An Introduction to Knowledge Management

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Objectives for this session

- To explore the history & theory of Knowledge Management (KM)
- To understand the controversies around KM
- To learn about how KM programs are implemented through different models
- To discuss the ideas in the readings
What is Knowledge Management?

- What are your ideas?
- What have you read?
- What have you heard?
- What do you imagine?
One Perspective of KM

“KM [Knowledge Management] involves blending a company’s internal and external information and turning it into actionable knowledge via a technology platform.”

Understanding KM

Understanding Knowledge Management requires an understanding of knowledge and the knowing process and how that differs from information and information management.
Classic Data to Knowledge Hierarchy

Wisdom
Knowledge
Information
Data
From Facts to Wisdom  
(Haeckel & Nolan, 1993)  
one example of the hierarchy

Volume  
Completeness  
Objectivity

Less is More
Wisdom
Knowledge
Intelligence
Information
Facts

Value
Structure
Subjectivity
Knowledge Management Models

- Documentalist
- Technologist
- Learner & Communicator
Knowledge management is a new business strategy, but its techniques can be traced to the work of documentalists in the early part of the twentieth century.
Documentalists as Knowledge Managers

In Europe and America in the first part of the twentieth century, documentalists had grand visions of collecting, codifying and organizing the world’s knowledge for the purpose of world peace.
Information Professionals as Knowledge Managers

The documentalists were the original multimedia professionals.

Paul Otlet – began the International Federation for Documentation. He wanted libraries to stop being depositories and to become more dynamic in information transfer.

Under the leadership of Otlet the Europeans not only collected and codified documents, they developed networks and worked to exchange knowledge among people.
Documentalists and Special Librarians

Suzanne Briet, sometimes called “Madame Documentation” drew the comparison between American special librarians and European documentalists after a visit to America in 1954.
“In *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?* Briet brilliantly defined documents in terms of indexical signs. In this, she was adopting an argument that previous documentalists of her time had suggested and which was present in the cultural air, as she states, through ‘linguists and philosophers,’ surely in the form of structural linguistics and semiotics.”

Professor Ron Day in the Preface to *Qu’est-ce que la documentation?*

[http://www.lisp.wayne.edu/~ai2398/briet.htm](http://www.lisp.wayne.edu/~ai2398/briet.htm)
Caution

It would be a mistake, though, to define Knowledge Management as solely the domain of documents and documentalists.
KM as a Technological Solution

- Is KM
  - Big business?
  - A competitive advantage?
  - Intellectual capital?
  - An intranet solution?
  - An asset dimension?
  - A technological infrastructure?
Contentnets have a role to play in KM

- As knowledge repositories for tacit knowledge that has been made explicit
- For best practices databases
- For expert “yellow pages”
- Online learning and knowledge sharing
- Knowledge sharing “boards”
Peoplenets & Processnets have a role to play in KM

- For group learning applications
- To connect individuals with each other for mentoring and knowledge sharing
- For decision support & decision making
- To sense, share, and respond to the “signals” coming from the environment
- To capture ideas and turn them into action
Caution

It would be a mistake, though, to define Knowledge Management as solely the KM technology infrastructure.
The Challenges of Electronic Collaboration in Knowledge Sharing

“Focusing exclusively on the technical issues of electronic collaboration is a sure way to a very expensive failure.”

“A focus on the people issues dramatically increases the potential for success.”

The Learning and Communication Process Model

- Innovation is a way of life
- Flexibility and the ability to act quickly is necessary in a changing environment
- New projects can benefit from alliances and learning from in-house experts and creative thinkers.
KM: Learning and Communication Process

In simple language KM is an effort to capture not only explicit factual information but also the tacit information and knowledge that exists in an organization, usually based on the experience and learning of individual employees, in order to advance the organization's mission. The eventual goal is to share knowledge among members of the organization.
Value to Organization

Organizational Learning

Repositories
- Best Practices
- Reports
- Documents
- Presentation Slides
- Tips

Decision Making Tools
- Profiles for Customization
- Pushed Reports & News
- Collaboration Tools

Active Knowledge Transfer
- Expert Knowledge Base
- Contact Links
- Expert Assistance as Needed
- Communities of Practice Index

Collection

Navigation

Codification

Communication
So...what is knowledge management?

“Knowledge management (KM) is an effort to increase useful knowledge within the organization. Ways to do this include encouraging communication, offering opportunities to learn, and promoting the sharing of appropriate knowledge artifacts.”

Some other key ideas

- Knowledge as a Social Value
- Knowledge artifacts
- Knowledge as an intellectual activity & the mind/body connection
- Common knowledge
- Process & things
- KM as a fad

“Processing data can be performed by machine, but only the human mind can process knowledge or even information.”

For more information

- ASIS KM Website
  http://www.asis.org/SIG/sigkm/index.html
- Brint.com Knowledge Portal
  http://www.brint.com/ym.html
- Knowledge Management Research Center
  http://www.cio.com/research/knowledge/
- Karl-Erik Sveiby and Knowledge Associates
- University of Arizona
  http://www.cmi.arizona.edu/research/kno_mgmt/