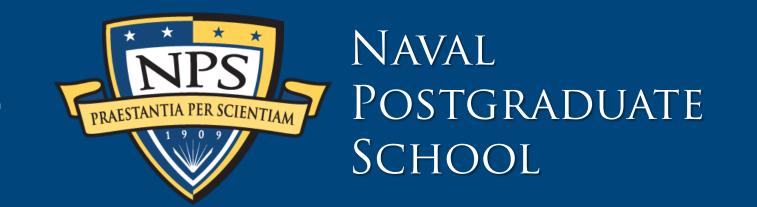# Mitigating the Loss of Institutional Knowledge: Analyzing Knowledge Risk Management Strategies for the Office of Naval Research's Acquisition Workforce

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

Abstract

This capstone investigates the potential risks associated with institutional knowledge loss within the Office of Naval Research's (ONR's) acquisition workforce. A comprehensive literature review, coupled with a survey administered to ONR's acquisition personnel, revealed critical weaknesses in areas such as the current knowledge management system (KMS), offboarding procedures, and the practice of regular knowledge audits. In response, the study puts forth a series of knowledge management (KM) recommendations to bolster these vulnerable areas while also incorporating feedback from the survey – suggesting enhanced informal knowledge-sharing practices and a greater reliance on cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence.

Methods

- Qualtrics survey
  - Contained three focus areas:
    - Offboarding & Retention
    - Culture
    - KMS
  - Provided to 110 ONR acquisition professionals
  - 42 responses

- Qualitative analysis of survey responses resulted in six (6) subscales:
  - Overall KM Competency
  - Training Opportunities
  - Offboarding Procedures
  - Culture & Leadership
  - Knowledge Auditing
  - KMS

Correlations

	Q7_overall	Training Opportunities	Offboarding	CultureLeadership	Q3_k.audits	KMS
Q7_overall	1.0000	0.6281	0.7666	0.4756	0.5196	0.7933
Training Opportunities	0.6281	1.0000	0.5479	0.6321	0.4954	0.5496
Offboarding	0.7666	0.5479	1.0000	0.5281	0.3650	0.5631
CultureLeadership	0.4756	0.6321	0.5281	1.0000	0.3697	0.4917
Q3_k.audits	0.5196	0.4954	0.3650	0.3697	1.0000	0.4442
KMS	0.7933	0.5496	0.5631	0.4917	0.4442	1.0000

The strongest subscale correlation with overall KM competency were Offboarding Procedures and the KMS.
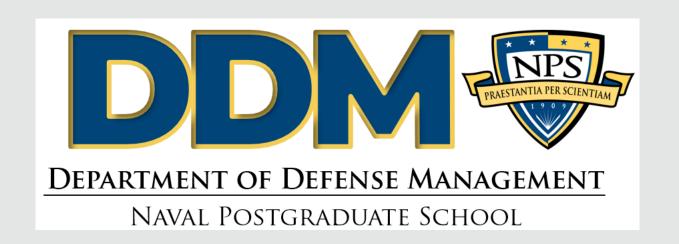
Recommendations

- Enhance ONR's KMS by introducing a more intuitive interface, advanced search functionality, improved metadata tagging, and AI-powered digital tools to streamline tasks.
- Foster informal forum, such as small-group discussions and digital storytelling, to encourage the real-time exchange of practical insights and experiences.
- Develop structured offboarding procedures with formal handover protocols, mentoring programs, and routine knowledge audits to capture critical institutional insights.

Future Research

- Investigate how the 2025 FAR overhaul affected the hiring, training, and retention of acquisition employees to inform policies for improved workforce development.
- Explore the effects of the 2025 staffing cuts on institutional knowledge to guide strategies for maintaining expertise through organizational transitions.
- Analyze the influence of existing knowledge management practices on outcomes amid workforce reductions, identifying best practices and areas for improvement.

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