



Conversations with Victor Newman

Chief Learning Officer, European Pfizer Research University

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 Sep 14, 2003 6:00 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Introducing Victor Newman

From: **Jerry Ash**

STAR Series with Victor Newman

I've already introduced Victor Newman several times in the Discussion Group, my EZine, and on the Web site where you should be "Preparing for Conversations with Victor Newman." So, I'll keep this one short for those who already know and encourage those who don't know to go to the EZine archives:
<http://www.kwork.org/Ezines/k-net/k-net30.html>

Or to Victor's AOK Page: <http://www.kwork.org/Stars/newman.html>

The short of it this: [Victor Newman is Chief Learning Officer of the European Pfizer Research University based at Sandwich, England. His background in business integration and knowledge mean that he is a passionate advocate of pragmatic solutions that connect knowledge across the drug discovery and development process to deliver global best-practice.](#)

He is the inventor of the "SuperKnowledge", "Predator" and "Barefoot" knowledge management approaches.

Victor is a board member on two knowledge management publications, and has a monthly feature comment article, "The Knowledge Angle," in AOK Affiliate Knowledge Management Magazine. He is author of the book "The Knowledge Activist's Handbook," and I encourage you to buy it through the AOK Bookstore:
<http://www.kwork.org/Store/featured.html>

Please help me welcome Victor Newman as guest moderator of the STAR Series Dialogues, September 15-26.

Date: Sun Sep 14, 2003 6:28 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Discovering the 'Real' Knowledge - Jerry Ash

From: Jerry Ash

Subject: Discovering the 'Real' Knowledge

Victor.

Thanks again for your gifts of time and knowledge as guest moderator for the STAR Series over the next two weeks. You want to share with us and draw feedback about your "SuperKnowledge" concept which can be read in its entirety at:

<http://www.kwork.org/Stars/newman.html#Declaration>

And, you want to exchange thoughts on the content of your new book: "The Knowledge Activist's Handbook: Adventures from the Knowledge Trenches"
<http://www.kwork.org/Store/featured.html>

I thought I would get the conversation going by repeating an excerpt from your book. On the back cover you said:

"A consultant friend worked for an international corporation. For the first three years he worked very hard, introducing lean production techniques into the business. This meant introducing measurement systems, benchmarking methodologies and eliminating waste in many forms through involvement and empowerment. He also made recommendations that led to new information systems whose implementation he led.

"The arrival of the interest in the learning organization allowed him to integrate everything he had laboured over into a coherent whole. When the knowledge revolution began to grow, he was convinced that what he had been doing had been part of that revolution.

"But one day, after three years of hard work across the corporation's plants around the world, he was allowed a glimpse of the real business knowledge that drove the organization. And to his initial sense of disbelief, the 'real' knowledge had nothing to do with efficiency, utilization or the involvement of large numbers of people. This 'real' knowledge turned out to be about knowing when to get into a market, when to get out; how to create value in that market and manage its decline.

"This knowledge was shared between three key individuals and by being allowed to see it, my friend was being invited to participate in a very privileged game. The question he kept asking himself, was: how could he have missed the real knowledge for so long? [How could he have confused what turned out to be minor tactics with a strategy?](#)"

The SuperKnowledge (SK) Declaration seems to follow on this story:

SK1 - [If you are seriously interested in realising high-value outcomes, then you need to know which specific knowledge has the potential \(if mobilised\) to deliver them.](#)

SK2 - [But you can still be defeated by not connecting the right people with the right knowledge, in the right format at the right time.](#) Especially when they weren't expecting it, and want to resist it because they were not part of the process of creating and building it.

SK3 - Then we probably need to [work backwards from high-value outcomes to identify the chain of dependencies](#) which, together, constitute our knowledge mobilisation infrastructure.

SK4 - We must develop a new knowledge infrastructure applying the K2 items (knowledge about knowledge) that is able [to identify and involve the right populations in building new knowledge and mobilising it.](#)

Okay, Victor, suppose we begin there.

