efforts, especially in communities vulnerable to environmental and social challenges. Through storytelling, traditional arts, and cultural practices, communities can preserve their cultural heritage, transmit knowledge, and build resilience against changing circumstances. The arts play a vital role in strengthening cultural identity, fostering community cohesion, and promoting sustainable livelihoods.

8. Advocacy and Policy Influence: Arts-based interventions have the potential to influence public discourse and policy-making processes. Artists and creative practitioners often use their platforms to advocate for sustainability and amplify the voices of marginalized communities. Through exhibitions, performances, and public campaigns, arts-based interventions can shape public opinion, raise awareness among policymakers, and influence the development of sustainable policies and practices.

In summary, arts-based interventions enable sustainability by raising awareness, fostering empathy and connection, encouraging creative problem-solving, engaging stakeholders, inspiring behavior change and action, transforming spaces and systems, building resilience, and advocating for sustainability. By integrating arts into sustainability initiatives, organizations and communities can harness the transformative power of the arts to drive positive change and create a more sustainable future.

### 13 Metrics

Everyone wants data. Metrics for these activities is dependent on the specifics of the situation, there is no generic set of metrics for arts-based interventions. There are metrics for resilience, for learning, for creativity, for problem solving, and a plethora of other activities and so it's necessary to understand the things that you are trying to achieve with the arts-based interventions and then determine the right metrics. Arts-based interventions impact a multitude of things that I've mentioned but also things like employee engagement, knowledge sharing, trust, psychological safety, and yes efficiency and effectiveness.

Consider this when it comes to efficiency and effectiveness, we have been told that the shortest distance between two things is a straight line, in intellectual terms that is translated into stream-line processes, taking out time for reflection and learning, we are expected to, “just know”. However, with complex tasks and wicked problems, the most efficient and effective way to complete those tasks/problems is not a straight-line, it is using play, curiosity, and diffuse thinking to understand the complexity, to see the bigger picture, and understand the interconnectedness of the pieces—arts-based interventions are the efficient, effective way of solving these problems.

When it comes to measuring the effectiveness and impact of Radical Knowledge Management (RKM), several metrics can be considered. Here are some potential metrics that organizations can use to assess the outcomes and progress of RKM initiatives:

#### 1. Innovation and Creativity Metrics:

- Number of innovative ideas or solutions generated as a result of RKM practices
- Successful implementation of innovative projects or initiatives
- Number of patents or intellectual property created through RKM efforts

- Recognition or awards for innovative practices or outcomes

## 2. Learning and Development Metrics:

- Number of employees participating in RKM training programs or workshops
- Employee satisfaction surveys regarding learning opportunities and professional development
- Skills assessments or competency evaluations related to RKM practices
- Employee retention rates and talent development outcomes

## 3. Organizational Performance Metrics:

- Time and cost savings resulting from improved knowledge sharing and collaboration
- Project success rates or improved project performance
- Customer satisfaction or loyalty metrics influenced by RKM practices
- Efficiency improvements in operational processes or workflows

## 4. Cultural Metrics:

- Employee surveys or feedback regarding the organization's culture of knowledge sharing and collaboration
- Perception surveys on the organization's commitment to learning, innovation, and continuous improvement
- Employee satisfaction or engagement surveys with specific questions related to RKM practices
- Qualitative assessments of changes in the organization's culture and mindset towards knowledge management and collaboration

It's important to note that the selection of metrics should align with the organization's specific objectives and context. Organizations may choose to track a combination of quantitative and qualitative metrics to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact and effectiveness of RKM initiatives. Additionally, regular monitoring, feedback collection, and periodic evaluations will help refine the metrics and ensure that they remain relevant to the organization's evolving needs.

## 14 Conclusion, call to action

There are a lot of pieces that make up the Radical KM story this book for the Radical KM White Belt course is meant only as an introduction to the ideas and concepts that make up radical knowledge management. It is a starting point, not an end point.

Radical knowledge management is an idea whose time has come. We have crippled ourselves by ignoring and discounting the importance of the arts in our lives, and yet they inform, enable, and energise everything we do if we let them. Arts-based interventions enable sustainable leadership and decision making, they help us be more creative and innovative. They bring wellness and balance to our lives and our organizations. It is time to embrace a new future, one balanced with diffuse and focused thinking, creativity and analysis. We need a sustainable future, arts-based interventions and Radical KM will give us the foundation to achieve it.

## 15 Appendix 1: Frequently Asked Questions

### **What Radical Knowledge Management (KM) is and how to implement it?**

Radical KM is about making space for creativity, specifically arts-based interventions, in our organisations. We have been told there's no place for creativity and the arts in our organisations, that they use up time and other resources for no reason. The only time we might make a bit of space for them is in team building or if the activity is directly connected with profit. And yet, knowledge work (which is what all of us do) requires space for reflection, curiosity, and iteration which are enabled and enhanced using creative method and arts-based interventions.

