



Book Reviews

Knowledge Management Practice in Organizations: The View from Inside.

Edited by Ulla de Stricker. IGI Global: Information Science Reference. 2014. 318 pp. ISBN 978-1-4666-5186-9.

Reviewed by Crystal Sharp, CD Sharp Information Systems, Ltd.

"The brand manager watching the competition, the business developer monitoring the industry for new opportunities, and the public sector analyst crafting policy all share the need for data, intelligence, and insight to be applied appropriately. No matter what the function and role in question, access to an application of 'what we know—and what we now know we need to find out' drives the outcome of business processes."

—deStricker, Chapter 1, page 1:
Context of Challenges

Knowledge Management Practices in Organizations: The View from Inside is a compilation of articles by information professionals who specialize in knowledge management. Drawing on experience, the authors share practical perspectives of the challenges and operational realities of knowledge management work in organizations.

Knowledge, a nebulous and intangible organizational asset, is acknowledged to be a key driver of competitiveness today. It encompasses any information with potential to enhance decision-making power, generate insight, increase productivity, encourage innovation, improve customer and supplier relations; preserve corporate memory, and improve corporate advantage. Such information can include: intellectual property, research databases, research findings, operational data, policies and practices, client data, and communications between employees and with clients, among other things. Particularly important, though challenging to harness, is tacit knowledge: the experiential knowledge that may reside only in the heads of employees.

The success of knowledge management depends greatly on how effectively that range of scattered information can be captured and stored; how easily and quickly that information can be found, accessed, and combined with other information to inform decision-making; how effectively that information can be shared, analyzed, and used; and how effectively the knowledge and learning thus gained can be contextualized,

captured and incorporated into day-to-day decision-making, and in informing long-term strategy.

If that seems a tall order, it is. The practice of knowledge management is multi-disciplinary, requiring information gathering, organizational, technological, community building, facilitation, and analytical skills. It needs enabling technology, tools and techniques that facilitate collaboration, and the collection, storage and management of a vast range of different types of information, while still protecting intellectual property, security and individual privacy. Above all, knowledge management needs good leadership and dedicated commitment – in time, staff, and resources – to encourage and maintain a knowledge sharing culture within the organization and to encourage use of the knowledge and tools that are made available.

Knowledge Management Practice comprises eleven chapters. In the first two chapters, deStricker defines knowledge management, describes challenges and barriers to implementation of knowledge management, emphasizes the importance of a corporate culture that

encourages and supports knowledge sharing, and the importance of investment in both, people and technology. Shamel's chapter presents a methodology for conducting an information audit and knowledge assessment, techniques for analysis to identify gaps and duplications, and offers advice on presenting recommendations for action based on the findings of the information audit. Crosby's two chapters discuss communities of practice as a way to engage individuals to share knowledge—and social media tools that can encourage knowledge sharing among members within communities of practice. Vala-Webb discusses information flows and different models and strategies that can be employed to make organizations "smarter" and more collaborative. Keller follows this with a chapter on the "learning organization" and use of the After Action Review process to incorporate adaptive learning within the organization that can encourage innovation. Huffman's contribution focuses on formal and informal methods and tools to encourage conversations as important strategies in maintaining, growing and managing organizational knowledge assets. Finally, Ard and deStricker discuss engagement of outside knowledge management consultants in helping guide an organization's knowledge management efforts.



Knowledge Management Practice is available online at www.igi-global.com/book/knowledge-management-practice-organizations/90644 in its entirety, for \$205, or each of its 11 chapters can be purchased separately, at \$37.50 per chapter. I was not enthused by the two-column format for this book: the text is quite dense, with few sub-titles, which made it particularly difficult on the eyes when viewed on my iPad as the text had to be kept small to see the entire page. Another irritation was the inability to flip back and forth between chapters, index and reference, or to search the text of the entire book, as the review copy could only be downloaded by chapter.

Knowledge Management Practice is not a how-to guide for knowledge management (as the authors point out, there is no one formula), and, apart from a rough estimate of the cost of a knowledge audit in Shamel's chapter, there is no discussion of budgeting, costing or resource allocation issues. However, the book is still important. The value of *Knowledge Management Practice* lies in the broad overview it provides of the issues, challenges, pitfalls and successes in managing corporate knowledge, as well as its presentation of cases, methods and scenarios that illustrate the soft skills, management issues, and processes that are necessary for knowledge management to work.

Information professional skills are ideally suited to knowledge management work. This book's practical, experiential slant is a useful contribution to the vast, existing knowledge management literature. *Knowledge Management Practice* can be used to help information professionals define their roles within organizational knowledge management structures, as consultants or as champions of knowledge management initiatives. *Knowledge Management Practice* should be read by any information professional

who has an interest in knowledge management. As well, the book should be on recommended reading lists within graduate programs in information science.

The New Digital Scholar: Exploring and Enriching the Research and Writing Practices of NextGen Students.

Edited by Randall McClure and James P. Purdy. Information Today, Inc. 2013. 400 pp. bibliog. index. ISBN 978-1-57387-475-5. \$59.50.

Reviewed by Vikki Bell, Bellinform Research

This well-edited volume has received a number of scholarly reviews already. So why write one for *AIIIP Connections*? Are the readers of this newsletter likely to be academic librarians or lecturers in college writing courses? Occasionally at best. Why should the rest of us consider reading this volume? Let's explore . . .

The underlying premise of the editors is that we need to find alternative ways of engaging students in the learning process involved in writing a research paper. The digital scholar (or NextGen student) is defined and research methods examined. Discussion around where students go for their information and where they *should* have gone, and how to get them there abound, with a variety of possible solutions. What stops them from going to the right places and what makes those places the right ones? Many of the information professionals I know or have read would look in the same places as the students described—Wikipedia and Google—as the invariable starting point, particularly if the topic is unfamiliar. What we call primary research is next, and social media is fast becoming a channel for that. This is followed by information that can be sourced in the scholarly databases.