Jerry

Date: Mon Sep 15, 2003 8:30 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Social Networking 'Upstairs' - Valdis Krebs

From: Valdis Krebs

Subject: Re: Missing the real knowledge

Interesting. I had a similar experience when I was @ TRW in the late 1980s -- we were in the midst of TQM.

[We found it was easy to map and improve low level processes \[processing Benefits claims\] but it was almost impossible to process-map high-level knowledge work \[designing Benefits programs\].](#) Eventually this frustration helped support social network

mapping. We found that the higher up you go in the hierarchy the more people use relationships and networks to get things done. Low level work can be mostly guided by policy and business 'rules', but the higher up the organization chart you go, the less clear and predictable your work is. You need to do 'sense-making' with key others and this involves local and non-local knowledge networks.

WHAT you know, and WHEN you know it, often depends on WHO you know!!!

Valdis

Date: Mon Sep 15, 2003 7:02 am

Subject: FW: SK1 - Finding Value vs. Being Agile - Denham Grey

From: Denham Grey, Grey Matter Inc.

Subject: SK1 - finding value vs. being agile

Greetings Victor,

>>SK1 - If you are seriously interested in realising high-value >>outcomes, then you need to know which specific knowledge has the >>potential (if mobilised) to deliver them.

This seems to be an almost direct contradiction of what SAS and other units are doing. They deploy the OODA loop:

<http://www.mindsim.com/MindSim/Corporate/OODA.html>

Seeking to position themselves for maximum agility, confusion of the 'enemy', having faster decision cycles - just a little better today so we can be even more better tomorrow!

No long and strong analytics here, no big models, no massive surveys, no setting & hanging onto utility values - short quick evaluation, small incremental drives towards better 'positioning', fast decisions to get 'inside' the target's trajectory and maintain them off-balance, disruptive tactics to secure a position of agility.

The trick, I suspect, lies in fast identification of disruptive change - but the issue is, we will not know from whence it comes!

Date: Mon Sep 15, 2003 8:30 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: SK1 and OODA; No Contradiction - Victor Newman

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Re: FW: SK1 - Finding Value vs. Being Agile - Denham Grey

Dear Denham,

There is no contradiction.

The OODA methodology doesn't suggest a kind of passive opportunism of waiting for your opponent to do something in the hope of being able to get inside their decision-cycle when they do that "something". I recognise the original context of OODA as being based on fighter- pilot training from the Korean War, where it emphasised the power of fast response based upon a thorough training in fast delivery of set- piece battle-drills or routines that cut into the opponent's attack routine by changing the pace of response.

My point is about creating an overarching intention, and deliberately deploying knowledge to create an environment where an intention becomes a strategy and ultimately a reality. [The mental shift I was promoting was part of a bigger move away from mass-KM \(all knowledge is good, the more you have: the better\) towards a SuperKnowledge approach based upon clarity, and focused leverage that is based on what I have learnt about the practical psychology of incompetence, and a willingness to confront what is known, and what might have to be known.](#)

Victor.

Date: Mon Sep 15, 2003 8:32 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Diagram Misleading - Jack Ring

From: Jack Ring, Innovation Management

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] FW: SK1 - Finding Value vs. Being Agile - Denham Grey

Considering that organizations of two or more persons must be seen from at least three viewpoints, what they Know, what they Do and what they Be, then there is a difference between the Know aspect and the Do aspect. [I read Victor's rule as the know side and the referenced URL as describing the Do side.](#)

OBTW, the notion of feedback in the referenced diagram is misleading. In feedback the presumption is that the effect can be detected and fed back to the effector in time to modify the effector behavior. This is usually not attainable in human systems. The diagram correctly uses feedforward. Instead of the feedback lines it should include sessions for three kinds of After Action Review and Reflection.

OBTW, notice the similarity to the Shewhart Cycle of Plan, Do, Check and Adjust which, I believe, predated Col. Boyd by several years.

Date: Mon Sep 15, 2003 12:30 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Mitigating Expert Bottlenecks? - Judith Meskill

From: Judith Meskill, partner, COO, The Growth Solutions Group

Subject: k2 point number 4 and organizational "tough love"

Regarding "...your knowledge experts often create positional power by locating themselves at the bottlenecks of strategic decisions..."

