



The Enterprise Guide to Launching a Knowledge Engagement Platform

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There's no way around it: buying a new software solution for an enterprise is a lengthy process. With the average sales cycle ranging from 6 to 24 months,¹ it's essential for stakeholders to have a detailed plan for launching their new solution after purchase. Without a plan in place, companies risk wasting time during the rollout process — or worse, failing to see a return on investment due to low adoption rates.

One of the most important things for stakeholders to consider when developing a launch plan is how to get end users bought in to the solution. It's especially important for stakeholders to get a high level of buy-in when launching a knowledge engagement platform, which is designed to democratize knowledge across the company by giving everyone a place to share and view information in many different formats. If end users aren't engaged with the platform, it won't be an effective tool for exchanging and preserving knowledge.

Unfortunately, knowledge engagement champions within enterprises sometimes face an uphill battle when it comes to getting employees to adopt new technology.

According to a Pew Research survey, 52 percent of American adults say they feel more comfortable using technology they're already familiar with, and 39 percent say they prefer to hear about others' experiences before trying new tech products.² In the context of enterprises, this can translate to having to get buy-in from hundreds or thousands of employees who are wary of change.

We've designed this guide to help anyone who is leading the charge to launch a knowledge engagement platform within their department or across their entire organization. In the three sections of this guide, we'll walk you through how to run a successful rollout, get your end users engaged, and prove the benefits of the platform to your executive team.

What We Mean When We Say Enterprise

If you search for the definition of an enterprise business online, you'll find a range of answers, with different estimates for the annual revenue and the number of employees a company should have to be considered a large enterprise.

For this guide, we're keeping our definition of enterprise intentionally broad. When we say **enterprise**, we're talking about a business that has hundreds or thousands of employees, may have multiple locations around the country or the world, and most likely has a full-time IT staff.

While we've written this guide for enterprises, we don't want to discourage readers from smaller, growing businesses who also face challenges working across geographies or siloed organizations. The information in our guide can still benefit your team, department, and company as you scale.

Launching an Enterprise Knowledge Engagement Platform

You've identified your business needs, evaluated a few vendors, gotten buy-in from your executives, and chosen a user-friendly solution. Now you may be wondering how you should roll out the new knowledge engagement platform to your team, along with the larger organization. Here are 7 steps to a successful knowledge engagement platform rollout.

1. Send Out a Pre-Launch Survey

Before you introduce your end users to your new knowledge engagement platform, you should send out a pre-launch survey to establish a baseline for how they're currently sharing and engaging with content. Questions on the survey might include:

- How much time in the average workweek do you spend looking for the information you need to do your job?
- How much time in the average workweek do you spend answering repetitive questions or helping others look for information they need to perform their duties?
- How often are you unable to find the information you need? (Answer options: I can always find what I need, I occasionally can't find what I need, I can't find what I need about half the time, I frequently give up because I can't find what I need)

- What are some challenges you face when trying to share information and collaborate with colleagues? (Leave this question open-ended.)
- Having employees complete this pre-launch survey (and then complete the same survey again after they've fully ramped up on the new knowledge engagement platform) will allow you to measure the ROI of your new platform.

2. Prepare Your Content

Pre-populate your platform with "starter" information to give people something to immediately interact with when they first engage with it. This may sound like a daunting task, but it's unlikely that you will have to start from scratch. Different departments may already be using their own content repositories, and you can start by pulling in some of their existing content that will benefit users from across the enterprise. If the platform you've chosen allows for bulk migration, you'll be able to upload large quantities of content with minimal work.

3. Design a Taxonomy

Start establishing categories for the content in your knowledge engagement platform. You may find it beneficial to keep your categories broad at first until you see how users are searching for and adding content. You can always adjust your categories as you go and add subcategories to further refine your taxonomy.

4. Do a Soft Launch

Roll out a soft launch to a select group of supporters prior to rolling out the knowledge engagement platform to your entire organization.

