



Conversations with Simon Lelic

Managing Editor, Ark Group

Prepared by Carol Butler, AOK Archivist

Note: The asynchronous nature of online discussion groups can be confusing, as the reader often encounters several unrelated messages between one question and its reply. The Star Series discussions at AOK are a rich resource for those of us interested in knowledgework. In appreciation for all that our guest moderators and fellow AOKers do to make these discussions so interesting, I attempt here to create an archival record that feels more like a face-to-face conversation. All contributions to this Star Series conversation are reproduced below in their entirety, but the order has been modified to create a smoother narrative. – Carol Butler, AOK Archivist

More information about this and other Star Series discussions can be found at the AOK website (<http://www.kwork.org/Stars/stars.html>).

About the Archives. A sentence or two from most messages has been highlighted in blue to make it easier to scan the document for a [quick overview of the entire conversation](#). Most messages contain 2 Subject lines. The first **subject line** was provided by an AOK editor, and appeared in the subject line of the message delivered to members; the last subject line was written by the person posting the message and appeared within the text of the message. Long signatures have been reduced to the **poster's name**.

Date: Sun Nov 16, 2003 3:20 pm

Subject: Simon Lelic: Welcome to STAR Series Guest Moderator - Jerry Ash

From: Jerry Ash

Hi Everyone.

It is my pleasure to introduce Simon Lelic, managing editor of Knowledge Management Magazine (KMM) and a couple of other related publications of the ARK Group, based in the UK.

In addition to managing the editorial content of KMM, Content Management Focus and Intranet Strategist, Simon heads up the reports division of the company.

AOK has long been proud of our affiliation with the ARK Group which believes that effective management strategies and techniques are valid across industry and geographic divides -- the same as we do. Their reach matches their beliefs. With offices in London, Singapore, Australia and the U.S., the ARK Group is sponsor -- along with the European Commission -- of the world's largest gathering of knowledge practitioners and leaders at the annual KM Europe which. KM Europe 2003 ended Friday in Amsterdam. That

event follows closely on the heels of KM Asia. To know more about the ARK Group's world-wide conferences:

<http://www.ark-group.com/events/conferences.asp>

ARK is dedicated to providing detailed, practical, objective information and guidance based on sound academic research and market-based/market-sensitive analysis.

I take this opportunity to tell you all this not to promote them, but to tell you what an important contribution the ARK Group is making to the understanding of management in what I call "The New Order." At the same time, Simon Lelic has the good fortune of being an important part of that; and, we have the good fortune now of having Simon in collaborative mode with AOK for the next two weeks.

As well as commissioning and editing a series of reports dealing with topics that include taxonomies, KM in the public sector and KM in the legal sector, he is currently researching and writing a practitioner's guide to communities of practice, which will be published at the end of the year.

Prior to taking up his current role, Simon was editor of Knowledge Management magazine for almost four years. Simon has interviewed and profiled the likes of Tom Stewart, Dorothy Leonard, Karl-Erik Sveiby, Leif Edvinsson, Bob Buckman, Warren Bennis, Fons Trompenaars and Arie de Geus. His articles on knowledge-management issues have also been translated and published in numerous publications across Europe and Asia.

Simon says he's not a KM practitioner, but I say he is a KM expert who has been tutored by the best!

Welcome, Simon! Thank you for the gift of time and knowledge. As with so many others of who have sat in the STAR Seat, we hope you get as much as you give!

Jerry

Date: Sun Nov 16, 2003 3:40 pm

Subject: Simon Lelic: A Guide and Some Stories on CoPs - Jerry Ash

From: Jerry Ash

STAR Series with Simon Lelic

Thanks again, Simon, for joining AOK as a personal member and leading the STAR Dialogues for the next two weeks.

Many of us are hungry for the kind of real life stories you can tell based on the myriad of interviews, articles and research projects you have conducted over the past four years.

When you first told me you were doing extensive research for a practitioner's guide to communities of practice, it occurred to me that this dialogue could start with that -- both to benefit AOK members with the stories, and you with more stories from our own members. That's the way the STAR Series began -- serendipitously -- three years ago when Steve Denning and his colleagues at the World Bank wanted to test a paper they had written on the "rules of KM."

As I look back at that archives, I note that Steve ended up doing most of the "talking." It was wonderful, but I'm betting -- given the nature of today's conversationalists -- this will be a fairer knowledge exchange.

So, to begin, Simon, would you give us a short overview of your current CoP project? And -- I know this is a big order -- could you share with us one of the real life stories you will use to illustrate a point or two about the nature of communities? You may want to address these in two separate responses.

Thanks again, Simon, for being here!

Jerry

Date: Mon Nov 17, 2003 7:36 am

Subject: Lelic: re. A Guide and Some Stories on CoPs - Simon Lelic

From: Simon Lelic

Subject: Re: Simon Lelic: A Guide and Some Stories on CoPs - Jerry Ash

Hello once again Jerry, and hello to all AOK members. Thank you once again for inviting me to take part in your excellent Star Series - I'm really looking forward to the discussions that will follow.

At Jerry's request, I'll start with a little background...

Ark Group has been working in the KM space for a good number of years now, primarily through conferences, benchmarking courses, exhibitions and, of course, Knowledge Management magazine. [Recently I was asked to head up a new initiative for the company focused on producing in- depth reports on KM-based topics that would provide readers with the same type of information that Ark has traditionally offered through its other channels:](#) practitioner-focused information and guidance based on the real-world experiences of those who have faced similar problems in their own work.

Thus far we have produced reports on taxonomies and KM in the public sector, and we have a number of others that will be published over the next few months. [The subject that is taking up the majority of my time at the moment, however, is communities of practice.](#) With a view to publishing a report on the subject in January, I am currently compiling

case studies, interviews and survey results - as well as ploughing through the literature that is already available on the topic. Again, what I am most concerned about is real-world experiences. There is some great theory out there, but I am most interested in how this theory is affected by the context in which it is employed. As such, if anyone has any stories about how established good practice has clashed or coincided with their own organisation's prevailing culture, I would love to hear about it...

Simon

Date: Wed Nov 19, 2003 6:23 am

Subject: Lelic: re. Stories on CoPs - Ron Donaldson

From: Ron Donaldson, Business Analyst, English Nature, Northminster, GB

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 281

Simon

Here in English Nature I have taken a deliberately contrasting approach to understanding Communities of Practice. I have spent the last few years looking at them through [different perspectives](#) and seeing what lessons emerge. Off the top of my head here are my top seven: (Spot the influence my recent IBM, Cynefin training has had):

Approaching it from a [Narrative](#) perspective makes me realise the importance of getting a community together and encouraging the telling of anecdotes about personal experiences.

Taking a [Psychological](#) point of view, makes me realise that the resonance of personal stories allows the listener to relate to the teller and the predicament and imagine themselves in that situation. Body language and tone of voice playing a greater importance than the actual words being spoken.

From a [Neurological](#) perspective, mirror neurons fire in the brains of the listeners while observing the movement (and perhaps storytelling) of the story teller in effect making and storing the experience as if it were real.

From a [Complexity](#) point of view, small inputs such as organising a social event can cause huge beneficial outcomes to emerge, far outweighing the effort put in.

From an [Ecological](#) perspective, sustainability (and often diversity) is the desired outcome, and because of the sheer number of complex interactions, we need to envision 'the sustainable COP', make sure the basic requirements are present, then encourage the positive and discourage the negative patterns whilst regularly monitoring the community condition.

From a [Philosophical](#) perspective, if a community can be helped to self-realise the deep seated archetypes and shared values within itself you are part way to resolving cultural and change issues and building that important 'sense of community'.

