

Knowledge Management and Virtual Organizations Minitrack

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Creating and organizing knowledge and knowhow for intra and inter-organizational sharing is not a trivial task. Multinational consulting firms such as Andersen Consulting or McKinsey and Co. demonstrate the exemplary application of such knowledge management skill. Knowledge management is also closely related to the topic of Organizational Learning which recently emerged as the new paradigm for management after the Business Reengineering fever in the early and mid 1990s.

Such learning takes place more and more in the virtual space rather in physical space. The explosive growth of the virtual space such as internet and on-line service networks as well as proprietary corporate networks will change the business environment of the 21st century fundamentally. Capability of the instantaneous communication among business partners and availability of the near perfect information and knowledge on the marketplace will strengthen the responsiveness and intelligence of the firm in meeting customer needs. Unlike in the physical space, however, we are bound to encounter more challenges in the virtual space as business cycle time shrinks, markets become more fragmented, and customers become invisible yet more demanding.

This year we have accepted four papers out of the eight submissions. The first paper, "Development of a Strategic Decision Framework for Identifying and Selecting Knowledge Management Projects", by W. Bower and A. Heminger, develops and evaluates a framework to guide the Air Force in the identification and selection of its KM projects. It also explores key factors that can directly affect the successful implementation of KM projects within organizations. The second paper, "Exploiting Soft Systems Methodology(SSM) and Knowledge Types to Facilitate Knowledge Capture Issues in a Web Site Environment, by J. Biggam, illustrates how the Soft Systems Methodology can be utilized to enhance the fuzzy, non-technical, issues surrounding the development of Web Site environments and , further, uses the concept of Knowledge Types to aid in the identification of critical organizational knowledge. The third paper, "Are Knowledge Management Systems in Practice Truly Reflective of Knowledge Management Systems in Theory?", by N. Wickramasinghe, compares

and contrasts KMS in theory and practice and demonstrate that they are indeed dissimilar. It highlights the lack of subjective component of KMS in practice and suggests an ideal KMS which supports not only objective but also subjective components of organizational knowledge management. Finally, the paper by J. Ahn and S. Chang, titled "Assessing the Contribution of Knowledge to Business Performance: The KP³ Methodology," introduces a KM implementation approach that quantifies knowledge levels and links them through linkage matrices with business performance in a systematic way.