First, identify the closest stakeholders and greatest enthusiasts for your new knowledge engagement initiative. Doing a soft launch to this group will help you generate content and avoid having an empty platform at launch. It will also provide an opportunity for instant feedback within the platform itself. Within a week or two of the soft launch, solicit feedback from your participants and make changes as needed.

5. Host a Full Launch Event

Treat the launch of your knowledge engagement platform like a new product launch. Stock your marketing communications arsenal with consistent messaging for use in your company newsletter, emails, and any other internal communication channels you may have. Consider scheduling a webinar or even a live event as part of your launch, and incentivize people to attend with a prize or contest.

Your intent should be to increase awareness of the platform and get people across the organization excited about using it. Make sure that you have follow-up messaging for people who may have missed the launch event or who need a reminder to help them get in the habit of using the new platform.

Of course, your efforts to get users engaged with the knowledge engagement platform shouldn't end with your launch event. In the next section of this white paper, we'll take a closer look at some strategies to get users bought into the platform and keep them engaged long-term.

6. Monitor Engagement Post-Launch

Ideally, you'll create a team tasked with monitoring engagement of your knowledge engagement platform and quickly responding to posts and questions during the first few weeks post-launch. This might require temporarily lightening the workload of these key members of your team, but it will be worth it when you see your success. The internal nuances that emerge in the comments and posts of your team members will help create a sense of trust and drive buy-in throughout the organization.

However you choose to manage the post-launch monitoring, make sure to dedicate some resources to this critical element. This will allow you to see what's working and to implement a feedback loop for ongoing optimization.

7. Send Out a Post-Launch Survey

As mentioned in Step 1, you can use a post-launch survey to measure change (such as the average time employees spend looking for information each week) after adopting your new knowledge engagement platform. We recommend waiting at least 30 days after your launch to send out this survey. This will give employees time to familiarize themselves with the platform and make it part of their daily workflow.

We also recommend sending out this survey on an annual basis so that you can measure the long-term impact of your knowledge engagement platform.

Getting Buy-In from Users

Getting one person to change anything is challenging enough. Multiply that challenge by the number of people in your organization and you have a formidable task ahead of you. You need to start preparing your end users for the shift to a new knowledge engagement platform before the platform launch, and you must continue to promote engagement in the platform post-launch until it becomes second nature for your end users to turn to the platform whenever they need to find or share information.

The most important thing to remember when crafting your change management strategy for your knowledge engagement platform is to articulate why team members should be motivated to use this new tool and change their behavior. You need to clearly answer the question, “What’s in it for me?”

Here are a few ideas for ways to answer that question:

Improved Collaboration and Communication

According to a Fierce Inc study, 86 percent of workers believe workplace failures are the result of ineffective collaboration or lack of communication.³ Conversely, three out of five companies say the solution to reaching their strategic goals is to collaborate more across functions.⁴

A knowledge engagement platform helps team members collaborate by breaking down communication barriers.

It has a democratizing effect on communication in that all platform users can see everyone else’s content, comment on it, and share it in real time. The ideas that an entry-level employee shares would have the same opportunity to be heard as those of senior leadership. This has the positive effect of encouraging people to share ideas and also creates a forum where ideas rapidly evolve and are validated by peers.

A knowledge engagement platform also provides everyone with seamless access to organizational knowledge by letting users search for both explicit and tacit knowledge in one central repository. Users can access “tangibles” such as images, files, and templates in the same environment as “intangibles” such as knowledge of how to do something, the historical experience a colleague had working on a similar project, and recommendations from vendors.

Increased Productivity

Using collaborative technologies such as knowledge engagement platforms can increase productivity by 20-25 percent, according to McKinsey. A knowledge engagement platform provides an easy way to disseminate information throughout an organization instantaneously. You can set a single post to appear in the news feed of everyone in the organization or select groups as needed. This breaks down geographical barriers of globally distributed teams working in different time zones, as everyone in the organization can access real-time information anywhere and at any time.

Easy, Efficient Way to Get Information

A 2012 IDC study found that information workers spend four and a half hours per week looking for documents — and half of that time, they don’t find what they’re looking for.⁵

A knowledge engagement platform addresses this wasted time by giving users access to all the information they need in one place — and the ability to search for it without having to guess at unintuitive file names or sift through unorganized email inboxes.