Finally, from a [Practical](#) point of view, by collecting anecdotes and lessons learned from various communities set up to handle major casework and projects I find that a common lesson is that "most of our breakthroughs on relationships, sharing understanding and revealing hidden knowledge came from our informal conversations outside and alongside the official meetings".

Cheers

Ron Donaldson

Date: Thu Nov 20, 2003 5:39 am

Subject: **FW: Lelic: re. Stories on CoPs - Simon Lelic**

From: Simon Lelic

Subject: Re: Stories on CoPs - Ron Donaldson

Thanks for your input, Ron. [Your point about social events \(and small inputs having potentially enormous outcomes\) is one that crops up time and again in examples of communities that have really succeeded in engaging their members.](#)

ActKM, for instance, a community of public-sector KM practitioners, which now has around 700 members around the world, continues to organise face-to-face meetings on the first Tuesday of each month in Canberra, the town in which the community was originally formed. Similarly, the community has an annual conference, which aims to attract an even larger proportion of its members. Most of the community's activities take place online (I believe through Yahoo groups, much like AOK), but the community leaders are all too aware that social interaction stimulates discussion and knowledge sharing, and generates a renewed sense of commitment among its members.

As Shawn Callahan, one of ActKM's founders, put it, it's all about creating relationships. And as you say, Ron, once the foundations are laid, these relationships often continue to build outside of the formal structures and interactions of the community.

Thanks,

Simon

Date: Mon Nov 17, 2003 5:01 pm

Subject: **Lelic: Re. A Guide and Some Stories on CoPs - Simon Lelic**

From: Simon Lelic

Subject: Re: A Some Stories on CoPs - Jerry Ash Communities and the Organization

[One question relating to communities of practice that I find fascinating is whether/how far to align community activities with the strategic goals of the organisation as a whole, a question that John Keeble, now of Aon and formerly of Enterprise Oil, addressed adeptly at a recent Ark conference on CoPs in London.](#)

John contrasted the approaches to communities developed by the two companies. Enterprise Oil, a company of around 1,000 globally dispersed employees, had in John's words an "open, collegiate, sharing approach to work". Correspondingly, communities were charged with the fairly intangible goal of removing time and geography as barriers to success - by sharing good practice, furthering understanding of technical issues and so on. Funding and support were minimal, and so were attempts to measure the bottom-line impact of community activities.

At Aon, the unashamed goal of the company's communities strategy (at least at its most formal level) is to leverage knowledge of client industries to increase revenue. Each global practice group (GPG as the top-level communities are known) has a full-time chairman, a manager and an extensive support structure, including funding. As John fully admitted, in many ways the GPGs have become similar to full-blown organisational units. They are what he would call communities of purpose.

Neither approach is mutually exclusive (at least, there is nothing to prevent a company developing a hierarchy of community formality), and I suppose context will dictate which approach is the most suitable for a given organisation. There are, though, two key issues here that every organisation looking to make the most of its communities strategy needs to consider: first, how far can community activities be tied to financial/strategic goals before the natural, and arguably most productive, aspects of CoPs are compromised? Second, if an organisation takes the opposite route and allows community activities to progress entirely organically, is that company in danger of missing a trick by failing to fully exploit the strengths of its community base

I'd love to hear your thoughts on this.

Simon

Date: Tue Nov 18, 2003 7:50 am

Subject: Lelic: Re. Communities and the Organization

From: Jerry Ash

Subject: CoPs are About *Practice*

Simon, I too am not a practitioner, but I am a full-time "student" of KM who has listened intently to many practitioners and thought leaders who have shown me differing views on the relationship between the community and the organization. They have all made sense, but they all can't be 100 percent correct, can they? So, we come to our own conclusions.

Here's mine.

Deb Wallace, who authored the book "Leveraging Communities of Practice for Strategic Advantage" <<http://www.kwork.org/Store/new.html>> with Hubert Saint-Onge, cleared my head about what CoPs really are when she joined Hubert in his STAR Series Dialogue a year and a half ago. <http://www.kwork.org/Stars/saint-onge_pt.1.html> She said:

"There are lots of different types of 'communities' at work in an organization -- communities of interest, of learning, of purpose. You see lots of different types of communities described in case studies and conversations about knowledge initiatives. Each has a set of characteristics that distinguishes it from other types. Communities of Practice are a very special kind of community where the focus is on *practice* <- the ways and means of accomplishing a work function. At this type of community, the core is a collaborative effort to improve practice -- the way people do their work. Wenger et al. in "Cultivating Communities of Practice" <<http://www.kwork.org/Store/featured.html>> define communities of practice as:

'Groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their understanding and knowledge of this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.'"

Yes! CoPs are about *practice*. Practice is about work, and work is about creating value for the organization and benefit for the group and the individual. Case closed! :-) Well, for me, anyway. A CoP that is *not* connected somehow to organizational purpose is not a CoP. It is some other kind of community -- let's say a "professional community" where practitioners hone their craft but do not actually "practice" it together for a common good -- like a professional association, for instance.

[The real issue is the relationship between the CoPs and the hierarchy.](#) That is the basis of your question -- "whether/how far to align community activities with the strategic goals of the organisation as a whole ... " But I suggest the question is not whether or how far, it is how. It is not a question of how intrusive an organization dare become in directing the course of the community as it is in creating a trusting and collaborative relationship between communities and hierarchies that bring balance and positive outcome for both.

[For the hierarchy, it is a question of learning to "manage without managing."](#)

I realize I'm sounding very unpractical in my view. But it is the realization I believe every manager must come to before setting forth to create an environment in which communities and hierarchies can work together. Once an organization understands the role of communities and hierarchies (separately and together), they can set about creating environments that spawn self-forming communities that work in harmony with the mission of the organization. "How" will be as varied as the cultural levels of the organizations and the people who will eventually work together in a wonderful new relationship. Isn't that evident in the different approaches of Enterprise Oil and Aon

Jerry

P.S. The views of Deb Wallace, Hubert Saint-Onge -- and now me -- are considerably different than those of Tom Stewart who believed strongly during one of his turns in the STAR Seat <http://www.kwork.org/Stars/stewart_part1.html> and as a contributor during

Hubert's turn, that "CoPs don't DO work! That's what teams and workgroups do. Hubert is wrong, wrong, wrong."

Date: Wed Nov 19, 2003 6:35 am

Subject: FW: Lelic: Re. Communities and the Organization

From: Simon Lelic

Subject: Re: Communities and the Organization

Jerry, your point about 'managing without managing' is an extremely important one, I feel. It is a point that Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, in 'Cultivating Communities of Practice', return to frequently, one that is reflected in their choice of language (right down to the term 'cultivating' in the title of their book) and their use of analogies (for instance, likening interventions to encourage community growth with tending to a plant, which will grow without outside help but will become stronger and healthier if cared for in a particular way).

[Jerry interrupting: Yes, I love the idea of KM practitioner as gardener. But I wonder if that image is too arsy-craftsy for the business world? Nevertheless, it is a good description of what a savvy knowledge manager does.]

Simon continues:

Regardless of how closely aligned community activities are with the strategic goals of an organisation, the case studies I have encountered (at least, those that illustrate any degree of success with communities of practice) seem to reinforce this point. Returning to the Aon example, while the global practice groups are closely measured and managed, the company is extremely careful not to elevate any community to GPG status if that community's members are not ready and, most importantly, willing to make the transition. As John Keeble says, you have to earn the right to help direct a community.

Thanks,

Simon

Date: Tue Nov 18, 2003 7:57 am

Subject: Lelic: Re. Stories on CoPs - Melissie Rumizen

From: Melissie Rumizen

Subject: Re: Lelic: Re. A Guide and Some Stories on CoPs - Simon Lelic Communities and the Organization

Simon, I would say that Buckman lies somewhere in between. Our original communities 11 years ago were organized around the industries we support and our strong R&D community. However, we took an open space approach following an initial emphasis on participation.

