



### What did we find?

**There are a number of key factors that need to be taken into account when seeking to adopt better Knowledge Management practice:**

**The time factor** – People almost universally perceive themselves to have no time; they suffer from information overload, email ‘sludge’, and are dominated by ‘urgent’ tasks that reduce the ability to invest in activities that will pay longer-term dividends. We need to consider carefully: what is important and what is urgent; what tasks are both important and urgent; can we sustain ourselves if we are constantly in ‘urgent mode’; and how can we create time to invest in tasks, such as knowledge management.

**Commissioning research** – Research proposals and reports are typically assessed on the basis of ‘scientific quality’ criteria such as novelty and methodological validity; the ‘relevance’ criteria such as timeliness, balance and synthesis of existing knowledge is often neglected. Because of this overemphasis on quality policy makers can find that research reports turn out not to be as relevant to their needs as hoped.

**The database instinct** – Many people instinctively feel that knowledge needs to be captured, and that information technology – particularly in the form of databases – offers the means to do this. And yet databases often fail to fulfil their purpose. Problems include: databases fail to be maintained; lack of user-friendliness, where those who need to input or extract information find the database difficult to use; and a tension between the desire for comprehensiveness – a database that contains all the possible information – and simplicity, where a database does a particular job well but is only useful for that narrow purpose.

**Some generic findings from the study:**

**Resilience** – Organisations need to pay attention to the resilience of their knowledge. The biggest threat is often that particular members of staff will leave, taking their knowledge with them.

**Relationships** – Relationships are key to effective knowledge management. Expert communities – in both the worlds of research and policy – tend to emphasise the gaining of knowledge and expertise at the expense of building strong relationships. This is partly because there tends to be a stronger focus on outputs – reports and publications – as compared to outcomes.

**Research Communication** – Problems around communication include: research reports having incomprehensible titles with the result that they go straight in the bin; reports being too long, instead of the one-page summary that policy-makers universally request; and the balance between written research reports and face-to-face communication.

### What will we do now?

The report sets out nine golden rules (see table) and a number of practical steps that MariFish partners can take to embed good KM practice including: reviewing the effectiveness of databases; and capturing existing knowledge through science reviews.

The Golden Rules of Knowledge Management	
1	Prioritise Knowledge Management
2	Keep it simple
3	Build resilience by balancing Capture and Connectivity.
4	Support Communities of Practice
5	Discover and map existing expertise; identify gaps
6	Balance Competition with Cooperation
7	Prioritise the sharing of knowledge as well as its discovery
8	Use Information and Communication Technology but keep it simple; don't put the IT boffins in charge
9	Emphasise relevance as well as scientific 'quality'

