

Inside Knowledge

Blue-sky thinking

KM and culture in South Africa



CASE REPORT

Jerry Ash on knowledge management at Indian pioneer MindTree.

MASTERCLASS

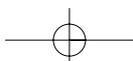
Oliver Schwabe explains the value of e-learning from a KM perspective.

NEWS UPDATE

Bill Gates seeks KM guru... Letter from Haiti... plus the latest events...

THE KNOWLEDGE

Mick Cope reveals how he escaped from corporate slavery.





UK EVENTS

For more information about events in the UK, please call +44 (0)20 8785 2700 or e-mail events@ark-group.com

Social Software in the Enterprise

24 August 2006, London

Blogs, wikis and even podcasts are increasingly becoming corporate tools as the so-called Web 2.0 phenomenon gathers momentum. This masterclass, led by social software specialist Niall Cook, will explain the key elements of social software and demonstrate its practical application within the enterprise. Cook will guide participants through the challenges of creating a social-software project and provide practical examples on how to gain buy-in from management and end users.

2nd Annual Developing and Executing a Robust Intranet Strategy

11 – 13 September 2006, London

This two-day event has been put together with an 'editorial board' of high-profile intranet strategists from industry. A variety of organisations will share their insight and provide a step-by-step guide to building a coherent strategy. This event will include in-depth case studies from BT, British-American Tobacco and British Airways, as well as two streams of workshops to enable participants to dig deeper and to gain more 'how-to' knowledge.

Measuring and demonstrating the value of knowledge management

13 – 15 September 2006, London

Demonstrating the value of their initiatives and programmes is a constant challenge to knowledge managers, whether that is building the business case for a new initiative or justifying the continual investment in an existing programme. This conference will showcase practical case studies of how organisations manage and demonstrate the value of their knowledge management (KM) initiatives. Senior knowledge managers from a range of industries and organisations will share proven strategies for linking KM with business objectives to provide real business benefits. The conference will also discuss the steps that need to be taken in order to demonstrate value, such as formulating the business case and establishing return on investment.

KM University

This month's tutor

Stan Garfield – Worldwide Consulting and Integration Knowledge Management Program for Hewlett-Packard Services.

Qualifications

Garfield joined predecessor organisation Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) in 1983 and launched its first knowledge management (KM) programme in 1996 – a programme that was widely regarded as trail-blazing.

DEC was acquired by Compaq in 1998 and Garfield therefore developed the corporate KM strategy there, before it was acquired by Hewlett-Packard (HP) in 2001. Garfield holds a degree in computer science from Washington University in St. Louis.

IN 1996 I was asked by the senior vice president of my business unit to start a KM programme following a visit to Ernst & Young's Center for Business Knowledge in Cleveland, Ohio. When he heard that Ernst & Young had a chief knowledge officer (CKO), he turned to me and said, "I want you to be our CKO". This made it sound simple, but it turned out that a lot of time and effort were needed to get our KM program off the ground.

Along the way, I had to endure many ups and downs, enlist allies in the cause, get executive sponsorship from a succession of leaders, deal with constant organisational change, adjust to changing technology, migrate from and integrate with legacy software, exercise diplomacy with many other groups and cope with two large-scale corporate mergers.

In my opinion, the basics of KM have broadly stayed the same for the

past ten years. The fundamental goals are unchanged, the challenges are much the same and the basic categories of people, process and technology still apply. What has changed is the technology, the acceptance of KM as a strategic initiative and the willingness of organisations to assign people to the roles of knowledge manager and knowledge assistant.

We still struggle to persuade people to spend time sharing and re-using knowledge, it can still be hard to find information and expense budgets are still tight.

But more people are practicing KM today, there are more ways for practitioners to share their thinking (with weblogs, for example) and building blocks, such as communities, team spaces and taxonomies, are now in widespread use. Emerging tools and techniques are being tried and tested in KM programs