There is so much magic that happens when we give ourselves space and yet all the space has been removed because it is seen as wasteful.

So, how do we implement creativity and arts-based interventions in our organisations? We start small. We start with quick little icebreakers, e.g., scribble drawings, guided visualisations, improvisational games.

It is easy and it is fun. The hardest part is letting go of the stories we tell ourselves about why we can't do it.

### **Why should ABIs should be placed under KM?**

First a couple of definitions: Arts-based interventions (ABIs) are activities that use an art medium or discipline to improve a process or situation. In organisations some of the places they are most used are in design, innovation, and team building, but they can be used anywhere.

Knowledge Management: traditionally, I have used the definition of connecting people to the knowledge they need to do their job, I still believe this, but find that it is too narrow and focuses too much on documented and documenting knowledge. The definition of KM for the purposes of Radical KM focuses more on continuous learning and so that KM is about enabling people to find and create the knowledge they need to do their jobs.

For many organisations, innovation is a key driver, people want to do things differently, more sustainably, more purposefully, more flexibly. However, the behaviours that allow us to behave that way have been educated out of us and discouraged by our quest to appease the metrics gods.

ABIs help us to tap into those skills and behaviours that have been lying dormant in us. They help us get out of our comfort zones and look at things differently, to see the bigger picture. ABIs are part of KM because they help people create new knowledge by asking different questions and looking at the world differently. ABIs inspire curiosity and thus facilitate continuous learning; they enable sustainable mindsets and resilience, as well as helping to transform organizational culture, becoming more of a knowledge sharing culture.

## **How do we create the space to breathe when we're working or in a workshop/meeting we are leading?**

This is both hard and easy.

It is hard because we have been indoctrinated with the ideas that we have to be “doing” something, we must be visibly active or engaged in something, that making space for reflection, thinking, research, creativity, is a waste of time. These beliefs are drilled into us from an early age and the thinking and patterns that support them are hard to change. We have a lot of stories that we tell ourselves about why we can't make space for doing things differently, even though in some cases, we know we should, doing it is quite difficult.

It is easy because we can start small and the things you can do to start are not difficult, the hard part is letting go of the stories we tell ourselves about why we can't.

So, how do you start, what do you do?

1. Decide you are going to do it, frame it as an experiment if you like, but decide you are going to try a short, small activity and see what happens.
2. Find an activity that you are comfortable leading, it might be a guided meditation, it might be a scribble drawing, it might be story cubes. If you need ideas google “icebreaker games” and see what you can find or reach out to me, and I can help.
3. Once you find one that you like, review it, and prepare to lead it. This might mean preparing a slide or a document or saying it out loud to your dog/cat/plant for practice.
4. If you can do it with a team, you know well and are comfortable with. Explain the activity to them and why you want to do/try it. If you're doing it the first time with a group you don't know (like I often do when I'm leading a workshop or a class), I just give a brief introduction and explain this is the way I work because it gives better results—more engagement, more innovative ideas.
5. Do the activity.
6. Debrief the activity: how did the participants like it, what came up for them, how did you like it, how did it feel for you?
7. Continue with the rest of your meeting/workshop, etc.
8. Keep looking for activities to try out and opportunities to try them out in.

We tell ourselves all kinds of stories about why we can't, about what might happen, but what if those stories we tell ourselves aren't true?

## **Where/how to connect creativity (especially painting, but other arts-based interventions, too) to KM.**

The easy answer is wherever people are involved, the bit more in-depth answer is wherever trust and respect come into the equation and knowledge is being created and shared.

It is a step before most people start at--many people seem to think that creating/sharing knowledge starts with technology, but the truth is, it starts before that when we give ourselves and our colleagues the space to ask questions, to reflect, to explore and iterate. That's where creativity and arts-based interventions come in, to provide motivation, a different angle to look at things from, and different questions to ask).

### **What does Radical KM look like in practice?**

In practice Radical KM has a lot of potential and can be utilised in many activities and every-day meetings, any place people are coming together to collaborate and share knowledge and information or create new knowledge in an opportunity for a creative activity. This is because it influences trust and respect within our relationships, so taking a bit of time to do something fun together and that gets us thinking about things differently. These activities are good for our relationships and knowledge sharing and help build a knowledge sharing culture and develop and support psychological safety (which must be experienced not just talked about).

So, practically speaking, you can start your meetings off with a guided visualisation, or a short icebreaker. These activities can also be done during the meeting, if you find things are stuck and no progress is being made and you want to shake things up a to re-energise everyone.

If you're planning a longer meeting, maybe a strategy or planning meeting that is going to be 2-3 days long you can incorporate larger interventions like painting, drawing, 3D Art, or theatre. These activities can be woven into the meeting to ignite people's innovation and problem-solving abilities.

Remember with these activities, it is about the process, and the relational impacts, not about the end product.