I once witnessed an engagement that suffered so dramatically from a knowledge expert bottleneck that an organizational psychologist was retained. He advised - along with a discreet program of business, team, and desired results recommendations - that the experts peel away from their egos for a moment to have a reality check into the fact that, even though they were the "invaluable innovators" of the organization, the business paid their salaries and if their behaviour prevented the business from being profitable then they would become dispensable.

This psychologist's delivery was flawless. He had "read" the group and found a way to speak to them that was effective. This is obviously the "Cliffs Notes" version of this engagement but this direct, hard hitting wake up call worked wonders in re-orienting these experts away from an "enemy within" focus towards a more healthy competitive business focus and ultimately led to highly positive and productive results.

The cultural components of your SuperKnowledge Thinking are significant, Victor. How have you either handled, or experienced the mitigation of these positionally powerful expert "bottlenecks"?

Date: Tue Sep 16, 2003 11:18 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Next Steps After Mapping Bottlenecks? - Valdis Krebs

From: Valdis Krebs

Subject: Re:powerful bottlenecks

Judith Meskill asked:

> How have you either handled, or experienced the mitigation > of these positionally powerful expert "bottlenecks"

Excellent question!!!

We find it easy to discover[map and measure] the bottlenecks using SNA, and that is a good first step to addressing an overbearing bottleneck. Yet, the hard part of the journey are the next few steps which may require more skills than a typical KM, SNA, or management consultant has. I have seen many organizations drop this into the lap of their on-staff HR/OD person.

I am eager to hear of examples of how this was handled successfully by others.

Valdis

Date: Wed Sep 17, 2003 7:16 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Trauma for the Knowledge Prince - Victor Newman

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Re: Next Steps After Mapping Bottlenecks? - Validates Krebs and Judith Meskill

Judith,

I must admit that resolving this issue of positional power has not been an end in itself (which you hint at). My experiences have usually been either part of returning a business to profitability (after one or two quarters of poor performance that threatened the continuity of the business) or a by-product of shifting an organisation from a functional to a process-based structure.

I discuss this in chapter 4.4 "The Curse of the Knowledge Princes". (The Knowledge Activist's Handbook <<http://www.kwork.org/Store/featured.html>>)

The accidental by-product of the exercises has been some simple techniques for documenting the knowledge needed to make the decision, and the inadvertent realisation that the Knowledge Prince (or Princess) has found managing the shift to the role of a knowledge-parent with a gift and duty of care for the recipient of the new decision-making knowledge quite traumatic. The trauma hasn't been because of the transition but the new sensitivity they acquire that shows how badly they tried to do it in the past (and there usually is a history of failed attempts) but also how poorly they prepared the recipient to build the necessary competence. Tears have been shed, when I least expected it.

Another approach is to exploit natural vanity. Having identified those occupying the bottlenecks, work with them to identify the new type of decision that they are going to have to prepare for in the near future, and encourage them to free up their diary for learning about this new decision that is emerging by giving their knowledge away. If they buy that, then you can build on their boredom of doing the same thing again and again, even if it means positional power. I have found folks usually refuse to give up their positional knowledge power because they don't know how to do it, and they lack confidence in their own ability to create new knowledge. Create the confidence and they will learn to commoditise it themselves.

Oh, yes. And keep it simple. My favourite teaching analogy is teaching a child to ride a bike, if you can work your way through that scenario, you can recreate the necessary methodology yourself.

Victor.

Date: Wed Sep 17, 2003 6:44 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Management of SK Matter of Survival - Kurt Rieger

From: Kurt Rieger, principle consultant, business integration, ATP Management Design, Hernes Oak, Victoria, Australia

Greeting to all - my name is Kurt Rieger and I live in the country side in Australia about 1 1/2 hours drive to the east from Melbourne in the state of Victoria.

I met Jerry Ash in Sydney last year at the QSA conference where he spoke about knowledge management and I presented a paper about business performance measurement. For the past 10 years I have jumped out of the trenches, took my blinkers off and researched measurement of business performance. [There is no truer statement than "people are the business' they have the knowledge, know-how of the hands, motivation and enthusiasm .etc.](#) I have an A3 statement about enthusiasm hung on the wall to help me through the rough times in my R&D and business.

