



ViiBE Blog

Why are subject matter experts important in business?

CSR, Customer experience, Knowledge management

Automotive, Construction, Energy, Insurance, Retail, SMB, Transport



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important in business

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Subject matter experts (SME) are individuals who hold a deep understanding of a particular area of expertise. They bring a strong competitive advantage when employed by a business. With their specialized knowledge and experience in the field, their role is to intervene and support the business in moments when general knowledge of the rest of the employees is insufficient.

1. What is the role of a subject matter expert?

An SME is a person considered an expert in one particular field or industry area. Contrary to most current positions across companies and businesses, a subject matter expert is not cross-trained in all matters concerning their industry, yet prides themselves in their deep knowledge of only one topic of choice. They are thus the person to turn to highly specialized knowledge and expert verification is needed.

SMEs play an [important role in any business organization](#), regardless of the company's age. In new companies, subject matter experts can provide a good base and a confident start, while making them stand out from the industry crowd with their quality of expertise. For businesses already established on the market, hiring an SME is a perfect solution to resolving unexpected challenges even experienced companies struggle with at times.

That being said, a good subject matter expert ensures your business will always provide your customers with the most current subject matter

expertise and [customer service of the highest value](#).



[Subject matter experts in business](#)

2. What makes a good subject matter expert?

Established SMEs usually represent several years of experience in the field, as well as advanced degrees from renowned institutions. After finishing their studies, they have to learn continuously. By continuing education they ensure their knowledge is always up-to-date with any ongoing changes in the industry so they can exceed market expectations.

Subject matter experts specialize in a particular area of expertise, be it a certain function, a process, a technology or a service – and a good SME is considered an authority in this particular field. To gain such authority and profound expertise, however, takes time.

Apart from the essential knowledge and experience, a good subject matter expert has to be passionate and immersed in the topic they specialize in. They have to show initiative, be proactive, think creatively,

and come up with their own ideas and solutions to improve their field of expertise.

Furthermore, together with their passion to improve the standards of their area of expertise, subject matter experts also have to show passion for spreading their knowledge. Many SMEs work in academia and contribute to research in their particular field, whether through teaching, researching, or publishing.

3. How do you use subject matter experts?

Usually used for solving problems and navigating challenges, subject matter experts can use their specialized knowledge in various different industries. The most common fields where SMEs operate are information, software development, marketing, customer service, and tech support.

The tasks subject matter experts are assigned usually require thorough knowledge about the subject and acute expertise developed through years of experience. With their efficacy and precision, subject matter experts can land a helpful hand in various everyday tasks such as:

- organizing and reviewing sector-specific documentation
- overseeing adherence to your industry's safety guidelines
- providing operational input with complex management processes
- managing content and social media, as well as reviewing and editing published information for accuracy, relevancy, and readability
- answering technical questions from team members
- enriching the company's [knowledge management systems](#) with their specialized expertise

A well-organized and efficient collaboration with your SME is key to making their role a game-changer for your business, hence you need to ensure you use them in a correct way that will bring long-term benefits. By clearly outlining their position and their input in the company at all times, they can be both autonomous within their role and interconnected with the rest of the team.

The tasks subject matter experts are assigned usually require thorough knowledge about the subject and acute expertise developed through years of experience. With their efficacy and precision, subject matter experts can lend a helpful hand in various everyday tasks such as:

4. Define mutual goals and expectations

Openly stating what both you and your SME can bring into the business and what you expect to take from the collaboration will ensure you are on the same page and can bring long-term success. Such expectations include the SME's role in the company, their relationship with and authority over the team leader, the extent to which they should participate in meetings, and how much they should be involved in the day-to-day operations. Your SME will understand how much effort they need to put in and what kind of work ethic you expect from them. On the other hand, you will know which steps to take to ensure they can continue excelling in their work.

5. Be flexible

The everyday life of the business can be very busy but remember that your SME also has a lot of commitments – they teach, publish papers, continue education and probably [provide expertise](#) for many organizations out there. As the information and knowledge they supply your business with are key for its long-term success, you need to establish a good working routine and a clear schedule adapted to other responsibilities your SME takes care of. Set clear deadlines, inform them about important dates in advance and make sure you are always easy to reach whenever they might need your help.

6. Communicate together

Regularly check up on your SME, whether about the status of their task, how they feel about their position in the company, and about their views on the current industry situation. Make sure you brief them about the company's day-to-day life or any changes it might be undergoing, and always update them when your expectations towards their work change. Similarly, make it clear for them to keep you in the loop of their work and whether they come up with any additional initiatives they would like to take on.

7. Help them grow

Subject matter experts have to continuously improve their knowledge and evolve within their area of expertise. Although most of the time they will be involved in academia one way or another, making sure you provide them with high quality [training materials](#) including the most current changes in the industry will only act in your advantage. A passionate and proactive SME will appreciate any training program that can help them grow, especially if it comes from their employer.

8. Don't exceed their responsibilities

The role of subject matter experts is to support the general knowledge of the company and its employees, rather than be used as the core of an issue. Their expert knowledge serves as a tool to connect the dots and fill in the blanks, hence they should not be used to manage heavy, time-consuming tasks.

9. Conclusion

Subject matter experts play a very important role in business. The addition of their specialized knowledge not only boosts everyday operations of the business and improves the productivity of its workforce but also enhances your organization's visibility on the market – thus is a great way to ensure

future growth. All in all, SMEs allow you to take your business to the next level and stand out from the industry crowd.

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