



Diagnosing Training & Operational Challenges

The Impact Tribal Knowledge Has on Credit Unions

One of the most common knowledge management strategies credit unions rely on is tribal knowledge. And yet, it can be the most detrimental to a credit union's well-being. From chaotic operations to never-ending training, a reliance on tribal knowledge prevents credit unions from growing.

So, what is tribal knowledge?

Tribal knowledge is all the organizational information that resides in employees' heads. It is unwritten and typically transferred from one person to another via word of mouth, messaging systems, or the infamous binder.

6 signs of tribal knowledge reliance in credit unions

- Overwhelmed supervisors
- Stressed and unconfident employees
- Inconsistent member service
- Lengthy training times
- Slow proficiency achievement for new hires
- Slow and painful change adoption



What are the costs of tribal knowledge?

Mental Health

One of the greatest impacts of tribal knowledge is your employees' mental health. Mental health affects employee performance, employee retention, and, consequently, the member experience.

Mental health costs include:

- Stress and burnout
- Anxiety about mistakes
- Lack of confidence and mental energy

Financial Costs

Tribal knowledge has a huge impact on your bottom line. When you rely on tribal knowledge, you have to hire more people to serve the same number of members.

Financial costs include:

- High employee and supervisor count
- Long wait times and low member satisfaction
- High training and onboarding costs

Opportunity Costs

When your credit union operates on tribal knowledge, you lose out on other strategies that can propel your credit union forward.

Opportunity costs include:

- Delayed opening of new branches
- Slow technology adoption
- Difficult adaptation to changes

What does tribal knowledge look like?

In tribal knowledge-dependent credit unions, employees either try to work from memory (and make mistakes) or escalate to their neighbor or manager. Here's an example of what a tribal knowledge interaction might look like at a local branch.