### **How do I bring Radical KM ideas and activities into our organisation?**

Many knowledge management programs start small, taking an "under the radar" approach, building support and success stories before taking on larger initiatives and processes, Radical KM is no different. Start small. Start with a team or group of people who are curious and supportive, the KM team itself can be a good place to start. Do some training and education with them and start using icebreakers and other ABIs to facilitate the KM team's activities. This helps get the team comfortable with the ideas and practices, then they can start bringing the activities into other meetings, meetings with people outside of the KM team.

Once you get some ground level support you can start sharing Radical KM ideas and activities more widely, by using change management activities: communication, training, education, as well as coaching, mentoring, and train-the-trainer.

Radical KM activities can be difficult for some people to adjust to, so go slow, allow people to go at their own pace and allow them to watch if they don't want to participate. It is about psychological safety, and everyone has a different threshold for what feels safe and what doesn't, being open, honest, and making space is key to long-term adoption of the ideas and the success of the program. There will be early adopters and laggards, just like any other change initiative, work with the early adopters first, the laggards will get there with time.

### **How does Radical KM connect to learning?**

Having an ABI experience takes us out of our comfort zones so that we see things differently, allowing us to make different connections. It helps us tap into and develop our curiosity, "what happens when/if..." in a safe space and builds our courage to ask these questions in other areas of our (work) life. Curiosity drives continuous learning.

### **Organisational culture and creativity - do we make creativity part of our culture or is it just a booster to perk things up?**

Creativity and ABIs help shift the culture and become part of it, it is a new way of working. They are used for teambuilding, communication training, leadership development, problem-solving, and innovation processes; as well as being a strategic process of transformation. If an organisation is serious about implementing the idea of Radical KM, they cannot help but shift the culture into one that is much more sustainable and collaborative.

### **Change management and the cultural shift that must happen to foster ABIs and creativity. Often there is a pushback of "I have a job to do, I don't have time to play around." So many people say "I don't have time" so then feel that the creativity part is a waste of time for them. How is this handled?**

Yes, unfortunately, we have been educated to believe that the arts and creativity are unnecessary, at best they are extras or nice-to-haves, but the opposite is true. They are incredibly necessary and useful in our VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) world. In knowledge work, we need time to think and reflect, we are not machines or robots; making space for creativity and ABIs gives us what we need to be efficient and successful knowledge workers. And make no mistake, we are all knowledge workers.

People might not have time for long/big interventions, but they have 5 minutes to do a creative icebreaker or a guided visualisation and reap the benefits of slowing down so that they can better focus on the task at hand.

### **Explaining that metrics isn't always about the numbers. How to do this to a numbers organization?**



As a reformed accountant, I understand people's drive to attach a number to everything, especially in our data-driven world, and numbers are useful, but there is more to life than numbers. William Bruce Cameron once said, "Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted" and we need to remember that. I often tell the story of the Cobra Effect, which speaks to how numbers can be manipulated as another reason to be careful about metrics. That said, there are metrics and ROI studies which show the value of creativity and ABIs, so sometimes these help address people's concerns. However, often there is something else, some other underlying reason for people resisting these ideas, so it is better to discover what those are and address them rather than trying to provide a never-ending supply of case studies and metrics to prove your point.

### **How to approach leadership on making creativity a priority?**

There are lots of case studies, and facts and figures that document and explain way creativity and ABIs are beneficial to people and organisations, unfortunately, in many cases the data doesn't convince management, they have been educated to believe that these things are not necessary, that they are extras, nice-to-haves rather than must-haves. In today's VUCA world that couldn't be farther from the truth, but convincing management can be a difficult job.

There are a couple of activities to try that can help win management over. The first thing to do is to try to find out what stories the managers believe about the idea. In some cases, they have a background in something creative and artistic and ended up in business to be able to "pay the bills". This is often a best-case scenario, because these managers will have experienced the magic of arts activities in real life and will be less difficult to win-over. In fact, they may become an important proponent of the idea. If they do not have an artistic/creative background, having this conversation with them will at least help you understand what their concerns are so that you can collect the information to correct their misperceptions.

The second activity is to give them the experience of an ABI. ABIs are experiential, so the best way to convey their value is to experience it. You can start small by introducing small activities into meetings or plan a longer meeting where you can integrate a bigger ABI into the activities. What you do will depend on the manager, situation, and organisation but giving the manager(s) the experience helps them to have the embodied experience, getting out of their heads and (hopefully) shifting their beliefs about the importance of ABIs.

**We tend to isolate creativity in individuals. I wonder how group creative work could help people get more involved, and maybe relieve some of the anxiety around "Creativity" by encouraging play and "team building".**

Engaging in group creative work has so many benefits, team building is certainly one of them. ABIs have the advantage that most people are uncomfortable, to some degree, in participating in them, and so they tend to level the playing field and help identify communication issues and other behaviours that may be hindering collaboration. A good

facilitator will see this happening and work to resolve the conflict. We are all creative and working together to solve problems helps us to discover the best solution to the problem.

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