In the very early stages of R&D we had a similar statement to: The statement " If we begin by defining Knowledge Management (measurement of business performance) as the "deliberate management of knowledge (people and their skills) to deliver specific outcomes," and that our interest in the deliberate management of knowledge is in the pursuit of competitive advantage, then the following propositions become possible.

In the early 1990s we upgraded our methodology to include the automatic collection of 'knowledge' by hi tech business systems - the ones used in industrial organisations. Because this knowledge is collected automatically there is a risk of "no ownership" and no decision making. There also is has a flow on effect into the financing and insurance sectors servicing these industries.

To focus our work in measurement of business performance we conducted a Value Engineering Study of business inputs and outputs with a specific emphasis on the external environment of regulation and technological impact on industrial organisations. The main emphasis in this study was concentrated on people, their skills and the connectivity of skill to infrastructure, and the processes of a business. This results can be applied as follows:

For SK1 - We developed a method to identify specific skills (knowledge in people) - that is linked to the infrastructure they use (have detailed knowledge of) to identify & manage risks (losses in all its forms) and barriers to achieving high value outcomes. My team and I do not accept GIGO in any shape or form - Our methodology deals with GIGO and if it did happens, the team has ownership and ability to identify and correct it and it is auditable (independently verifiable) from anywhere in the world. Freedom based on authority of skill (knowledge) to the people that make the money

Furthermore deliberately introducing valuable knowledge is fraught with danger - nobody understands - That's why we developed a system where knowledge is voluntarily contributed (mechanism to extract, motivational, rewards, remuneration based) to the 'system' but it is verified and validated prior to the full implementation of change - however the process of continuous improvement (gaining knowledge) can be deliberately introduced (continuous change management under control). We call this top down design with bottom up feedback that is a continuous process - SK can make it happen -

organisational motivation based on systems of ownership is our key issue. People are the business!

For SK2 - Within a Unit or sub unit of production (small business units that make quantitative and qualitative reliability measurement a reality) everyone needs to be able to make an informed decision. In a crisis, decision making is delegated to the operator - its a matter of life or death - management will arrive too late to make the decisions (this statement is supported by regulations that govern electronic safety related systems (OECD countries) - they make it a legal requirement - but the electronics industry has not solved it's people issues - there are problems that only industrial organisations can solve - SK is the key to keep directors out of jail. Security of knowledge is the real challenge faced by organisations and the management team!

For SK3 - Re-engineering is very costly indeed and recent organisational history point the finger at 'bad management' - the courts are ruling management failure. The number of examples is staggering and unacceptable by investors, insurance, finance, and governments world wide - so SK is essential.

In this electronic age the skills to investigate a disastrous event (accident, corporate failure) is beyond any one skill group. Knowledge gaps between the industrial age and the electronic age have become a gulf, to bridge the huge K/Gaps requires a new - shift in management paradigm toward SK and this is underpinned by Occupational Health and Safety Regulations - There are cultural differences but the globalisation and court rulings reduces these effects. I do acknowledge differences between European and American cultures.

Knowledge mobilisation infrastructure - we have developed a system and the methodology based on current knowledge - it requires a change in paradigm by Middle Management (we have a partial solution to this one). We have tested it in the Design, Manufacture, Construct and Commissioning phase of a business venture.

Failure statistics are very bad indeed for management - 80% of failures are accountable to the owner, with 67% of failures in the concept / change after commissioning phase. The 2 Pareto principles most certainly apply - but what are the next 5% to improve on? Re-inventing the competitive advantage of an organisation is critical in this age of knowledge explosion driven by the hi tech electronic industry.

For SK 4 - Applying the K2 items 1-5 can only happen when people can take ownership - this means management top down 'must' let go - share - decision making with 'bottom up' so that everyone can contribute to reducing losses (in fact gaining./building knowledge to improve production). Improvements in the bottom line are a minimum of 30% productivity improvement. However we know that this is false economics. An example is the sinking of the Petrobras Oil Platform. Management paradigm - spot on the money. So what caused it to sink

The Management of SK is a matter of survival in this globally competitive market place - electronic hi-tech systems see to that.