My answer to this is practical. If someone invests, they deserve to ask for evidence for a return on their investment. However, this demands a good discussion of what they are investing in - a looser structure than other organizational structures, a group that is driven largely by passion in an area or topic, and the members of the community itself, to name some of the important ones. If you have the right discussion, you will see that you are investing in intangibles. Then you can develop measures that go beyond the financial goals. [The problem is not that you are dealing with communities so much as that you are discussing tangible measures for knowledge investment and work. The measures are too limited to be appropriate.](#)

Also, when an organization in effect says hands off -- we'll let communities develop on their own, they are failing to build a capability they need -- the capability to develop and foster communities. Again, I think the underlying issue is different from how I read the question. The issue is whether or not an organization understands the value of communities and views them as a strategic capability. I would suggest to everyone that they read Hubert Saint Onge and Deb Wallace's book on communities - Leveraging Communities of Practice for Strategic Advantage <<http://www.kwork.org/Store/new.html>>.

Cheers, Melissie

Date: Wed Nov 19, 2003 6:26 am

Subject: Lelic: Re: Stories on CoPs - Simon Lelic

From: Simon Lelic

Subject: Re: Stories on CoPs - Melissie Rumizen Communities and the Organization

Melissie, I guess many of the perceived failures within organisations that relate to CoPs arise when management structures fail to fully understand the potential value of communities. Often there seems to be a real confusion about where the boundaries between CoPs, teams and business units etc lie (an issue Tom Stewart and Hubert Saint-Onge tackled in a previous dialogue, as Jerry points out!).

Again, from the case studies I have come across, [those organisations that have consciously, and successfully, tied community activities to strategic goals have actively considered whether a community of practice is the best means of tackling a particular issue \(as opposed to a team, taskforce etc\).](#)

In contrast, communities sometimes become the 'default' means to a given end purely because senior managers come across a pre-formed structure that, as far as they can see, is not being fully exploited. In cases such as these, the repercussions for the community itself may be catastrophic.

Thanks,

Simon

Date: Wed Nov 19, 2003 4:43 pm

Subject: Lelic: Re. Communities and Organizations

From: Karyn Cullen, Know How Coordinator, Minter Ellison Lawyers, Brisbane, AU

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 281

Re: Communities and organisation

I am enjoying (as usual) reading the exchanges and am prompted to say something: I am not an expert in this area by any means but my observations and reading lead me to the following conclusions -

1. the COP and the organisation are integrally linked because the organisation and its business goals spawns the COP network 2. How they are linked to the organisation's heirarchy is probably as varied as the number of organisations! 3. however, there might be a few generic things we can say about COP's and the organisation - (a) organisation should identify and recognise them (b) organisation needs to support them to reach their potential (c) organisation should be sensitive to 'managing' them (but the need to do so will vary with each organisation)

Perhaps this is a little 'simple'?

Regards,

Karyn

Date: Thu Nov 20, 2003 5:41 am

Subject: FW: Lelic: Re. Communities & Organizations - Simon Lelic

From: Simon Lelic

Subject: Re: Lelic: Re. Communities and Organizations - Karyn Cullen

Thanks, Karyn. I don't think there's anything wrong with trying to keep things simple -- that so many organisations struggle to get the basics right when it comes to CoPs suggests a need for a few fundamental guiding principles, and you have hit on some critical points. I said in my opening statement that I think the term "best practice" is a misnomer, but I also firmly believe that there are certain elements of good practice that organisations cannot afford to ignore.

Thanks,

Simon

Date: Thu Nov 20, 2003 5:35 am

Subject: Lelic: Re. Communities & Organizations - Kurt Reiger

From: Kurt Rieger- ATP Management Design - Business Integration

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 281

Everyone/Jerry - much appreciate the learned experiences you have accumulated over the years, sharing this wisdom and the opportunities created by the current discussion is mind blowing.

In my experience - all types of organizations have a missing link - I call it the 'glue' or 'cement' between CoPs, hierarchy, horizontal and vertical barriers of any kind (un/intentional). Many of these are derived from the way people gain knowledge. People take a risk ('looking out' into the future) by make a decision what (K) to gain before they go to 'teaching' organizations - with the goal of making lots of money in their 'life cycle'. Teaching organizations can only cram so much (K) into people's heads and thus people are conditioned to think and learn in 'specific fields' (from a very early age) = Organisational barriers reinforced by 'teaching'. Unlearning is much more difficult than learning - organizations have difficulty in dealing with these problems. What makes it worse is the rate of change in technology. It makes it extremely difficult for organizations to tell 'teachers' what they need to teach in order to make the organization successful "just in time" not years later as is the case today. That's why the glue is so important - to increase the supply of skill on 'time' - to allow top down management to actually know how to reduce the risks of 'failure' by 80% and use Corporate Governance and Regulatory requirement to halve production & learning costs.

"Glue" can be designed to overcome any barriers between CoPs/hierarchy/learning - but the glue is very specific to the goals of a 'production' unit and its people - whatever the function of the business unit. The glue is there to help people achieve their own goals with a primary focus on "overall safety" of the organization - which coincidentally also results in a multitude of organisational benefits.

"Glue" is designed to meet the need of CoPs / peoples within a business unit. But to implement and maintain these people needs there is an equal requirement to also implement and maintain the 'glue' within the hierarchy and structure of the organization. We designed a new management technology which encourages People within CoPs to take ownership, share (K), learn and build knowledge, to be successful in achieving the life style they desire and at the same time meet organisational needs. Organisational leadership - top down management design must meet the safety and reward needs of CoPs - so we use the 'glue' to link effort expended to reward and recognitions (financial, promotion, personal, family, community) it's visible - by everyone! (\$ do not feature in this recognition)

Kurt Rieger

Date: Thu Nov 20, 2003 12:15 pm

Subject: Lelic: Re. Communities & Organizations - Simon Lelic

From: Simon Lelic

Subject: Re: Lelic: Re. Communities & Organizations - Kurt Reiger

Kurt, you have touched on some a very important points here. The relationship between community and organisational hierarchy/structure depends on the needs of both

individual and organisation being fulfilled. [A community will only function effectively if active participation offers its members a tangible reward for their efforts.](#) By this, I do not mean financial rewards (in fact, I think you are wise to avoid monetary incentives, which raise all kinds of practical, and moral, dilemmas), rather that employees, through their involvement in community activities, are empowered to do their jobs better.

The whole issue of how to incentivise community participation is a fascinating one, I feel. At Buckman (correct me if I'm wrong, Melissie!) employees are simply expected to participate in community activities. While there is a clear understanding in the firm that you cannot enforce active participation if employees see no value in taking part, the only reward the company offers those who do participate is that they get to keep their jobs! This is a slight exaggeration, of course, but (to paraphrase Melissie) there is certainly a tendency to rely more on the stick than the carrot.

Siemens, on the other hand, has developed a fairly comprehensive reward and recognition system. Employees are rewarded based on the perceived value of their contributions, on how this knowledge is used and on whether contributors update their postings. Distributed according to a system of 'shares', actual rewards have, in the past, included trips to New York and the latest mobile phones (Siemens models, naturally!).

It's quite a contrast, and I see the logic of both approaches, but as I say, I think the most powerful incentive for employees is the knowledge that by participating in a community they will become better equipped to do their jobs.

Thanks,

Simon

Date: Sun Nov 23, 2003 2:13 pm

Subject: [Communities & Organizations](#)

From: Bob Parden

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 283 Communities & Organizations

[I wish we could identify "The Glue" \(to hold community and organization together\).](#) I think it takes shared leadership to obtain seamless collaboration however you label the organizational units.

