

# The High Cost of Inaccessible Knowledge *in the UK*



The latest Starmind research report, [The High Cost of Inaccessible Knowledge](#), reveals the extent to which time is wasted and business opportunities are lost, as a result of inadequate and old-fashioned knowledge management practices.

For its research, conducted in July 2022, Starmind engaged with 1,400 respondents in the UK, the US, Switzerland and Germany. Each respondent is a full-time knowledge worker at a company with over 10,000 employees.

This executive summary captures key learnings from the survey, as they pertain to the UK market, and the ways in which business leaders can unlock multiple corporate benefits, ranging from increasing the time spent on the real tasks they need to complete, to more sales, and faster product and service evolution.



UK knowledge workers lose  
**406 hours a year**  
 or more than 10 working weeks,  
 looking for the answers they need to  
 do their work.

This calculation is based on survey findings showing they spend an **average of 97 minutes searching for information each day** (slightly less than the international average of 102 minutes). These minutes quickly stack up, however. In the UK, there are 251 business days in 2022, so each worker loses 406 hours.

According to government figures, on average, full-time skilled workers in the UK earn around £15/hour (though this ONS figure includes skilled tradespeople, as well as knowledge workers). Thus, the £70M figure comes from 406 lost hours x 10,000 x £15. The average salary for knowledge workers at your own company will provide a more accurate estimate.

At a company with 10,000 knowledge workers, the cost of this lost time comes to around  
**£70M each year**



Leadership team members in the UK lose more time seeking information than other employees.

They spend **107 minutes looking for information each day**, adding up to over 11 working weeks **lost to seeking information that is not readily available**. Of course, the higher rates of compensation for these staff members means the final consequences of wasted time are considerably higher than those for general staff.

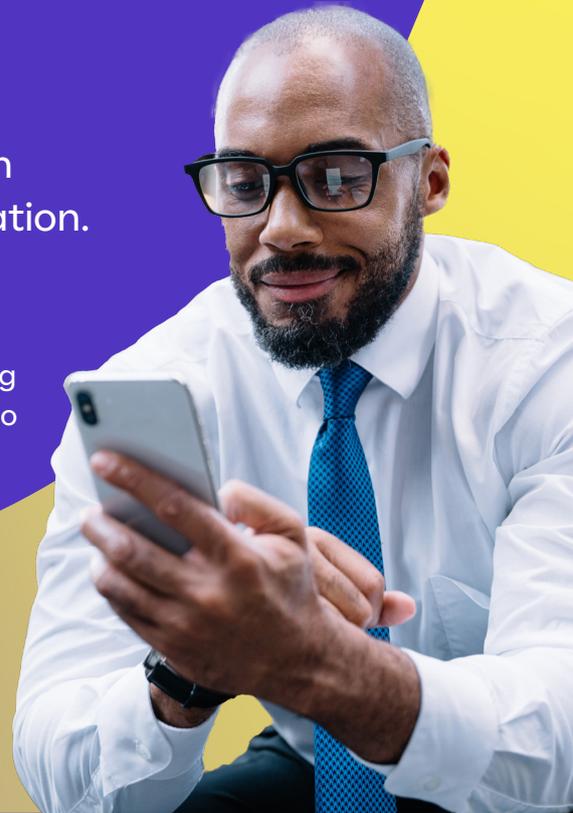
Among the countries surveyed, **the UK leads on documenting the knowledge and best practices** required to keep their organisations in motion, with more than half (56%) saying there was documentation.

That said, this still means that 44% of the knowledge required to run the business is undocumented in UK companies, meaning that finding answers to common business questions will require that knowledge to be found among the experts who hold it, and shared by them.

