

# Increasing brain gain

Rather than leaving it up to chance, J. Ray is using its brains to connect valuable resources with the people who need them.

Knowledge and experience are terrible things to waste.

It happens all the time, especially in large companies with thousands of employees stretched across the world. Without efficient ways to capture and share these valuable intellectual assets, re-work, delays and inefficiencies can slow down progress, compromise the quality of products and services, increase costs, decrease response time and diminish the ability to recruit and retain talent. People are forever re-inventing the wheel, getting dizzy and going nowhere fast.



So-called “brain drain” is especially a concern with the large numbers of older workers on the brink of retirement, ready to take their lifetime of experience and legacy of skills with them.



To avoid this fate, J. Ray has taken concrete steps to increase “brain gain” by implementing knowledge-management tools that identify, create, represent and distribute knowledge for reuse, awareness and learning.



## K.now

Launched in March of this year, K.now is a web-based system that leverages and optimizes J. Ray’s collective Engineering knowledge

“It reaches across organizational and geographic boundaries to integrate our intellectual property, leverage our know-how, speed up knowledge transfer, facilitate collaboration, and provide a connection among employees and between offices,” explained Bill Soester, J. Ray Vice President, Worldwide Engineering.

Instead of hoping that knowledge currently kept in peoples’ heads and file cabinets, scattered across computers and servers, on the Internet and even with third parties somehow gets shared, K.now creates the infrastructure to support the rapid, efficient transfer of complex knowledge.

Features include content submittal process and procedures for sharing best-in-class information, and easy access to company and industry reference material. “Ask the Expert” provides streamlined contact with bona fide specialists. Discussion forums facilitate collaboration across time zones on technical issues.

“Our vision with K.now is to become smarter at transferring know-how across the organization, particularly as we expand on a global scale, and to maximize the value J. Ray delivers to customers and their projects around the world,” added Soester.



## Lessons Learned

Another important part of J. Ray’s knowledge management is its Lessons Learned system. Also web-based, it is available to all employees throughout the company, regardless of title, function or discipline.

“Lessons Learned is geared towards building knowledge from experience for the purpose of improving future performance,” said Bill Pender, Vice President of Project Services.

In this context, a “lesson” is a success to be repeated, or a mistake to be avoided. Anyone who has experienced a situation that could be helpful to others is encouraged to submit it.

Both K-now and Lessons Learned are related to continuous improvement, since they drive learning and shared knowledge. The power that such large-scale interaction yields far out-smarts what individuals or small teams, however brilliant or effective, can accomplish alone.

