

5 Knots to be Untangled in Organizations with Patience and Finesse

David Albrice, January 11, 2016



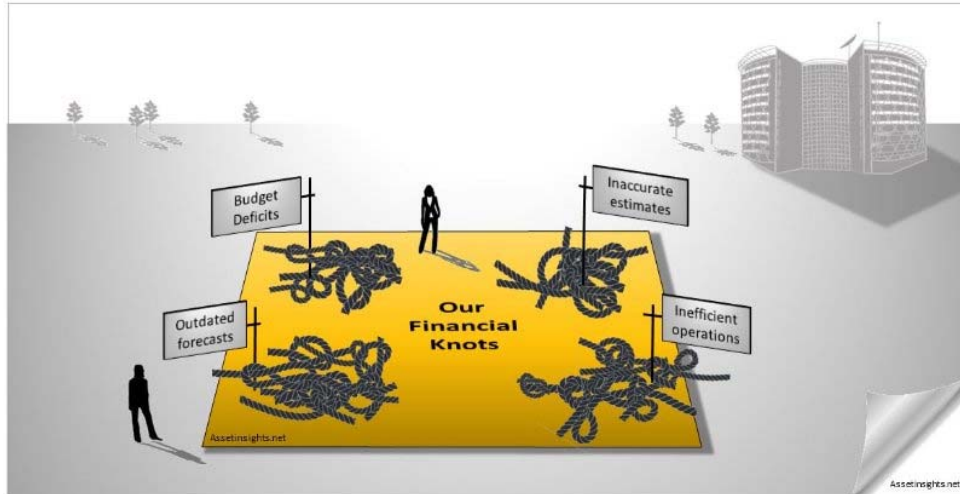
"We learn the rope of life by untying its knots" -- Jean Toomer.

Problems sometimes manifest themselves as "knots." Knots can be tight or loose; deliberate or accidental; composed of many ropes or just one; and visible or concealed. Regardless, all knots require focus, patience and finesse in order to be untangled. In my experience working with different organizations, I have found that knots tend to arrange themselves in five areas.

1. Financial Knots

Here are some examples of financial knotty-problems I have seen organizations try to untangle:

- Budget deficits
- Inaccurate estimates
- Inefficient operations
- Outdated forecasts
- Low returns on investment

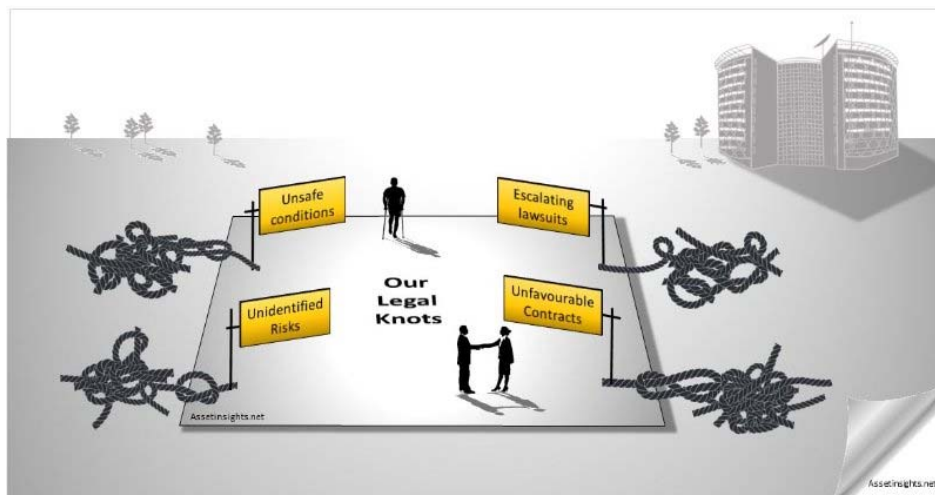


The untangling of these financial knots cannot be rushed. If we are not careful, the knot may tighten and even more effort will be required.

2. Legal Knots

Here is a list of some examples of legal knotty-problems I have seen organizations try to untangle:

- Unsafe site conditions
- Escalating lawsuits
- Unfavourable contract terms
- Unidentified risks
- Misaligned policies

