

## TACIT KNOWLEDGE (HIDDEN COMPETENCE)

The term “tacit knowing” or “tacit knowledge” was first introduced into philosophy by [Michael Polanyi](#) in 1958 in his magnum opus *Personal Knowledge*. He famously summarizes the idea in his later work *The Tacit Dimension* with the assertion that “we can know more than we can tell.”<sup>[2]</sup> According to him, not only is there knowledge that cannot be adequately articulated by verbal means, but also all knowledge is rooted in tacit knowledge in the strong sense of that term.

With tacit knowledge, people are not often aware of the knowledge they possess or how it can be valuable to others. Effective transfer of tacit knowledge generally requires extensive personal contact, regular interaction<sup>[3]</sup> and trust. This kind of knowledge can only be revealed through practice in a particular context and transmitted through social networks.<sup>[4]</sup> To some extent it is "captured" when the knowledge holder joins a network or a community of practice.<sup>[3]</sup>

Some examples of daily activities and tacit knowledge are: riding a bike, playing the piano, driving a car, and hitting a nail with a hammer.<sup>[5]</sup>

The formal knowledge of how to ride a bicycle is that in order to balance, if the bike falls to the left, one steers to the left. To turn right the rider first steers to the left, and then when the bike falls right, the rider steers to the right.<sup>[6]</sup> You may know explicitly how turning of the handle bars or steering wheel change the direction of a bike or car, but you cannot simultaneously focus on this and at the same time orient yourself in traffic.

Similarly, you may know explicitly how to hold the handle of a hammer, but you cannot simultaneously focus on the handle and hit the nail correctly with the hammer. The master pianist can perform brilliantly, but if he begins to concentrate on the movements of his fingers instead of the music, he will not be able to play as a master. Knowing the explicit knowledge, however, is no help in riding a bicycle, doesn't help in performing well in the tasks since few people are aware of it when performing and few riders are in fact aware of this.

Tacit knowledge is not easily shared. Although it is that which is used by all people, it is not necessarily able to be easily articulated. It consists of beliefs, ideals, values, schemata and mental models which are deeply ingrained in us and which we often take for granted. While difficult to articulate, this cognitive dimension of tacit knowledge shapes the way we perceive the world.

In the field of knowledge management, the concept of tacit knowledge refers to a knowledge possessed only by an individual and difficult to communicate to others via words and symbols. Therefore, an individual can acquire tacit knowledge without language. Apprentices, for example, work with their mentors and learn craftsmanship not through language but by observation, imitation, and practice.

The key to acquiring tacit knowledge is experience. Without some form of shared experience, it is extremely difficult for people to share each other's thinking processes<sup>[7]</sup>

Tacit knowledge has been described as “know-how” – as opposed to “know-what” (facts), “know-why” (science), or “know-who” (networking)<sup>[citation needed]</sup>. It involves learning and skill but not in a way that can be written down. On this account knowing-how or embodied knowledge is characteristic of the expert, who acts, makes judgments, and so forth without explicitly reflecting on the principles or rules involved. The expert works without having a theory of his or her work; he or she just performs skillfully without deliberation or focused attention<sup>[4]</sup>

Tacit knowledge vs. Explicit knowledge:<sup>[8]</sup> Although it is possible to distinguish conceptually between explicit and tacit knowledge, they are not separate and discrete in practice. The interaction between these two modes of knowing is vital for the creation of new knowledge.<sup>[9]</sup>