4 Tips for Driving Adoption

As with any change initiative, a new knowledge engagement initiative will require leadership to take a close look at the inner workings and attitudes within their organization and craft an engagement strategy specific to the organization's needs. Achieving behavioral change is a slow process, and leaders need to develop a plan for successfully driving that change over time. Below are some strategies for driving change and encouraging adoption of a new knowledge engagement platform.

Make the Knowledge Engagement Platform the Primary Vehicle for Communication

Executives should set a precedent that the knowledge engagement platform will be the primary vehicle for communication by using it themselves. Make sure you have at least one executive sponsor who understands the value of the platform and is prepared to contribute to it regularly. This executive could post a weekly company update video, comment on other users' posts, or respond to questions in the platform.

In addition to getting an executive sponsor to demonstrate how to use the platform, you should also identify champions from across the organization who can help encourage their teams to use the platform regularly. These champions might make sure that questions in the platform

are answered within a specified time frame or remind their team members to search the platform for information when they ask a question over email or chat. By keeping the knowledge engagement platform top of mind with their team members, these champions will shape new knowledge engagement habits within the enterprise.

Make Knowledge Engagement Part of the Company Culture

Breaking down strict hierarchical systems and chains of command for information flow will help open the gates to a true culture of knowledge engagement. To accomplish this, make sure that employees at all levels of your organization, from executives to task workers, have access to your knowledge engagement platform and understand its purpose. Upon launch, everyone should feel ownership of the mission. Without widespread support, you'll be fighting an uphill battle.

Make Sure Your Knowledge Engagement Strategy Is Aligned With Your Company Mission

Refer to your company's mission statement with each new knowledge engagement decision. If your action doesn't meet the mission statement, you need to think about making a change in your direction. Otherwise, you will consistently suffer from a disconnect when the mechanism of your tool conflicts with the values of your organization.

Communicate the Relevance of the Information in Your Platform

Ensure that team members understand how the information in your knowledge engagement platform is relevant to them and will serve them. Without this personal connection, people will be reluctant to change their habits. Provide employees with examples of ways they can use the knowledge engagement platform to work more efficiently. Encourage project teams to use the knowledge engagement platform to house all information and conversations relevant to their project so that the platform becomes the go-to place for answering questions and finding resources.

Executives should set a precedent that the knowledge engagement platform will be the primary vehicle for communication by using it themselves.



Proving Success to the C-Suite

As you launch a new knowledge engagement platform, it's important to define the metrics you will use to measure success and to make sure you can track those metrics. If you choose a platform with built-in analytics and reporting, you should be able to look at engagement data and answer the following questions:

- Who is sharing content?
- Who is viewing content?
- What is being shared?
- What is being viewed?
- How often and how much are people contributing?
- What percent of questions are being answered, and how quickly are they answered?

In addition to looking at engagement metrics, you should also look at productivity gains. This is where your pre- and post-launch surveys can help. At a large enterprise, it's unlikely you will be able to get employees to accurately time how long they spend searching for information or answering repetitive questions each week, but you can get a reasonable estimate through the pre- and post-launch survey.

You may also want to measure the gains of specific departments based on your goals and use case. If you launch a pilot program for your knowledge engagement platform with your customer support team, for example, you might want to measure the average call resolution time pre- and post-launch. If you launch your knowledge engagement platform with your sales department, you might measure the average time to close deals.

Tracking these metrics will help you evaluate what's working and what isn't so that you can modify your knowledge engagement strategy to fit your business. It will also help you prove the value of your knowledge engagement initiative to your C-suite, allowing your initiative to benefit from their continuing buy-in and engagement.

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Bloomfire is the leader in knowledge engagement, delivering an experience that connects teams and individuals with the information they need to do their jobs. Our cloud-based knowledge engagement platform gives people one centralized, searchable place to engage with shared knowledge and grow their organization's collective intelligence. For more information or to schedule a demo, visit www.bloomfire.com.

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