

# Knowledge management strategy diagnosis from KM instruments use

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this article is to measure knowledge management (KM) implementation and determine KM strategy by assigning KM instruments into KM orientations.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Information is collected from ten SMEs in Spain and ten in Austria taking part in a KM audit project.

**Findings** – Results show that instruments can be used to diagnose KM strategy. Besides, some firm's characteristics as industry, national culture, size and age act as contingent factors. Personalisation strategy is predominant probably due to be more feasible in first KM stages.

**Research limitations/implications** – Besides the increase of cases, business strategy could be introduced to explore relationships with KM instruments and strategy.

**Practical implications** – This study helps management to auto-diagnosis its KM implementation and strategy

**Originality/value** – Instead of sophisticated measures, KM strategy is revealed considering knowledge instruments use.

**Keywords** Knowledge management, Spain, Austria

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

After many years of research, the literature of strategic management has been unable to explain differences in firm performance or to find where the success of an organisation comes from. Among the many contributions in this field, the resource-based view of the firm arose, arguing that the differences in performance are fundamentally due to firms' heterogeneous internal resources. A recent extension of the resource-based theory is the knowledge-based view, which states that the sources of competitive advantage are not all the firm's internal resources, but just the intangible or knowledge-related assets of the organisation and its capability to integrate knowledge (Grant, 1996). Knowledge, particularly tacit knowledge, can be argued to be a source of advantage because it is unique, imperfectly mobile, imperfectly imitable and non-substitutable (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2001). Nowadays, knowledge is the fundamental basis of competition (Zack, 1999).

Although the importance of knowledge has been highlighted in the last decade by both academics and practitioners, the result has been an incomprehensible and confusing body of knowledge. On the one hand, from the academic perspective, diversity of intellectual antecedents of knowledge management (KM) field as economics, sociology, psychology and philosophy (Prusak, 2001) has led to a set of contributions featured by a lack of integration. On the other hand, from the practice perspective, many companies everywhere are paying attention to knowledge and are beginning to actively manage their knowledge and intellectual capital – exploring what it is and how to create, transfer, and use it more effectively all over the world (Davenport *et al.*, 1998). However, recent research has reported