

THE 2026 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PLAYBOOK

What's Working, What's Not, and
Where to Focus Now



Executive Summary

Most organizations aren't struggling with understanding the value of knowledge management.

They're struggling with how to make it deliver real impact.

APQC's latest research across **160+** knowledge management professionals reveals a clear pattern:

- ▶ Investment is steady or increasing
- ▶ AI adoption is accelerating
- ▶ But maturity and impact remain uneven

Most organizations report that KM is **“gaining ground”**—yet only a small percentage describe it as truly **“thriving.”**

The Takeaway:

KM isn't failing. But it isn't fully delivering either.

This isn't a technology problem. It's a maturity, integration, and culture problem.

The Big Shift



Knowledge management is evolving rapidly. Organizations are shifting from:

- ▶ **Managing content → to enabling knowledge flow**
- ▶ **Supporting teams → to driving enterprise outcomes**
- ▶ **Documenting knowledge → to powering AI and decision-making**

KM is increasingly expected to:

- ▶ **Enable productivity and efficiency**
- ▶ **Support digital transformation**
- ▶ **Power intelligent enterprise capabilities**

At the same time, AI is accelerating expectations.
But most organizations aren't fully prepared.

Top Priorities for 2026

What organizations say they're focused on

At a more tactical level, five themes dominate:

49%

Incorporating AI
and “smart”
technologies

23%

Identifying and
prioritizing critical
knowledge

22%

Increasing KM
maturity

21%

Enabling
collaboration

20%

Boosting
participation and
engagement

INSIGHT:

KM teams are being asked to do more—especially with AI—while still building foundational capabilities.

KM is increasingly tied to enterprise priorities:

- ▶ **Operational efficiency and process improvement**
- ▶ **Intelligent enterprise**
- ▶ **Digital transformation**
- ▶ **Strategic integration**

KM is no longer a **support function**.
It's **expected to drive** measurable
business outcomes.

Where Organizations are Struggling

The top challenges reveal the real story

THE BIGGEST BARRIERS TO KM SUCCESS ARE NOT TECHNICAL—THEY ARE ORGANIZATIONAL:

40%

Culture does not incentivize knowledge sharing

39%

Change fatigue limits adoption

37%

Leadership focus is elsewhere

37%

Employees are too busy

33%

KM impact is hard to measure

WHAT THIS MEANS:

- ▶ KM is competing for attention
- ▶ Behavior change is the hardest part
- ▶ Value is difficult to demonstrate clearly

The Hidden Gap

Organizations are investing—but not integrating



KM investment is holding steady or increasing:

60%

expect increased investment

THE GAP:

Organizations are layering AI and tools onto fragmented, immature KM systems.

At the same time:

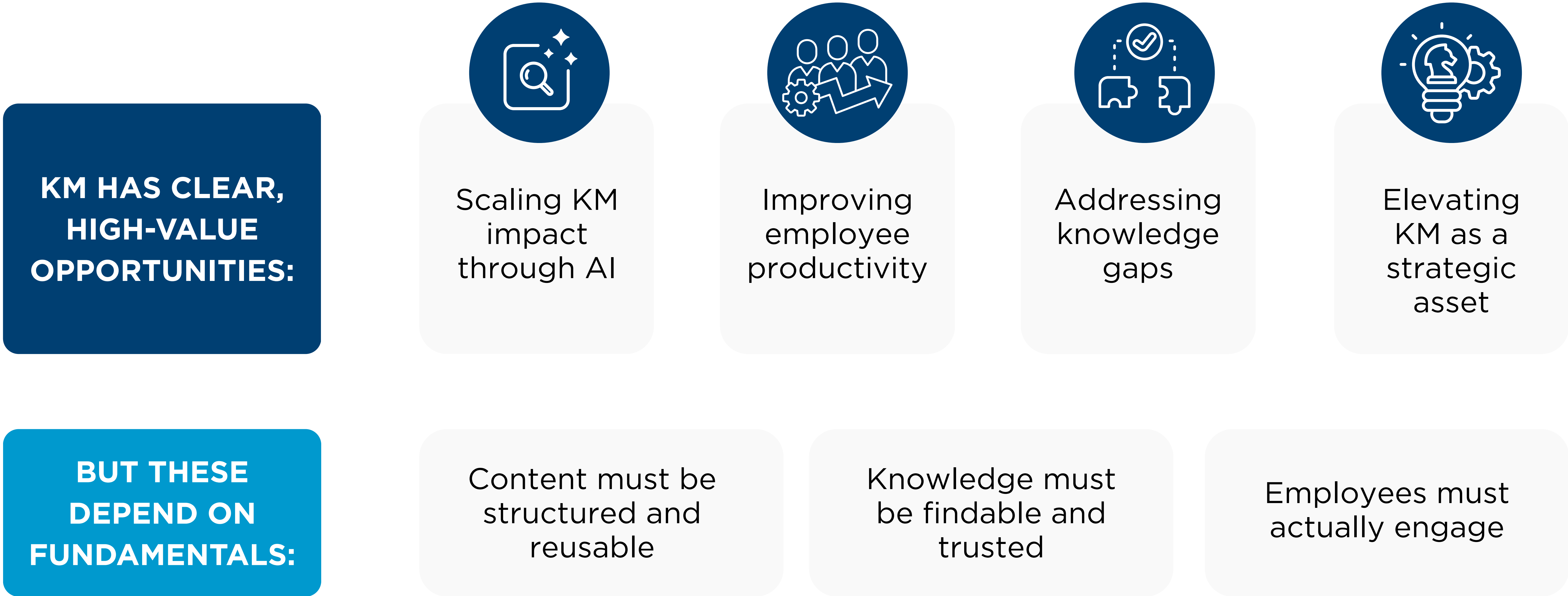
- ▶ **Most organizations are only moderately mature**
- ▶ **Many are still in early or developing stages**