**44%**



of undocumented knowledge



The traditional knowledge base or wiki tools (such as Google Docs, Helpjuice, Guru, Sharepoint or Confluence) introduced to make access to information more easy and organised **are unpopular and found wanting**. When using these tools:

**24%**



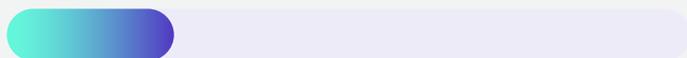
find the process too complex

**33%**



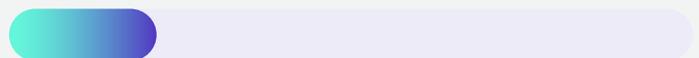
say the information they find is not always reliable, it's difficult to validate and may be outdated

**27%**



don't have access to all documents or documented knowledge

**25%**



feel it takes too long to get an answer

## The effects of this inaccessible information have many impacts aside from the lost time:

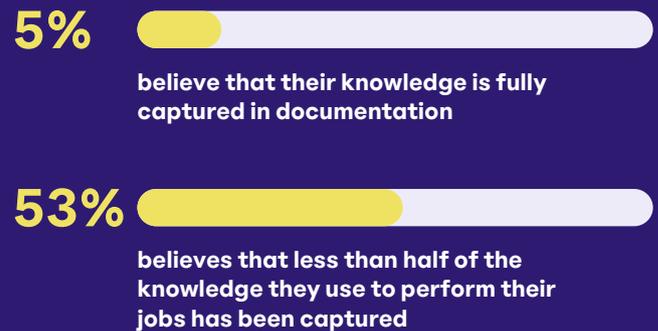
**70%** of UK employees say that their **capability to perform deep work has been affected**, the highest result from any country surveyed; in Sales and Customer Service, **47% have experienced a severe impact** on their ability to answer customer queries; while in Research and Development, **41% report serious delays to** getting projects completed, product updates, or launching new products.



**38%** report delays in submitting an RFP or lost sales due to not having the answers to business questions readily available

Further knowledge management issues surround the documentation of employee knowledge and experience. In the UK, just one in 20 (5%) believe that their knowledge is fully captured in documentation. The majority (53%) believes that less than half of the knowledge they use to perform their jobs has been captured.

This leads to considerable problems.



## For Sales



The majority of UK employees (**57%**) in Sales say they **do not have visibility into best practices**, or the successes and failures of past sales employees.

Nearly half (**43%**) say they don't know what their colleagues are working on, nor the challenges they are facing, and the same proportion say experience gained working on specific accounts is not documented in any way, leaving future employees to start again building knowledge and relationships with clients and customers.

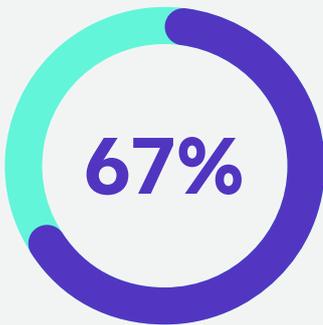


## For Helpdesk and Shared Services

Helpdesk staff are similarly unhappy with the tools, particularly when it comes to the duplication of effort:

**67%**   
say that half or more of the tickets they receive each week have already been resolved for other employees

**62%**   
say the information required to resolve half or more tickets is already documented through existing self-service systems



## For Research and Development

More than two-thirds of R&D workers (67%) have **delayed projects due to missing information** and the same proportion have discovered after-the-fact that R&D expertise was already **available within the company for challenges they faced**. Better access to this information would save time and help create first-to-market advantage, a crucial goal for these workers.



**5 hours** per week

On average, ready access to company information and expert knowledge would save an R&D employee 5 hours per week.

Time wasted searching for the business information employees need to do their jobs is a serious drain on expensive resources. What is worse are the consequences of not obtaining the correct information. Decisions are made on the basis of past experience or intuition, as opposed to data. Products and services are released behind competitors and thus lose their competitive advantage. Proposals and customer responses are delayed.

In short, the £70M figure cited above may only be the tip of the iceberg for the cost of inaccessible knowledge. Better, more modern knowledge management tools can provide the answer.

The full report, [The High Cost of Inaccessible Knowledge](#), is available for free from Starmind's website.

