3. What is Knowledge Management

ETL525 Knowledge Management
Tutorial One

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The subject of KM was originally arisen in the field of expert systems, described as “knowledge-based systems” [in late 1980s].

The term became associated with the consultancy companies [around 1997], and diverged into three streams:

- **IT-focused** consultancy companies promote KM as something to be accomplished through technology.
- Those previously worked in organization development seized upon the ‘learning organization’ as a vehicle for promoting effective sharing of information in organization.
- The nature of intangible assets and intellectual capital in companies and the need to account for them in the balance sheet emerged as a subject of concern to corporations. KM was used as an alternative way of speaking about this phenomenon.

KM History (cont.)

- Knowledge Innovation Timeline
  <http://www.entovation.com/timeline/timeline.htm>
- **Books** on KM began to appear by the early 1990s.
- The field picked up momentum in the mid-1990s with the development of a number of large, international KM conferences and consortia.
- KM became an **academic discipline** in 2003. Many universities offer courses in KM, including business and library schools.

Source: Dalkir (2005)
Multidisciplinary nature of KM

• Some of the disciplines that contribute to KM:
  – Organizational science
  – Cognitive science
  – Linguistics and computational linguistics
  – Document and information management
  – Information and library sciences
  – Technical writing
  – Education and training
  – Communication studies
  – Collaborative technologies
  – Decision support systems
Topics covered in ICICKM 2008

- ICICKM 2008 (5th International Conference on Intellectual Capital, Knowledge Management & Organizational Learning):
  - Frameworks for conceptualizing KM
  - Parameters of the field of study
  - Knowledge creation and sharing mechanisms
  - Knowledge asset valuation models
  - Impact on organizational learning
  - Impact on business strategy
  - Architectures for KM systems
  - Integration of knowledge from different groups in an organization
  - Knowledge sharing between different groups in an organization
  - How to initiate KM value of tacit knowledge
  - Resourcing KM
  - Competitive advantages
  - KM case studies
Topics covered in ICICKM 2008
(cont.)

- The evaluation of KM
- KM and the Web and e-Business
- Structural capital
- Inter-organizational relationships
- Strategic alignment
- Intangible assets and resources
- Human capital
- Organizational learning
- Experiential learning
- Participatory learning
- Intellectual capital
- Economic intangible assets
- Organizational coaching
- Ethics of KM
Topics covered in ICICKM 2008
(cont.)

– Knowledge acquisition
– KM readiness
– Knowledge cities
– Knowledge sharing for the public sector
– The role of KM in crafting marketing strategy
– The role of KM in crafting management strategy
– Intellectual capital and the family business
– Mapping social networks
– Social networks analysis
– Intangible assets identification and valuation in strategic operations
– KM in design
– Socio-technical frameworks for knowledge sharing
– Metrics and measurement of intangible assets
– Collaboration and communication in KM

Source: <http://academic-conferences.org/icickm/icickm2008/icickm08-home.htm>
Topics covered in ICKM 2007

• ICKM 2007 (4th International Conference on Knowledge Management):
  – KM processes
  – Data mining (store/discover/propagate)
  – Technologies for knowledge sharing
  – Learning technologies
  – Management and measurement of intangibles
  – Optimization of organizations (business process management)
  – Assessment methods
  – Innovation methods
  – Social networks and psychological dimensions
  – Case studies on collaboration tools for KM

Source: <http://www.executiveacademy.at/executive-academy-mainsite/ickm/>
Topics covered in KMPA 2006

- KMPA 2006 (3rd Asia-Pacific International Conference on Knowledge Management) held in Hong Kong:
  - The Day 1 of the Conference features renowned keynote speakers who will explore multi-dimensional issues in Knowledge Management (KM), namely collaboration and societal issues, knowledge discovery through data mining and taxonomy, and tapping into intangible assets. The keynote speeches will be followed by a forum to address the management issues and the assessment of intellectual capital.
  - On Day 2 of the Conference the relationship between innovation and knowledge management and topics such as connectedness, organizational effectiveness, leadership, knowledge networks and clusters, learning and unlearning will be discussed.

Source: <http://www.ise.polyu.edu.hk/kmap2006/>
KM Definitions

• It is impossible to adequately define KM in a sentence or in a paragraph. Why?
  – KM covers multiple disciplines
  – KM involves multiple professions
  – KM has multiple interpretations
Group Discussion
What is KM?

• Questions
  – What is KM and what is not?
  – Knowledge management = management of knowledge?
  – Knowledge management = information management?
  – Should KM technology-focused or people-focused? Are they mutually exclusive?
  – Does KM mean managing an organization’s intellectual capital?
  – Is KM just a fad?
  – What is your own definition/views of KM?
Managing knowledge activities

Activities involving knowledge:
   – Knowledge creation
   – Knowledge capture
   – Knowledge sharing
   – Knowledge dissemination
   – Knowledge acquisition
   – Knowledge application

KM = these activities?
KM = effort (activities) to facilitate/organize these activities?
Dalkir’s and Park’s views on KM

• KM is the deliberate and systematic coordination of an organization’s people, technology, processes and organizational structure in order to add value through reuse and innovation. (Dalkir 2005)

• KM is a discipline used to systematically leverage expertise and knowledge to enhance effectiveness, facilitate innovation, and improve efficiency and competency. (Park 2005)
Wiig’s View on KM

• Knowledge is the primary driver of enterprise performance. Knowledge affects performance by making it possible for people to perform good and effective actions. Application of better knowledge provides opportunities for better performance.

• Knowledge must be managed – the efforts to facilitate and organize knowledge production and utilization is KM.