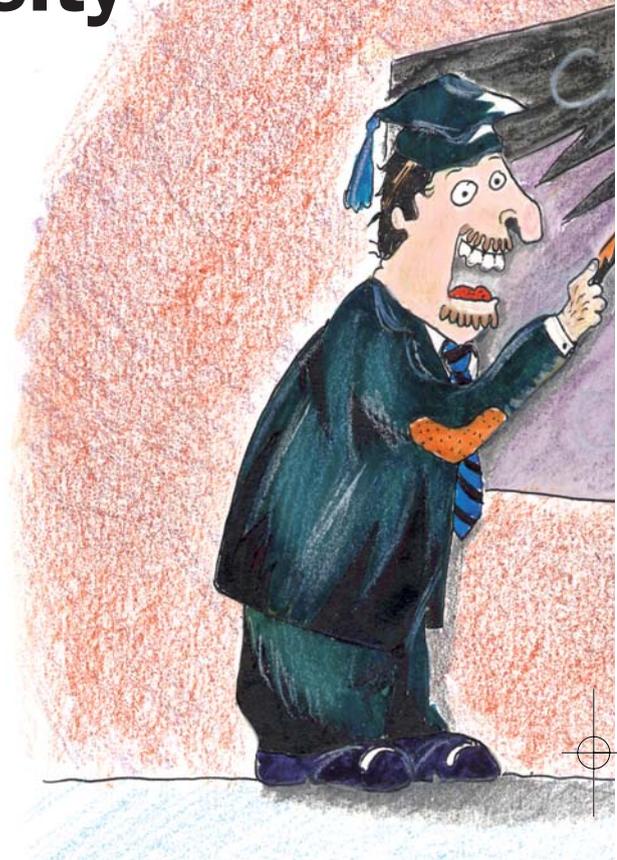




Illustration: Emma Palfreyman

to better address existing requirements and to enable new capabilities.

The challenges for KM include creating new knowledge to stimulate innovation, expanding and better exploiting people networks, incorporating narrative in all knowledge initiatives and making it easier to find information when it is needed for better decision making. KM is here to stay and by applying its fundamental concepts of learning from the past, re-using good ideas and avoiding past mistakes, KM practitioners can ensure that their initiatives will succeed.

The books which have had the most influence on me are those with the following attributes:

1. Well written. They must be clear, concise and articulate, and contain a minimum of jargon;

2. Logical. The arguments should be well-formulated and appeal to logical thinking;
3. Iconoclastic. The authors must be willing to stake out new or unpopular positions and not conform to existing thinking, trends and fads.

For KM University, I selected a baker's dozen of books which stood out from the many others that I have read. Not all of them are strictly KM, but they have all influenced my thinking and the way that I approach KM.

Knowledge management

- 'The Wealth of Knowledge: Intellectual Capital and the Twenty-first Century Organization' by Thomas Stewart. Published Currency/Random House (2003);
- 'Working Knowledge' by Thomas Davenport and Laurence Prusak. Published by Harvard Business School Press (2000);
- 'Thinking for a Living: How to Get Better Performances and Results from Knowledge Workers' by Thomas Davenport. Published by Harvard Business School Press (2005).

Narrative and leadership

- 'Squirrel Inc. A Fable of Leadership through Storytelling' by Stephen Denning. Published by Jossey-Bass (2004);
- 'The Leader's Guide to Storytelling: Mastering the Art and Discipline of Business Narrative' by Stephen Denning. Published by Jossey-Bass (2005).

Management and project management

- 'Why Employees Don't Do What They're Supposed to Do – And What to Do About It' by Ferdinand Fournies. Published by McGraw-Hill (1999);

- 'The Mythical Man-Month' by Fred Brooks. Published by Addison-Wesley Professional (1995);
- 'Peopleware – Productive Projects and Teams' – by Tom DeMarco and Timothy Lister. Published by Dorset House (1999).

Marketing

- 'Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind' by Al Ries and Jack Trout. Published by McGraw-Hill (2000);
- 'Marketing Warfare' by Al Ries and Jack Trout. Published by McGraw-Hill (2005);
- 'Focus: The Future Of Your Company Depends On It' by Al Ries. Published by Collins (2005).

Sales

- 'Why Customers Don't Do What You Want Them To Do' by Ferdinand Fournies. Published by McGraw-Hill (1994);
- 'SPIN Selling' by Neil Rackham. Gower Publishing (1995).

Wealth of knowledge

I'd like to focus on what I learned from Tom Stewart's 'The Wealth of Knowledge'. I gave this to all 50 attendees at HP's last worldwide KM meeting and led a discussion in our KM forum about some of the insights gained from reading the book. Stewart's book defines the following key elements of a KM programme, based on Denning's experience at the World Bank:

1. Communities of practice;
2. Place (online presence for communities);
3. Help desk;
4. Yellow Pages (who-knows-what directory);
5. Primer (frequently asked questions);
6. Knowledge artifacts (records of prior projects, emphasising best practice and lessons learned);



GLOBAL EVENTS

ASIA-PACIFIC

For more information on events in Asia, please contact Shawn Sree on +65 6325 3162 or e-mail: ssree@arkgroupasia.com

Re-Assessing the Performance of KM as a Functional Business Tool

20 – 21 July 2006, Singapore
This masterclass is designed to challenge thinking around knowledge management (KM) and encourage attendees to address the failings and potential of KM within their organisation. The masterclass leaders will work with attendees to instruct, guide and challenge, helping them to re-align and rejuvenate KM in their organisation.