Bob

Date: Tue Nov 25, 2003 10:08 am

Subject: [Lelic: Glue, Communities & Organizations - Kurt Reiger](#)

From: Kurt Rieger - ATP Management Design - Business Integration

Subject: Glue, Communities & Organizations - Bob Parden

Bob - We designed the glue for an industry or a group of industries and the CoP applies and cements it to their infrastructure and technology in the concept phase. It can also be

used forensically - if a hi tech system fails to perform as expected or failed inexplicably. It is a very powerful risk analysis tool - that is understandable within the organization.

The specific function of this glue/cement system is to recycle existing knowledge so that new knowledge can be derived from its use - repeatedly and traceable- we call it a knowledge management control system (KMCS). We have KMCS articles which could be published by the KM magazine (Simon I hope this is OK to say here)

But - current sophisticated risk assessment techniques fail to detect 67% of failures in E/E/PE SRS.

The glue works in a way that approaches a three dimensional matrix - the CoP, the corporate hierarchy and management become the team to manage the overall safety of electrical, electronic and programmable electronic safety related system (E/E/PE SRS) and the equipment under control (EUC) by the E/E/PE SRS . The glue, the hierarchy and management are enabled to make INFORMED (sorry about the capital letters but this has become a legal obligation in many countries) decision specific to making the Org Unit as safe as agreed to by the CoP - whom determine the level of acceptable risk for the life cycle within the regulatory obligations in that country.

A seamless interface ensures informed decision can be made top down bottom up and is critical in the concept phase - in this phase the CoP is exposed to its highest risks - what you don't know can hurt you many years down the track. The glue/cement/management interface allows the CoP to take ownership of the risks (by their design) within the Org. Unit. The glue is specific to manage risks for: infrastructure, hardware, software, people-ware and the process used by the organization and it is built into the cement for safe keeping, distributed and making visible how all these elements work together. This ensures members of the CoP and management can understand the risks and agree to the level of remaining risk that is to be managed by the CoP or another CoP in the operations phase.

All this within the accepted way in which things are done within the organisational unit. Change management in its simplest form and manageable. We have designed simple solutions that solve the complexities of modern organizational systems and the technology in use, but is specific to the risks within an org units. Improved data analysis is the way to improve decision making and reinventing the corporate competitive advantage. What we are talking about is way beyond Industrial Intelligence Management (IIM) -- it is that, plus designing the IIM and managing the consequences if an IIM system fails - and they do fail catastrophically.

Kurt Rieger

Date: Mon Nov 24, 2003 6:56 am

Subject: Lelic: Communities & Organizations

From: Kurt Rieger

Subject: Re: Re: Rieger: Re. Communities & Organizations - Simon Lelic

The key to organisational success is the identification of the right people throughout the organization and to give them the power of knowledge to make better decisions. (I published a paper on organisational management performance in the Quality Society of Australasia in 2002).

In my experience, in many large organizations, it is the informal leaders that "get the job done ON TIME" (Time is money - an issue close to my organisational and personal heart). If this means breaking 'organisational hierarchy as it is implemented' they are prepared to take the 'risk' to succeed. 'Risk' is the one quantity that is very difficult to measure. People take risk to participate in CoPs - it would be an interesting question to ask participants. So it is important not to measure risk but to measure risk avoidance by the people in the CoPs. That's where the 'glue' for CoPs and the 'cement' for organisational hierarchy is so important (Note I made the terminology glue /cement more specific).

The glue/cement system enables everyone to 'see' by making visible how all the small elements within a production unit/CoP work together (I mean all elements, infrastructure, people, processes/ procedures, suppliers, contactor and customers should that be the case - everything that contributes knowledge to the decision making process). The glue/cement system is highly motivational - by design (top down) the glue/cement system empowers CoP to share and build knowledge (bottom up and visa versa).

Failure by organizations to identify and recognise the 'right people' is the miserable failure of 'managership' - most managers are in a 'protective' mode for a great many multitudes of reasons. [The removal of barriers is essential in forming effective CoPs.](#)

By top down decisions we enable communities within a production unit to design a level playing field which provides 'equal opportunity(also Male/female) based on contribution and successful outcomes that are traceable (in terms of personal and organisational safety - doing the job safer and more productive for the life cycle) something badly missing in current 'measurement' systems. It would be interesting to measure the success rate of male/female L/Rbrain/thinking on decision making when it comes to managing 'overall' safety. So below:

There are a multitude of legal reasons why CoPs are more important than ever = personal reinforcement to participate.

The primary reason for designing the glue/cement system is the management of the overall safety of "functional safety of electrical, electronic and programmable electronic safety related systems" - so that organizations can comply with OHS obligations anywhere in the world.

Safety related electronic systems have an 80% failure rate - the organization/CoPs are accountable for these failure and 67% of failure occur in the concept and rework after commissioning phase (Failure statistics by International Electrotechnical Commission - I

can send details and an article if needed) - so there is a real incentive for CoP's to be formed and members actively participate - there are legal reasons that reach every individual in industrial organizations that makes use of hi tech electronic safety related systems.

The glue/cement system makes these complex systems understandable (kiss principle) for everyone to participate and be recorded as having participated in the decision making processes that ensure overall safety in the workplace. These complex systems can only be safely managed with an active CoP in place top down bottom up - no barriers - an equal playing field linked to the right reward.

We have the risk/reward graphs to show and as required to control the relationships = top down decisions to comply with OHS obligations cost effectively = CoP benefits. Other personal reason for participating in CoP's - spending more time with family/friends/holidays/travel/better life style(1) staying out of jail (1+). Laws are changing all over the world right now and many are retrospective.

K sharing within CoPs is the key to a prosperous community and the Communities of Practice in the place we exchange TIME for \$ at a rate proportional to the risk we manage - it can be done. Knowledge in TIME = money, lots of it. But . . . TIME is the real enemy!

Kurt Rieger P.S. Anyone who may be able to provide more details of the face-to-face meetings on the first Tuesday of each month in Canberra. Would like to attend ASAP. Thank you.

Date: Thu Nov 20, 2003 4:39 pm

Subject: FW: Lelic: Re. Communities & Organizations - Judith Meskill

From: Judith Meskill, Partner, COO, The Growth Solutions Group, U.S.

Subject: Re: Communities & Organizations - Simon Lelic

Greetings Simon,

Welcome to AOK! I fall into the group of those who believe that Communities of Practice should be just that, Communities of 'Practice'. [I am interested in your views on the 'responsibility', if any, and 'accountability', again if any, of CoPs and their members to the organizations in which they are formed.](#)

I would also like to hear more about your 'good' vs 'best' practice views as they would apply perhaps to the lack of 'mandatory compliance' practices among power providers in the North American Power Grid. This is obviously a current issue, due to the preliminary report issued today by the USA and Canada's Energy leaders. Thanks!

Once again, great to have you here,

Judith Meskill

Date: Mon Nov 24, 2003 7:00 am

Subject: FW: Lelic: Re: Communities & Organizations - Judith Meskill

From: Simon Lelic

Subject: Re: Communities & Organizations - Judith Meskill

Good to hear from you, Judith. On your first point, and as you imply yourself, I think the two issues, of responsibility and accountability, are interlinked. [The organisation, if it expects to benefit from community activities, has a responsibility to - as Karyn Cullen put it in an earlier post - identify and recognise the existence of the community, to support it in helping that community reach its full potential, and to be sensitive to the unique structures and activities of the community.](#)

But the more that the organisation invests in that community, the greater the level of accountability that exists. No community should be forceably tied to organisational structures (after all, a community is most accountable to, and has the biggest responsibility towards, its members), but as Melissie said, ["If someone invests, they deserve to ask for evidence for a return on their investment."](#)

On your second point, and basing my answer on the few reports I have read on the subject in the British press, I believe the issue of mandatory compliance is more a matter of what is perceived to be safe and socially responsible practice. I am nowhere near informed enough on the subject to pass judgement on what the ideal solution is to the current situation, but mandatory compliance with given rules and regulations implies a threshold between unsafe and safe practice.