• Effective KM must be people-focused.

Sallis and Jones’ View on KM

• KM as being about learning to know what we know.

• Knowing what we know, and using it creatively and productively, is the major source of economic value and competitive advantage at the disposal of any organization.

• Organization need to have a process to know what they do not know but should know.

Source: Sallis and Jones(2002)
KM views in Halawi’s article

The following are views as collected in Halawi et al (2005):

• It has become clear that the term ‘Knowledge Management’ has been applied to a very broad spectrum of activities designed to manage, exchange and create or enhance intellectual assets within an organization, and that there is no widespread agreement on what KM actually is (Haggie and Kingston, 2003).
KM views in Halawi’s article (cont.)

• KM can be presented as a convergence of ideas promulgated over the past decade, including core competencies and resource-based theories of the firm, ‘info-mapping’ and information resource management, the ‘balanced scorecard’ and intangible/intellectual assets, the learning organization and ‘communities of practice’, total quality management and business process reengineering, the networked organization and the ‘boundary less firm’ (Corrall, 1998).
KM views in Halawi’s article (cont.)

• KM is a conscious strategy of getting the right knowledge to the right people at the right time and helping people share and put information into action in ways that will improve organizational performance (van Ewyk, 2000).

• KM is about encouraging individuals to communicate their knowledge by creating environments and systems for capturing, organizing, and sharing knowledge throughout the company (Martinez, 1998).
– KM has two main objectives: (1) to make the organization act as intelligently as possible in order to secure its viability and overall success, and (2) to otherwise realize the best value of its knowledge assets (Wiig, 1997).
Views from AS5037-2005

• Standards Australia on knowledge management (AS 5037-2005):
  – A trans-disciplinary approach to improving organisational outcomes and learning, through maximising the use of knowledge. It involves the design, implementation and review of social and technological activities and processes to improve the creating, sharing, and applying or using of knowledge.
  – KM is concerned with innovation and sharing behaviours, managing complexity and ambiguity through knowledge networks and connections, exploring smart processes, and deploying people-centric technologies.

Source: Ferguson S (2006)
CIKM’s view on KM

- CIKM (Conference of Information and Knowledge Management; annual conference since 1994) defines KM in an organization:
  - We define KM as **business activity** that attempts to **build a direct connection** between an organization’s **intellectual assets** - be they in the form of employees (tacit) or in the form of record (explicit).
  - Within an organizational context, it would mean **managing the collective information expertise** in the form of **employees** and the **organizational processes**.
CIKM’s view on KM (cont.)

– KM covers identifying and mapping intellectual assets within an organization, generating up-to-date expertise for competitive advantage, making vast amounts of corporate information accessible, sharing of best practices, and technology that enables managing all of the above including groupware and intranets.

Source: <http://www.cikm.org/Knowledge-Management.html>
KM views in Chan’s article

Dressing down KM, views collected in Chan (2003):

• Vendors have bandied their technology too much in pushing KM.

• If building technology was the point of the KM programs then they were doomed to fail. KM is not just about technology.

• KM is about people, not the technology. Vendors say KM is IT and people, with IT at the core – that is simply not true.
KM views in Chan’s article (cont.)

• KM can contribute to financial performance – this critical point needs to be shown to senior management in Hong Kong.

• KM focuses on existing internal resources and processes, enhancing and improving them to create competitive advantage.

• There is a cultural barrier here in Hong Kong that prevents knowledge sharing. People here are so afraid to speak up.
KM views in Chan’s article (cont.)

• KM is a function that people in an organization should **add onto what they do everyday** - rather than create a whole new defined role, such as the Chief Knowledge Officer.
Case Study – Systems Staff

• The HKUST Library Systems Department is responsible for the development and management of the Library's digital library and automation environment, which is the core platform for delivering library services and enabling access to electronic journals, e-books, reference databases, and Internet resources. It is also responsible for providing IT and computing support within the Library.

• Systems staff is one of the most valuable knowledge asset to the Department. Their expertise, talent and work culture have been the key elements contributing to the success of the Department as well as meeting the missions and strategic goals of the Library.
Case Study – Systems Staff
(cont.)

• Systems Department experiences continual staff loss, due to their highly marketable knowledge and experience, and attractive promotion opportunities available elsewhere.

• At the same time, there is a need to focus more on the knowledge requirements for competent execution of increasingly more complex systems tasks in a rapidly changing environment.

• KM strategies were developed to enhance and maintain these intangible knowledge assets:
  – **Documentation** - staff are required to write up full documentation on all developed programs and server installations.
Case Study – Systems Staff
(cont.)

– **Backing up** - every systems task has a backup person, so that when one staff is unavailable, the backup staff can take up the task right away.

– **Training** – whenever a new system or application is rolled out, the involved staff will conduct training or briefing to other relevant staff.

– **Intranet** – maintain a Systems Department “staff manual” website as a repository of systems knowledge, policies, procedures and documentations.

– **Innovation** – cultivate the culture of software trial and evaluation, by enabling testing platform and encouraging downloading of emerging and advanced software for testing.
Case Study – Systems Staff
(cont.)

– **Idea sharing** – cultivate the culture of sharing of ideas, showing off new programs developed, discussing views on emerging technologies, etc. among systems staff as well as with the peers from other libraries.

– **Open-source motivation** – encourage software development and sharing by creating a [Shared Software Pool](#), to host source codes and programs produced by the Systems Department, and making them available for download on the Internet.
Case Study – Systems Staff
(cont.)

• Outstanding factors affecting KM of systems staff
  – Uncompetitive salaries
  – Lacking promotion opportunities
  – Insufficient work space
References


References (cont.)


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