And:

- ▶ **Most organizations report only partial integration of digital tools and AI**

KPI Reality Check

What drives value—and what it holds back



INSIGHT:

AI doesn't fix KM.
It amplifies whatever foundation you already have.

What High-Performing Organizations Do Differently

Based on research, leading organizations focus on:

1

FOUNDATIONS BEFORE TECHNOLOGY

They invest in:

- ▶ Governance
- ▶ Taxonomy
- ▶ Content quality
- ▶ Knowledge architecture

2

KM AS A STRATEGIC CAPABILITY

They:

- ▶ Align KM to business priorities
- ▶ Tie initiatives to measurable outcomes
- ▶ Position KM as a value driver—not a repository

3

CULTURE AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE

They:

- ▶ Incentivize knowledge sharing
- ▶ Build KM into daily work
- ▶ Use change management intentionally

4

SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

They prioritize:

- ▶ AI fluency
- ▶ Change management
- ▶ Design thinking
- ▶ Critical thinking
- ▶ Data management

KM is becoming a bridge between people, data, and AI

What This Means For You

Based on research, leading organizations focus on:

IF YOU'RE LIKE MOST ORGANIZATIONS, YOU ARE LIKELY:

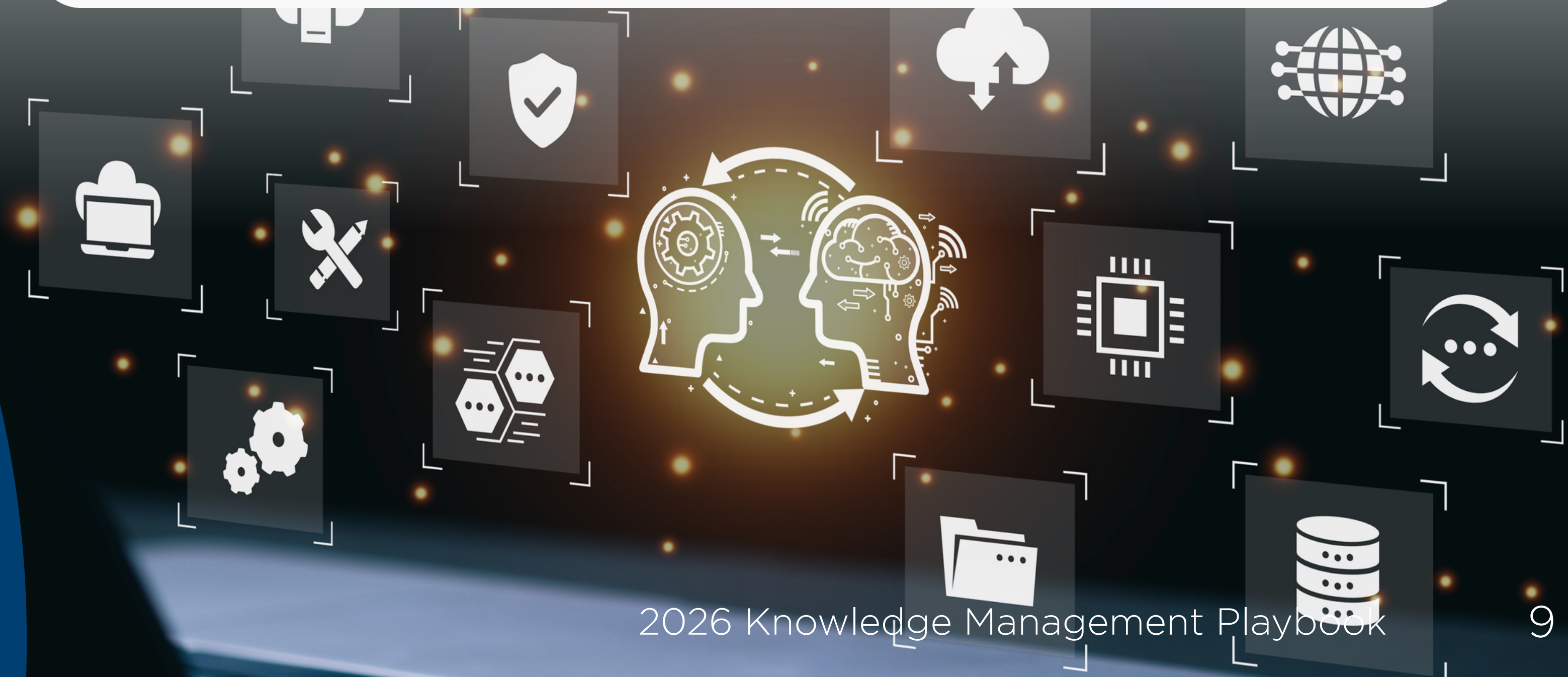
- ✓ Investing in KM and AI
- ✓ Expanding knowledge initiatives
- ✓ Trying to improve access and reuse