Many would interpret safe practice as good practice, but other costs will of course be incurred. I suppose best practice would allow for a totally stable supply of electricity and unfettered competition between power firms, at no additional cost to either the suppliers or users of electricity. And even with my limited knowledge of the situation, I am pretty sure that situation is some way off!

In KM terms, my biggest issue with the term 'best' practice is that it implies no further scope for improvement, without taking issues relating to context into account. This is by no means an original standpoint, and is, I suppose, really a question of semantics, but as every KMer knows, inaccurate terminology can easily give rise to flawed practices.

Thanks,

Simon

Date: Wed Nov 26, 2003 6:37 am

Subject: Lelic: Re: Communities & Organizations - Kurt Rieger

From: Kurt Rieger

Subject: Re: Communities & Organizations - Judith Meskill

It is worth to repeat these words from Simon

Sentence 1 I believe the issue of mandatory compliance is more a matter of what is perceived to be safe and socially responsible practice. Reply: -The OHS regulatory environment in the OECD has spelled out the social responsibilities to be the physical, political/social, environmental and legal consequences of failure.

Sentence 2 I am nowhere . . . , but mandatory compliance with given rules and regulations implies a threshold between unsafe and safe practice.

Reply: The rules that establish the threshold are spelled out for managing the functional safety of electrical electronic and programmable electronic safety related systems (E/E/PE SRS).

However these rules fail to provide guidance on how companies can comply with the overall risk management and also fail to provide guidance for the integration of hardware and software - K gaps created by computer chips - these spawned two industries - IT and Automation controls industry. These industries leave it up to industrial organizations to solve the 'overall' problem spelled out in the guidelines (performance based legislation).

Organizations pay/ pay/pay - overdesign, expensive equipment, and built in risks that lead to failures in the future (67% of failures can not be detected by sophisticated risk assessment techniques, are imported into the design phase and remain hidden until failure)

We designed the people 'glue' and the org. hierarchy 'cement' to give power to the right people to get the specification right (prevent the 67% of failures in the concept phase) so that the supply chain provides life cycle 'essentials' at the agreed ALARP level of risk established during the design phase and agreed to by the CoP enabling other CoPs to manage the remaining risks. It gives people their life back and make increased returns to the organization at the ALARP level of risk that can be insured at much lower premiums.

[The glue and cement hold together the essential knowledge to ensure life cycle risk management can be implemented at a level of risk that is decided by the CoP = the opportunity for SKM in the KM industry.---](#)

Date: Fri Nov 21, 2003 4:14 am

Subject: Lelic: Communal Organizations - Jack Ring

From: Jack Ring

Subject: Communal Organizations

I have gained interesting insights from the "Simon Says" sessions so far. One is the concept of organization' which is presumed to be different from the concept of community. A second is the seemingly foregone conclusion of a conflict between hierarchy' and community.

I notice these because in the paradigm of chaordic-like behavior of two or more humans <<http://www.chaordic.com>>, such artificial differences don't make a lot of difference. We have seen hierarchical CoPs and heterarchical organizations.

One of our initiatives, nearing project status, is to identify the key attributes of organizations of various kinds along with situations of various kinds; then interrelate the two models as a decision aid for selecting the right organizational form for the situation. Anyone interested in participating in this endeavor, please email me directly at jring@amug.org

Some communities may not have shared purpose. In fact, a dialogue (meaning moving through) sustains better when no agenda exists and each can discern whatever they need from the meaning pool. Agendas or other forms of shared purpose ruin dialogue.

In addition to clarifying community, we would be less confused if we were more clear on the meaning of practice' as used successfully for centuries before being mis-appropriated by the KM mavens. Physicians, lawyers, musicians, race car drivers (living ones), to name a few examples, are practitioners not because they DO something but because of HOW they do it. Donald Schon, MIT, in "The Reflective Practitioner," describes it nicely. Joe Novak, Cornell, in "Learning, Creating and Using Knowledge" gives a similar view. The short form is -- First, a practitioner absorbs a body of knowledge (BoK) consisting of terms, principles and theories pertinent to their domain of interest. Then they engage clients, no one of which matches exactly the stuff in their personal BoK. **The practitioner's challenge is to select and adapt what they know (which may exceed what they learned) to the situation at hand.** Thus they synthesize a process for the case before them. This is called practicing their profession. Often they solicit help (second opinion) to help ensure good choices. Accordingly a community of practice is a group with shared theory, principles, and terms.

If such community has shared Purpose, as well, then the community of practice is really a community of purposeful practice. Notice that immediately after the ball is put into play, a professional sports team is a community of purposeful practice engaged with another community of purposeful practice to see who wins according to theories as exercised within the rules of the game.

Reflective practitioners (a subset) think about the experiences and gain further insights, some of which may apply only to themselves while others may be articulated as knowledge claims about terms, principles and theories and communicated to others.

A community of interest, on the other hand, can be seen at the annual Star Trekkies gathering.

Make sense

Date: Mon Nov 24, 2003 7:01 am

Subject: Lelic: Re. Communal Organizations - Simon Lelic

From: Simon Lelic

Subject: Re: Lelic: Communal Organizations - Jack Ring

Thanks for your insights, Jack - can I quote you

I'd also be interested in hearing a bit more about the initiative you mention, so will certainly be in touch directly.

Thanks,

Simon

Date: Fri Nov 21, 2003 7:07 am

Subject: Lelic: Global Innovation- Debra Amidon

From: Debra Amidon, founder and CEO, Entovation International and one of AOK's earliest STAR Series moderators.

Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 280

[NOTE: This message was inadvertently delayed. Sorry Debra!]

Welcome Simon!

This is wonderful news as I believe that your contribution to the knowledge profession has been peerless as it relates to providing substantial, timely documentation of activity with a scope and depth that is admirable. Kudos for you and the Ark Group as well.

We've corresponded now for years and I am heartened by the prevailing interest in what started as 'Techno-Cities', evolved into 'Digital/Information' Cities and now has moved toward 'Knowledge/Intelligent' Cities, Regions and World - the theme of our recent Roundtable - <http://www.knowledgesystems.org/e100mt/index.html#monterrey>. This provides a solid foundation for the building of EN2Polis - <http://www.entovation.com/group-alliance/en2polis.htm>, and our plans to dovetail in Barcelona with Forum 2004.

I offer as evidence the current dialogue being hosted by Ron Dvir, Innovation Ecology, on KnowledgeBoard - <http://www.knowledgeboard.com/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=119941>. I urge you to scan his paper - 'Innovation Engines in Knowledge Cities' Others may want to chime in with their insights.

For now, [I would like to take this AOK opportunity to get YOUR own perspectives on the evolution and prospects for the future.](#)

Warmest regards,

Debra

Date: Sun Nov 23, 2003 2:03 pm

Subject: Lelic: Last Chances for Conversation with Simon Lelic - Jerry Ash

From: Jerry Ash

Hi Everyone.

We begin the second week of Conversations with Simon Lelic knowing that Thursday is Thanksgiving in the U.S. and an extra vacation day is often taken on Friday to have an extended weekend.

AOK, along with its international membership, won't take a holiday -- but our opportunities to converse with Simon Lelic are numbered. Help us make this a productive week of dialogue.

Date: Sun Nov 23, 2003 2:12 pm

Subject: Lelic: Future for KMers? - Jerry Ash

From: Jerry Ash

Thanks for your excellent responses last week, Simon. To get this week started, I thought I would widen the discussion a bit.

(To the group: Please continue the CoP thread by sharing your specific experiences, successes, problems with managing communities. Or start one of your own!).