Date: Thu Sep 18, 2003 4:40 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Origins of Bottlenecks - Kurt Rieger

From: Kurt Rieger

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 240

I am in the steepest learning curve in my life right now - sharing with others what I discovered in 20 years of research in a way that is understandable and in short hand. This one on typical.

The subject of bottle necks is highly complex in this electronic age - we sub/consciously know they exist but how to identify their root cause.

My experience: In this age of electronics - bottle necks are inadvertently introduced into organisations through the purchasing system. Knowledge gaps in management between the electronic and industrial age. These are inadvertently exploited by the supply chain. Generally nobody is aware that this is happening.

It all started in the '60s with the introduction of computer chips and "hardware" and "software". I was able to get education in the design of "black boxes" - designed to collect and store data that can be transposed into "knowledge" & "control". I use these terms deliberately because computer chip technology spawned the IT and Process Control Industries - both use hardware and software but for totally different purposes and these purposes are divergent. Both these purposes are only of interest to management and management must converge them in order to be competitive and make use of the 01010101.

Black boxes are understood by the people that design them, manufacturers make 1000s of them and marketing people sell them - so there is no effective connectivity (except glossy material and manual written by software professionals) in knowledge back to the organisation through the purchasing department. The supply chain leaves it up to management to establish the connectivity for whatever organisational function is intended for the technology.

This is also the time where GIGO reared its head because people started to teach "software" based on people knowledge base. GIGO caused an explosion in the application of statistical methods to sort out the 'mess'. But could it? (I have published an article on this subject)

Knowing and understanding complex hi tech systems leads to identification of bottle necks and our solution has turned out to be very simple. We designed a 'standard language' (industry based) that removes these and many other bottle necks in communications, knowledge and organisational learning and enables quantitative &

qualitative reliability measurement. To make this simple (top down) we designed a software architecture to make visible how all the components work together for the life cycle. The language and the software tool makes complex systems understandable. We enable people to use more of their sense in gaining knowledge for decision making. There are legal obligations world wide - everyone - 'must' be able to make informed decisions. If you think of this in terms of CEO/CFO is now accountable for cost cutting, removing skills, changing processes? This fits in with the Middle Management dilemma mentioned in your book.

To gain a competitive advantage SK must be measurable, transparent and provide for corporate risk reporting on-line. It was paramount in our design to implement Quality Assurance in reinventing the competitive advantage so its right the first time, no errors allowed, all based on accurate customer / supplier / business process reliability measurement. But its not perfect - checking for bias (fraud risk) is the new key issue. More challenges for SK and HR management - Facilitation - Mentoring the new management paradigm But you already know this. We have some of the answers toward managing the intangibles of a business - we have a tool to do it for hi tech industrial organisations - further R&D in SK management is the way to the future.

Date: Thu Sep 18, 2003 4:46 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Don't Know 'K' When You See It - Victor Newman

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Re:SuperKnowledge: Management of SK Matter of Survival - Kurt Rieger

Kurt,

Your reframing your work in terms of SuperKnowledge is a vote of confidence. I am almost speechless.

The SuperKnowledge Declaration was born out of anger at the futile discussion in KM around ROI, shifting it toward including the psychology of intentionality or competence.

I have recently been "playing" with a workshop where I encourage folks to explore documented KM methodologies from an almost anthropological point of view, and the commonplace question that participants keep raising is: why do published KM methodologies ignore what we all know about managing change? I feel that SuperKnowledge could be a component within K2 (knowledge about knowledge).

I am also coming back to the view that folks who haven't applied Statistical Process Control cannot know what information, far less knowledge actually looks like and how it connects with context. [This connects with my suspicion that a fundamental component of KM is an understanding of problem-framing techniques.](#)

Victor.

Date: Fri Sep 19, 2003 3:02 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge:

From: Mark McElroy, president, KMCI, CEO, Macroinnovation Associates, LLC

[www.macroinnovation.com]

Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 242

Hello Victor:

You said:

"This connects with my suspicion that a fundamental component of KM is an understanding of problem-framing techniques."