Knowledge Management for the Legal Profession

16 – 18 August 2006, Singapore
The legal profession has often been accused of being backward when it comes to knowledge management (KM), but if that were ever true, it is certainly catching up now. Indeed, many law firms are regarded as being on the cutting edge of KM. Is your firm?

At this event, you will learn more about:

- Leading and managing for knowledge sharing;
- Aligning KM strategy with corporate strategy;
- Auditing existing KM endeavours.

Intranets for the Public Sector

6 – 8 September 2006, Singapore
Too many corporate intranets are under-used, key functions lost in a poor interface design that pays too little attention to the needs of users. Learn how you can overcome intranet and portal development challenges:

- Use the intranet to streamline workflow;
- Drive unified design through navigation that is consistent across the organisation;
- Integrate the intranet with other work applications;
- Developing processes for intranet redesigns;
- Coordinate agency-level and government-level design;
- Ensure accessibility for employees with disabilities, beyond simple compliance.



7. Bulletin board;
8. Doorway (provision for outside access).

I have found this to provide a useful framework for benchmarking the KM programme that I lead. I was pleased to find that at HP we had implementations for each of these. It also prompted me to add links to HP's expertise locator tools to the Knowledge Network, our KM home page.

Chapter six, "The Case Against Knowledge Management", describes 'the Kraken', a project based on a Lotus Notes e-mail list for general Q&As at one organisation. "The founders imagined people would spark discussion by uploading white papers and the like. That is, they expected users to pile logs of content on the fireplace, generating fire in the form of questions, critiques and so on. Instead, the spark comes first. 80 per cent of Kraken traffic starts with questions: Does anybody know? Has anybody ever done something like...?"

"The Kraken differs from KnowledgeCurve [another initiative]. The latter is supply-side; it's full of documents and other explicit knowledge...The Kraken's a conversation; KnowledgeCurve and its cousins are compendiums. KnowledgeCurve is about teaching; the Kraken is about learning."

This became the topic of a lively thread in HP's KM discussion forum.

Knowledge networks

The importance of getting knowledge moving around an organisation is dealt with succinctly elsewhere: "Connection, not collection: That's the essence of KM. The purpose of projects, therefore, is to get knowledge moving, not to freeze it; to distribute it, not to shelve it."

Too many KM initiatives over-emphasise capture – collecting lots of documents, but not enabling people to effectively re-use them. At HP, we have made the phrase 'connection, not collection' one of the key themes of our KM programme.

Stewart has influenced KM at HP in other ways, too. On page 313, he makes the following important point: "Don't use too many measurements: He who tracks everything knows nothing." After reading this, we cut the number of KM metrics from five to three.

In the chapter, 'Measuring the Efficiency of Knowledge Work and Knowledge Workers', he provides two lists. One, culled from various sources, lists possible ways to measure how efficiently human, structural and customer capital are deployed (see www.go2cio.com/articles/index.php?id=1474 for the full list).

The second comes from Wouter de Vries, who lists a dozen factors critical to the success of a KM project or initiative:

1. Knowledge vision: Do we know what knowledge we need for this project or in this line of business?
2. A clear connection to performance: Will this save money? Grow sales?
3. A knowledge-friendly structure. For example, teams versus functional silos;
4. A knowledge-friendly culture: Do people share or hoard?
5. Adequacy of resources;
6. Technical infrastructure: How good are our KM tools?
7. Knowledge structure: Have we established a vocabulary and taxonomy for the knowledge we are using?
8. Motivation: Are the right incentives in place?
9. Clarity of purpose and goals;
10. Is there a common terminology about KM itself?
11. Senior management support;
12. Power: How great is our ability to break through the organisational barriers we encounter?

Details such as these are valuable for KM project managers. I recommend this book to all KM professionals.

For articles on KM by or about Stan Garfield, along with KM-related links, please visit <http://groups.msn.com/KnowledgeManagement>