Simon, one of your publications is called KM Magazine, and so this question is poignant. [Based on your reporting and editing over the past four years, what is your view of the future for KMers?](#) Notice, I said "KMers," not KM. So it isn't just a question of whether we will manage knowledge in the future, but will we do it with "knowledge managers" per se

Thanks for being here, Simon. I look forward to another week!

Jerry

Date: Mon Nov 24, 2003 7:08 am

Subject: Lelic: Future for KM - Simon Lelic

From: Simon Lelic

Subject: Re. Lelic: Global Innovation - Debra Amidon

Subject: Re. Lelic: Future for KMers - Jerry Ash

Hello Debra - great to hear from you again! In answer to your post, and in response to Jerry as well, with his question about what the future holds for KMers, [I expect two trends to continue: first, that the principles and practices that we group under the heading 'knowledge management' will become ever more important and central to the activities of just about every collective body - organisation, business venture, city, country and so on.](#)

Second, use of the term itself, and thus the existence of knowledge managers per se, will diminish. I don't think many people would dispute how pervasive KM-based ideas have become in recent years. At every level of society, and in so many fields of human endeavour, the value of knowledge has never been so fully appreciated. But while I have yet to come across a single, all-encompassing term that betters 'knowledge management' (for all its faults and limitations!), I believe the very need for such a term is receding.

In part, the second point follows naturally from the first - if KM becomes simply the way we work, the need for the term is obviated. Similarly, the experiences of numerous organisations suggest that, in many instances, attempts to introduce 'knowledge management' have been hampered by the term itself. Instead, they have focused on developing KM-based working practices and referring to them in a language that employees understand and relate to. After all, it is how we work that is important - if terminology gets in the way of change, get rid of the terminology.

That said, I do not expect 'knowledge management' and 'knowledge managers' to disappear altogether, at least not for a while yet. For one thing, many organisations may find (and, indeed, have found) that these are precisely the terms to use to capture the imagination of their employees. And while we have made progress towards fully appreciating the role of knowledge in everything we do, there is still a long way to go yet. In the meantime, while the term is not perfect, I struggle to think of an alternative ('common sense' is an option, although I realise this doesn't give much away!). If anyone has any ideas, I'd love to hear them.

Thanks,

Simon

Date: Mon Nov 24, 2003 11:07 am

Subject: Lelic: Re. Future for KM - Judith Meskill

From: Judith Meskill

Subject: Re: Lelic: Future for KM - Simon Lelic

Simon,

Thanks for your thoughtful response to my first two inquiries.

Regarding your comment on knowledge management - "I struggle to think of an alternative ('common sense' is an option, although I realise this doesn't give much away!). If anyone has any ideas, I'd love to hear them." - Minsky likes 'commonsense'. (^:

My preference is 'Knowledge Mapping' - as 'Mapping' is, in my opinion, inclusive of the necessary 'Social Networking' component of a 'Knowledge Strategy'.

I have been in a number of working situations where a single individual, or group of individuals, belong to more than one CoP within the same organization. In order to

facilitate communication between individuals, team, CoPs, and the organization(s) to which individuals are responsible or accountable (at one of my earliest 'KM' engagements) we developed something that approximated the current 'weblog' phenomenon and experienced an exponential increase in productivity.

The folks at AOK have heard me weigh in on weblogging a few times recently, and we have some well respected bloggers in our ranks here. The AOK bloggers, and the extended 'Knowledge' centric blogging community, have created an impressive 'Body of Knowledge' on the Internet.

The ability to read, feed, comment (interact with the blogger at the post level), trackback (cite or make reference to another bloggers post on your own weblog), and generally collaborate with this extended body of our peers is invaluable. Denham Grey, for instance, not only publishes a most excellent weblog but also maintains an impressive 'Wiki' (a piece of server software that allows users to freely create and edit Web page content using any Web browser) on 'KM'.

While the weblogging community I describe above is a purely 'voluntary' community, each individual gleaned a personal reward for their activities, the use of this 'daily' accounting, or sharing, of tips, facts, ponderings, questions, discoveries, ideas, and 'news' lends itself brilliantly to an organization's 'Knowledge Strategy' for a minimal outlay of funds. [Weblogging, in my mind, is an integral component of 'Personal Knowledge Mapping' and by extension 'Organizational Knowledge Mapping.'](#)

Best regards,
Judith Meskill

Date: Mon Nov 24, 2003 3:34 pm
Subject: Lelic: Future for KM - Jack Ring
From: Jack Ring
Subject: Re: Future for KM - Simon Lelic

Simon,

[Since encountering the book on Knowledge Production and Utilization in the early 1980's I have used that label with clear success in several organizations.](#)

+ KP/KU signifies the purpose, + KP/KU avoids the pessimistic ambiguities of 'management' (that is, 1) a manager doesn't have to be proficient in the work and 2) management means manipulation) + KPU is usually gleefully adopted as a convenient designator for obsolete knowledge that should be disregarded or purged. + Some players hang out on one side or the other but soon most get the idea that personal circulation is the name of the game. + KP/KU is not associated with the data mining, image management, data base administration and other stuff that has camped-on the KM movement and caused many to be quite skeptical.

I suggest that the label will be even more important now that the initial (easy) 5% of the market has been served. Getting next 15% through the Awareness, Appreciation and Acceptance cycle is going to demand a lot more than hucksterism or FUD.

As executives begin to understand that humans are not resources and that the name of the game is the orchestration of capabilities, processes, resources, and materials the role of knowledge production and utilization as the rhythm section of the orchestra will become more clear and their fear of the unknown will diminish below the Acceptance threshold. At the same time, the KP/KU activity becomes autonomic, not needing a big label.

Date: Mon Nov 24, 2003 5:53 pm

Subject: Lelic: P.S. Future for KM - Jack Ring

From: Jack Ring

Subject: Re: Lelic: Future for KM - Simon Lelic

[NOTE: I meant to hold Jack's previous post until I got some clarification. Put it in the wrong file and it ended up being sent. Here's Jack's reply to my inquiry which should make his earlier comments more meaningful. Good lesson for the rest of you -- remember this discussion is a bit disjointed and when you refer to a previous post you need to remind us in a few words what was in it and how your comments relate to it. -- Jerry]

Hi, Jerry, Sorry for the confusion. I went too fast.

Actually I was influenced by two books; "The Optimum Utilization of Knowledge" K. Boulding, ed, 1983, and "Producing Useful Knowledge for Organizations" R. Kilmann, et al, Praeger, 1983.

From these [I adopted Knowledge Production and Knowledge Utilization to emphasize the duality --- ideally a regenerative duality.](#)

cheers,

Date: Tue Nov 25, 2003 10:12 am

Subject: Lelic: Future for KM - Simon Lelic

From: Simon Lelic

Subject: Re: Future for KM - Jack Ring

Thanks, Judith and Jack, for your thoughts. As you both seem to suggest, I agree that it is the 'M' in KM that causes most of the problems, primarily because it has such negative connotations in so many people's minds. (Although having said that, one practitioner I spoke to recently described the word 'knowledge' as a "multifaceted monster", and the term 'knowledge management' as "semantic madness"!)

[In terms of how to describe the KM practitioner's role, I quite like Fons Trompenaars's idea of 'knowledge leadership'.](#) As I said in a previous post, what KM is called in a corporate context is less important than the level of understanding among employees of

its core concepts (call it what most resonates). But for the set of disciplines (some have called it a science) that is knowledge management, knowledge leadership seems an apt expression. But it is certainly a tricky issue. For the same reasons that I dislike the term 'best' practice, I am aware that the misunderstanding that 'knowledge management' generates is dangerous (particularly, as Jack says, in this next phase of development). At the same time, I can see why many KM practitioners I know refuse to get bogged down in discussions about what to call what they do - they would rather concentrate on describing the processes and principles that underlie the changing nature of work, in terms that those they are relating to understand.