You should hold that suspicion and develop it further because it's true. The same idea lies at the heart of the Knowledge Life Cycle (KLC), a conceptual framework for knowledge processing that tries to describe the patterns of activity we find in organizations related to knowledge production, integration, and use. Here is the framework I speak of:

<http://www.macroinnovation.com/images/KnowledgeLife8.01.03.pdf>

You will observe that the KLC gives great weight to the discovery and specification of 'problems' as the precipitants to learning and innovation. That is, we produce knowledge in response to the discovery and articulation of problems. Such events trigger knowledge processing, and it is the purpose of KM to help make the knowledge processing capacity of a firm the best it can be. This is why I sometimes say it's not Knowledge Management, it's Knowledge PROCESS Management.

Thus, a key issue in KM is how to help people in organizations identify and formulate their problems as a precursor to learning and innovation. 'Problem Claim Formulation' is a crucial part of knowledge processing. So I'd be interested in hearing more about the 'problem-framing techniques' you've been working with? What are the alternative techniques you've evaluated, and what are you doing in that area

Regards,

Mark

Date: Mon Sep 22, 2003 10:28 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Confusing Language, Structure with BPR - Victor Newman

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] SuperKnowledge: Knowledge Life Cycle (KLC)

Hi Mark,

I feel like the guy who denies he's in denial, and by his response confirms himself in a logical trap.

My problem with the KLC material is personal, and I think largely due to its association through language and structure with BPR. This doesn't invalidate the idea behind it, but I found to my horror years ago, that most case-studies of BPR activity seem to be largely about redesigning administrative processes as instead of being about redesigning a process of innovation. This goes back to my concerns about efficiency and effectiveness: I began to realise the BPR thinking was being dedicated to making processes efficient that could have been outsourced. I began to reflect on the Bales & Strodbeck research observations from 1950/51 that pointed out that when teams couldn't solve a problem, they tended to reformulate the problem into one they could solve. So my issue is largely about the BPR/ "process" associations and their involvement in low value, commodity processes that took cost out but failed to design new, knowledge-based value in.

The problem for me is that KLC is the language of the stabilisor, it's logical but I'm not sure that creators or implementors would ever use it. Its associations with the factory are not convincing for me.

And yet... it's quite clear to me that a documented process is a means of focusing attention, enabling foundation work that creativity can build on. And for years I used to run a "Process Leadership" program for certain consultancies that developed the kind of process-awareness that leaders of processes required. This was sometimes a traumatic exercise in distancing from action in order to be effective.

With regard to problem-framing, I have used techniques (sometimes in combination) like Predator, and integrated lines of storytelling development based on Predator that involve the use of dichotomous twin scenarios to explore the problems and opportunities within the organisation like: good and bad twin, and lazy and radical twin scenarios. These flush out the tendency to create myths of efficiency and virtue at the expense of discussing the need to say goodbye to the old knowledge that was useful, and invest in the new forms of knowledge that could make our strategy effective.

Similarly, establishing the gaps between what a customer says they want and going into their world to discover what they need, I tend to call this the customer knowledge opportunity.

A favourite is Goal Orientation, and the way that reframing a problem as a goal changes the psychology of those involved, unpacking the issues as obstacles, and then the creative fun of creating enabling (how-to) statements that reframe the obstacle as an action, sometimes by reversal or substitution. Another fun variant is the use of metaphorical Goal Orientation, with the translation of metaphorical how-tos into concrete tactics for resolving the problem. At the heart of Goal Orientation lies the idea of being clear about what you want: I have found this very important, and it has probably driven my definition of KM as being the "deliberate management of knowledge to deliver specific outcomes".

The latest variant on problem-framing is one that Andrew Hopkins and I are working on that was probably influenced by vague memories of Goldrat's "The Goal" and his Theory of Constraints and re-reading Andy Grove's "Just because you're paranoid.. ". [This BoxLogic approach begins by exploring the clues that suggest that you are trapped in a strategic "box" of diminishing returns, chasing a strategy of efficiency because you may have lost the ability to develop effective strategies, it's about moving from populating a portfolio \(a visual box-trap\) of products with diminishing differentiation towards developing a portfolio of strategies that allow you to be effective.](#) The box metaphor/analogy is based on the old 9-dot problem, and involves escaping from the box by understanding the constraints, unpacking the underlying assumptions, then running a reality-check on these, and then working creatively to develop escape-tactics that neutralise the constraints and offer new freedoms through new capabilities.