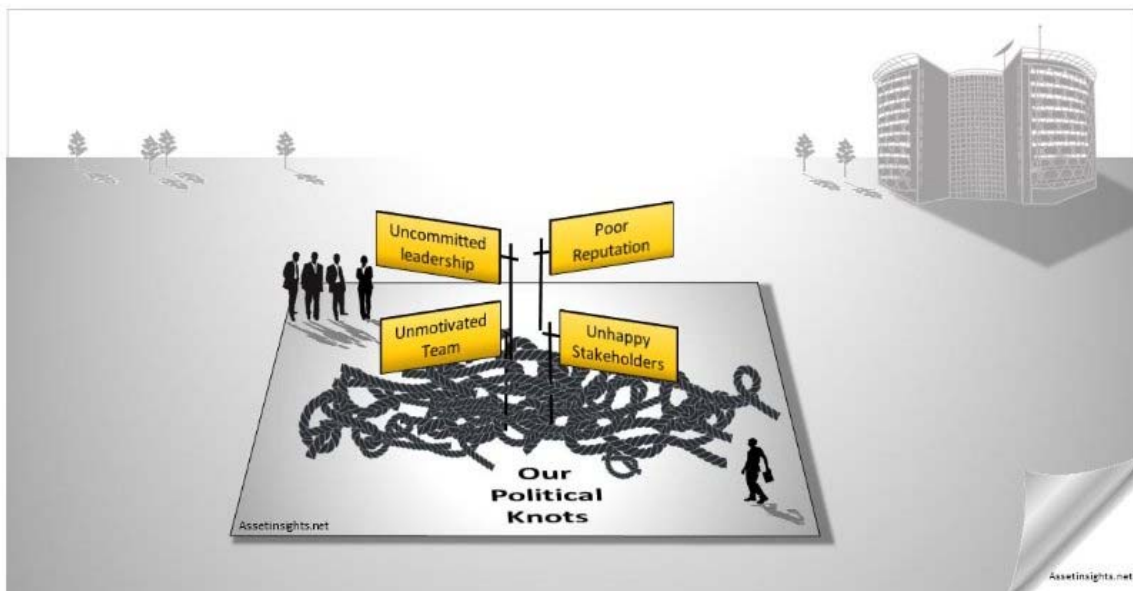


Legal knots are particularly insidious. Sometimes the organization may not even be aware that the knot exists until it suddenly reveals itself.

3. Political Knots

Here is a list of some examples of political knotty-problems I have seen organizations try to untangle:

- Low staff morale
- Uncommitted (and opaque) leadership
- Dissatisfied stakeholders
- Organizational silos
- Poor reputation



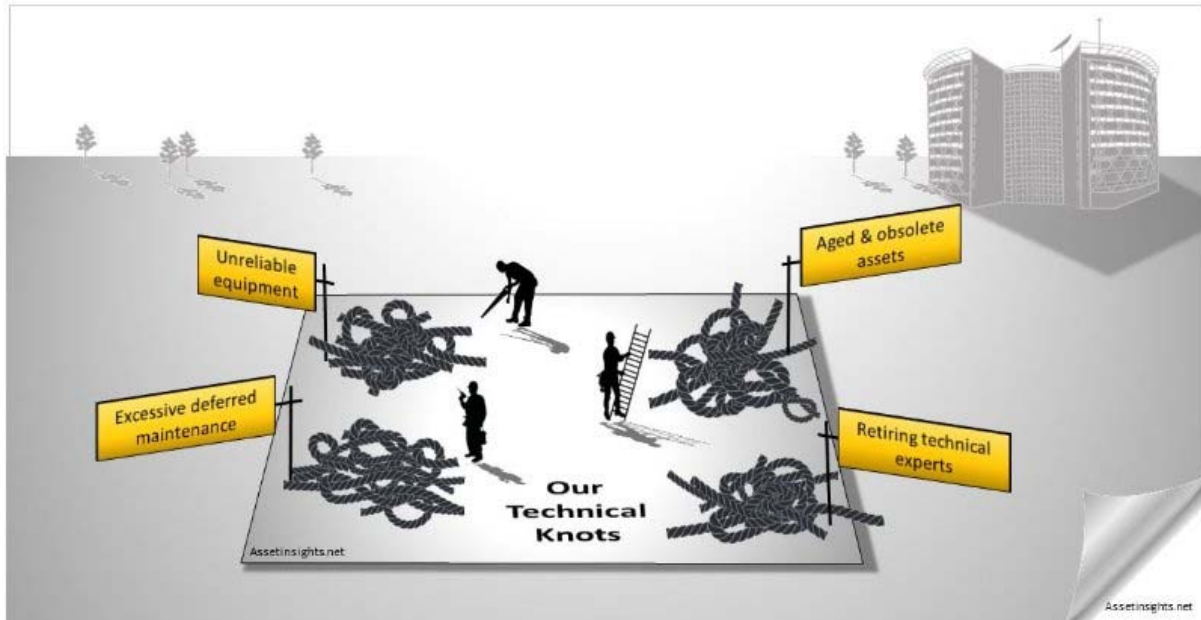
Political knots are often made up of many smaller knots that come together to form a tightly woven mass. Each individual knot needs to be unravelled with mindfulness of all the other interconnected knots.

4. Technical & Physical Knots

Here is a list of some examples of technical knotty-problems I have seen organizations try to untangle:

- Aged and obsolete assets

- High levels of deferred maintenance
- Unreliable equipment
- Retiring technical experts
- Unknown asset failure modes



Technical knots often require an information gathering exercise to reveal the deeper structures of the knot before trying to untangle the outer threads.

5. Administrative & HR Knots

Here is a list of some examples of administrative and human resource (HR) type knotty-problems I have seen organizations try to untangle:

- Incomplete records
- Disjointed systems
- Inconsistent data
- Unskilled staff
- Overly competitive labour market



Knotty problems almost always have more than one cause and generally require more than a simple solution.

Knots hold negative energy that needs to be teased out...

The knot is what holds the problem together. The knot is therefore the manifestation of the energy in the problem. By untying the knot the negative energy is released.

It may be helpful to look at the knot from multiple angles to get a sense of its internal structure before attempting to pull at one of the threads:

- The number of threads that make up the knot
- The tension in the threads (how tight)
- Whether there are multiple knots wound together or interconnected somehow
- The type of knot(s) - A reef knot? A sheepshank? A bowline? A clove hitch?
- The age of the knot - is it new or has been tightly wound for a long time. They say that rope has memory of its coils.

Should the organization start with the looser threads first and then proceed to the tighter ones? Or, should the organization pull on all the threads at the same time?

If we do not approach the knot with the right skill and finesse, the organization may inadvertently tighten the knot or create a new knot.

What knots have you had to untangle in your organization? What approach worked best to loosening your knots?

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