It is an issue we discuss frequently at the magazine, although we never seem to reach any wholly satisfactory conclusions. Fortunately, most readers judge Knowledge Management magazine on its content above all (Vic Newman, for instance, sits on our editorial board, but I am very aware how much he dislikes the KM moniker). Perhaps that is a useful lesson for the movement as a whole -- after all, it is what is behind the term 'knowledge management' that is most important.

Thanks,

Simon

Date: Tue Nov 25, 2003 10:31 am

Subject: Lelic: KM/RM Convergence - Mark McElroy

From: Mark W. McElroy, president, KMCI; CEO, Macroinnovation Associates

Subject: RE: Future of KM -- KM/RM Convergence

Hello Simon:

Good to hear what you have to say about things. Regarding your query on the name 'KM' and its possible alternatives, a recent development bears reporting. [There's a kind of convergence going on between KM in some quarters and Risk Management.](#) The result is a variant of KM called "Knowledge and Risk Management," or KRM. The key point here is that KM (or KRM) has an important role to play in managing corporate or organizational risk.

How? By taking steps to create and maintain 'quality control systems for knowledge.' On the view that all action in life, including risky action in business, is nothing more than knowledge (reliable, dubious, or otherwise) in use, what we need are provisions in organizations that make it possible to quality control our knowledge before it gets put into use, or at least before it gets repeated.

This is an aspect or branch of management that is clearly knowledge-related, so KM must either rise to the occasion and embrace it, or not. If it does not, it (KM) will get left behind, so to speak, while KRM, or some derivative of KRM, will move on. With all of the attention now being paid to corporate integrity, transparency, and governance issues, the door for KRM is wide open. Only question is, will KM take the hint and walk in

In any case, the idea of building and maintaining quality control systems for knowledge will advance regardless of what we call it. For references on this subject, folks can turn to a new book by Dale Neef entitled "Managing Corporate Reputation and Risk, A Strategic Approach Using Knowledge Management" (Butterworth-Heinemann, 2003), and also to KMCI where I and others are working on a KM-enabled enterprise model called "The Open Enterprise":

www.kmci.org, or

http://www.macroinnovation.com/openness_thebook.htm)

Regards,

Mark

Date: Wed Nov 26, 2003 6:41 am

Subject: Lelic: KM/RM Convergence - Simon Lelic

From: Simon Lelic

Subject: Re: Lelic: KM/RM Convergence - Mark McElroy

Hi Mark - good to hear from you again. Yes, the association between KM and risk management (RM) is one that seems to be gaining a great deal of attention at the moment. It was, for instance, the topic of one of the keynote presentations at this year's KM Europe. We actually ran a special edition of the magazine exploring the link between the two back in September 2002 (as you no doubt recall, Mark, as you wrote an excellent piece entitled 'Ethics, innovation and the open enterprise' - available to AOKers at:

<<http://www.kmmagazine.com/xq/asp/sid.6EEB55ED-8FF4-437D-9233-7D2287375225/articleid.20C04C34-11CE-45AE-8815-CAAB07EE516D/qx/display.htm>>

(NOTE: You may need to copy and paste that long URL.)

We also ran an event at around the same time entitled 'Managing knowledge to manage risk'. It was a great programme, but while the speakers were extremely excited about the topic, there was less interest from potential delegates than we had expected. Perhaps we were a bit ahead of the game!

I agree that there is potentially huge crossover between the topics, although as I see it (and as Jack alludes to in his post) KM has the potential to positively influence just about every business process. I also take Jack's point about the dangers of KM 'splitting' into various subsets, but perhaps this process will help to increase our understanding of the field rather than dilute it

Another positive repercussion might be a more visible link between knowledge management and the bottom line, which could very well help convince/convert those business leaders who remain sceptical. Perhaps, given the current economic climate, risk management is a 'route to market' (so to speak!) that, in addition to generating tangible business gains, will help build an awareness that KM-based processes are almost universally applicable.

Thanks,

Simon

Date: Wed Nov 26, 2003 7:36 pm

Subject: Lelic: KM/RM Convergence - David Jones

From: David G. Jones

Simon wrote:

> Hi Mark - good to hear from you again. Yes, the association between > KM and risk management (RM) is one that seems to be gaining a great > deal of attention at the moment. It was, for instance, the topic of > one of the keynote presentations at this year's KM Europe. > We actually ran a special edition of the magazine exploring the link > between the two back in September 2002

I think the Records Management (RM) people (the heart and soul of IM) will be a little sad to see someone taking their acronym away.

David Jones

Date: Tue Nov 25, 2003 3:54 pm

Subject: Lelic: Future of KM - Jack Ring

From: Jack Ring

Subject: What's in a name

Simon,

Thanks for the response. I understand the importance of focusing on what people do vs. what they call it. That is fine for incumbents but those yet to be engaged need a label for what they are about to buy.

Consider the post regarding Knowledge and Risk Management. Although there is no doubt that improving knowledge production and utilization can reduce risk, there is also no doubt that improving knowledge production and utilization can reduce product development cycle time and cost and/or reduce the fall-offs from the sales funnel and/or reduce the incidence of janitors installing the paper towels backwards in the dispensers and/or reduce the rework on the factory floor, etc., etc.

It may be that KM will fractionate into KM for Risk and KM for Product Development, etc. but how will we avoid fractionating the understanding of the theories, principles, factoids, knowledge claims, etc., behind it all

This is not a concern for those who already believe they have the answer and are dedicated only to inflicting it on unwary customers (or management) but it is a concern to those who think we still do not understand the field well enough.

Date: Wed Nov 26, 2003 6:38 am

Subject: Lelic: Future of KM - Kurt Rieger

From: Kurt Rieger

Subject: Re. Lelic: Global Innovation - Debra Amidon

Subject: Re. Lelic: Future for KMers - Jerry Ash

There is a much deeper issue arising than KM, SKM, it is managing the Intellectual Property (IP) of Organisation, CoPs, Individuals. Neither of them does it effectively at present, but managing the risks in today's industrial organization takes all three levels of IP - but who's IP is it that is being used to increase the profit and safety in the workplace. This is an issue that CoP may feel strongly about - could be a huge barrier in setting up, maintaining CoPs in the future. The risk/reward relationship needs to include the IP of all three levels and it needs to be measurable to ensure equity. We seek an opportunity to test the glue/cement system in a real life application - a Greenfield site - Pareto works for us every time and the second Pareto rule allow us to improve business by the next 5%. My feeling is that Jack is right = KM in underpinned by OHS legislation - there is no need for a big label.

Kurt

Date: Thu Nov 27, 2003 12:35 pm

Subject: Lelic: KM's Alphabet Soup - Paul McDowall [+Jerry Ash]

From: Paul McDowall, Special Advisor, Learning and Knowledge Management |

Conseiller spécial, Apprentissage et gestion du savoir Treasury Board of Canada,

Secretariat | Secrétariat du Conseil du Trésor du Canada Ottawa, Canada

Subject: Who's on First, What's on Second - was KM/RM Convergence

AAAGGGHHHH!.... Sorry but I had to get that off my chest.

Hi folks,

Sorry about that outburst but I get tired of a new acronym every day. KM, SKM PKM RKM KRM KMM Please...Stop!! Why do we have this penchant to reinvent the wheel

Everyone has a personal and powerful perspective on KM based on their experience and based on their work context but that doesn't mean that we have to constantly change the acronym. I doubt that anyone would disagree too strongly that risk is an important

management aspect, as are many other aspects. I am not demeaning the reality that risk can be more important to some people than others depending upon their context, and I am not just picking on the risk discussion. I think this is symptomatic of a larger issue. [I plead for a big picture view. If we have an alphabet soup of permutations and combinations of KM and call them all something different, what does that say about our domain? What does that say about us? And what does that say to the people we are trying to reach?](#) I am trying to make the complex simple -- at least straightforward and logical - for these folks. But when they see every combination known to man of KM variants, each with their own slant they get confused and get turned off by the prospect of having to understand them all.