BUT STILL STRUGGLING WITH:

- ✗ Low engagement and adoption
- ✗ Fragmented systems and content
- ✗ Difficulty demonstrating value
- ✗ Disconnect between KM and business



**The opportunity is not to do more.
It's to make KM work as a system.**



Want the Full Picture?

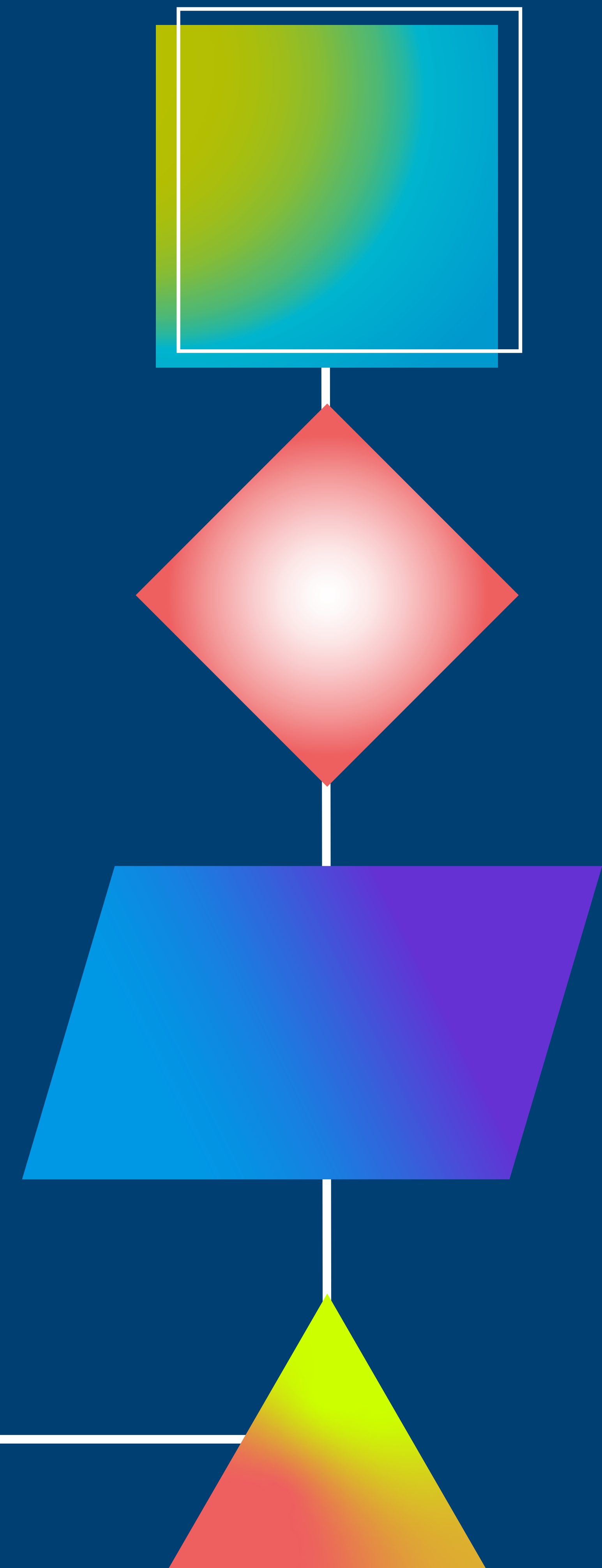
This playbook highlights just a portion of the findings.

Explore the full **2026 Knowledge Management Research Collection**, including:

- ▶ The complete survey report
- ▶ Detailed priorities, opportunities, and threats
- ▶ Practical tools and KM frameworks
- ▶ Guidance for AI, KM maturity, and strategy alignment



[Click here](#) or scan the QR code to access the full research collection





apqc.org