[My personal view - feel free to differ with me - is that KM is essentially a unified theory of management. And I believe that it should be a unifying theory as well. If this is true, then why are we trying to segment it](#)

Very respectfully

Paul McDowall

[**Jerry Ash:** I can't help this ... APPLAUSE. Sorry Simon, don't let me interfere with your reply. I'm just one person here, and frankly, I waffle between today's "here here," and tomorrow's, well, yes, it isn't about knowledge management, it's about managing knowledge under whatever flag. I realize (for me) it is a waffle between idealist and pragmatist. Or is it bravery vs. cowardice? Are we not all caught in some version of this dilemma?]

Date: Fri Nov 28, 2003 11:38 am

Subject: Lelic: re. Alphabet Soup - Simon Lelic

From: Simon Lelic

Subject: RE: Simon Lelic: A Guide and Some Stories on CoPs - Jerry Ash

Thanks, Paul - I am in full agreement with you here. As a journalist, acronyms/abbreviations are for me purely a means of avoiding having to spell out long and often clumsy phrases every time we refer to a concept or discipline (electronic-document-and-records-management system, anyone?). Hence my use of (RM) in my previous post - not an attempt to requisition the abbreviation from the records-management people, David, purely an attempt to make my reply a bit easier to read (although I also realise now, looking back at that post, that I didn't actually use the abbreviation later in that post!).

[One of the biggest hurdles knowledge-management practitioners have had to overcome is the common conception among business leaders that KM is merely old ideas rehashed and disguised as new ones - a symptom, I believe, of what you call alphabet soup, Paul. Vendors, consultants and, yes, journalists, bear a large portion of responsibility here. I believe I am right in saying that it is for precisely this reason that Tom Stewart refuses to even utter the letters 'KM', and actively dislikes the phrase 'knowledge management'.](#)

Referring back to my previous posts in response to the points Jack raised, I think acronyms/abbreviations/labels are useful, but only up to a certain point. From one perspective, they allow practitioners of a discipline to coalesce around that subject and recognise other participants with whom they can exchange experiences and knowledge. From another, they can be useful in engaging those who would buy in to a discipline (or set of disciplines), as Jack pointed out. It can be difficult to promote a concept if it can only be referred to as a set of nebulous ideas and principles (particularly one that deals with as many intangibles as knowledge management), but it is clearly what sits behind the label that is most important.

Thanks,

Simon

Date: Fri Nov 28, 2003 11:36 am

Subject: Lelic: Re. Alphabet Soup - Bob Bater

From: R J (Bob) Bater, principle associate, InfoPlex Associates, Briston, U.K.

Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 290

Paul McDowall said:

> Sorry about that outburst but I get tired of a new acronym every day. KM, SKM PKM RKM KRM KMM Please...Stop!! Why do we have this penchant to reinvent the wheel? <

I entirely agree with Paul. It is so tempting to invent a new term every time we see a new facet of something, a new connection. It puts me in mind of the 'five blind men and the elephant' story, where each one feels a different part and identifies it as something different. As Paul says, let's not lose sight of the 'big picture view'. Yes, of course risk management has an interface with KM (as does RM - records management - via IM) as do most other areas of organisational activity.

I remember a project where we took knowledge mapping in a large engineering enterprise down to a detailed level of competence profiles (skills + knowledge + experience + behaviour), at which point we realised that we weren't purely in the KM domain any more, but were staring PD (sorry Paul - personal development!) in the face, with work design and performance management lurking in the shadows. So, were we 'doing KM' or 'doing HRM'? I would suggest both, because the conventional functional distinction between KM and HR is artificial, a matter of convenience for command-and-control based organisations. Yes, it creates a terminological problem, but I'd rather live with that and retain the bigger picture.

My take on this is that KM is very much an ecological issue, where organisms at several levels of aggregation and abstraction - individuals, teams, CoPs etc. and the organisation as a whole - exchange knowledge and information, beliefs, values etc.. An organisation is

a complex adaptive system (CAS) composed of other CASs, which is why - if you look hard enough - you'll find a connection between KM and practically every other type of activity. In complexity theory terms, I view 'disciplines' like KM, risk management, performance management - all of the 'managements' in fact - as 'attractors' where, just for a while, various elements combine to make a particular kind of sense from a particular perspective, but without actually representing the whole organisation. Not terribly scientific, I admit, but it helps me to make sense of what I see. It's also why I think 'KM' will, as appears to be the consensus during Simon's stint, eventually disappear as a distinct 'discipline' as it becomes a part of everyday organisational practice.

Thanks for a stimulating week, Simon.

Bob Bater

Date: Thu Nov 27, 2003 6:27 pm

Subject: Lelic: Last "Official" Day with Simon Lelic - Jerry Ash

From: Jerry Ash

Hi Everyone.

Today (Friday, November 28) is the last scheduled day for the STAR Series Dialogue with Simon Lelic. Since he is now a member of AOK, it is possible he may hang with us a little longer or a little later. But if you want to be certain of a reply now, today is the day you need to correspond. Those who have been engaged in the dialogue may want to wrap up on their threads and thoughts today also.

Thanks.

Jerry

Date: Fri Nov 28, 2003 11:32 am

Subject: Lelic: KM & Decision Management - Jack Ring

From: Jack Ring

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] Lelic: Last "Official" Day with Simon Lelic - Jerry Ash

Simon,

Could you say a few words about the relationship of KM to decision management? Or perhaps the value of KM to improving decision making of the rational and intuitive kinds

Thanks,

Date: Tue Nov 25, 2003 3:55 pm

Subject: Lelic: Principles of KM? - Jack Ring

From: Jack Ring

Subject: Principles

Simon,

Being a principles maven I notice that [you have mentioned KM principles a few times](#). [Could you please recite some of those principles](#) or designate a source

Date: Fri Nov 28, 2003 11:43 am

Subject: [Lelic: re. Principles of KM? - Simon Lelic](#)

From: **Simon Lelic**

Subject: Re: Lelic: Principles of KM? - Jack Ring

(Note: This post was inadvertently delayed. Apologies to Simon and Jack!)

Jack, I suppose the principles I referred to are those the KM community as a whole has developed over the past ten years. My principal source is, of course, Knowledge Management magazine; in particular, the practitioners I have spoken to and who have written. To be honest, I did not have anything specifically in mind, other than the elements of good practice that have emerged over the years. But, for the sake of this discussion, I have listed below my top five 'guiding principles' that I feel should govern, or at least influence, any KM initiative. In no particular order:

1. [People are the key to success in any knowledge-based process. As such, developing an effective communications and change-management strategy should be right at the top of your KM 'to-do' list;](#)
2. [Technological tools should be seen as just that - tools that should only be used if and when they help people to do their jobs better. To paraphrase Dave Snowden, too many organisations focus on trying to "bio-reengineer the hand" to fit the tool;](#)
3. [Senior buy-in is crucial, but not necessarily enough on its own - as Melissie Rumizen wrote in a recent article in the magazine, "KM is a participative sport";](#)
4. [Don't get too bogged down in terminology - describe what you want to achieve in terms that resonate with your audience \(whatever their position in the organisation\);](#)
5. [A KM project is never 'complete' - it is an ongoing journey that requires a great deal of stamina!](#)

Nothing particularly earth shattering - all of these points have been reiterated by numerous practitioners on numerous occasions - but it is surprising how often they are overlooked! If anyone else has anything to add, I'd love to hear it.

Thanks,

Simon