I still believe that our most powerful weapon is our boredom, and responding to the cues within our boredom to create something new. Perhaps the ultimate problem-frame is that we are the problem, and working creatively to see new problems and turn them into opportunities keeps us engaged instead of merely being occupied. What we are learning from BoxLogic is that whilst a logical, researched presentation is useful, it will be more effective as an argument if it is built upon a consistent dialogue that reviews assumptions behind strategy and enables participants to create their own language about problems and solutions (thus reducing the inevitable alienation due to the language of someone else's solution, and the tradition of NIH that results). I suspect that the Evangelists may be right, there are no problems: only opportunities.

Finally, I would like to take us in a new, associated direction around the need to shift from the language of knowledge-sharing to knowledge-building, that is about the need to engage folks through purpose and thus sharing their actual and potential knowledge through working together to create something new, rather than looking backwards to document that which we know or knew but which may not necessarily be useful now.

I invite AOK participants to consider sharing how they have used purposive, knowledge building to create innovative outcomes.

Victor.

Date: Mon Sep 22, 2003 12:25 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Request, Respond, Reward - Jack Ring

From: Jack Ring

In the INTelligent ENTerprise ALLIANCE which cooperates with the Intelligent Enterprise Working Group of the International Council on Systems Engineering we explore the application of systems engineering principles and practices to the initiation and evolution of intelligent enterprises and, obversely, the value of performing systems engineering as an intelligent enterprise.

[Our method is based on the Three R's of an enterprise, Request, Response and Reward.](#)

Our method starts with identifying the context of the enterprise in terms of Sources of Requests and types of Requests that the Sources do or might impress. Next, we specify the content and timing of Responses and the type and amount of Reward being sought in exchange for the Response.

Note that the concept of Reward includes several units of reward, notably; monetary, learning, good will (1/distrust) etc. Also a range of Rewards can be expected depending on the degree to which the Response conforms to the Request and the degree to which the Source is helped to understand the value they really gained with the Response.

At this point we address two questions. 1) What must we Know, Do, and Be in order to provide the Response? 2) What will we learn as a result of producing the Response and garnering the Reward. The first question allows us to assess the gap between implied capabilities and known or expected capabilities, thus feeds the demand side of the staff capability development process which handles the who, what, where, when and how getting prepared. The second question allows us to anticipate the learning opportunity (even encouraging us to take risks in the Response in order to increase the learning opportunity) thus reducing the enterprise latency and enhancing the slope of the Learning curve and Technology Diffusion curve.

One of our principles is simple but high leverage --- ‘when surprised with a new realization bring it to the attention of at least three others in the organization who might find it valuable as well.’ One can even keep score on how many times per week this dispatching happens and how many are acknowledged thus wearing in the co-learning relationships. Although this might seem only knowledge sharing it turns out that the majority of surprises are concerned with unanticipated problem symptoms. Thus the organization becomes very good at discerning what they don’t know they don’t know.

As Phil Crosby noted, As an organization grows, management finds it increasingly difficult to know what is happening and practically impossible to know what is not happening. Our approach makes both obvious.

All of this precedes any hypotheses about internal organizational processes, thus avoids the Law of Unintended Consequences that the BPR hysteria repeatedly demonstrated.

Date: Tue Sep 23, 2003 7:14 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Psychology of Knowledge Transactions - Victor Newman

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Re: Request, Respond, Reward - Jack Ring

Fascinating approach. [It would be interesting to look at the Knowledge Economy you have created and the kind of currency and markets that evolve.](#) In some of my early research into knowledge experts I discovered some of the hidden knowledge transactions

involving experts across companies and continents and began to explore the psychology of knowledge transactions, it seems to involve the following elements:

Recognition: YOU are asking ME this question
Respect: You suspect that I know something of value that you can use.
Attribution: You can use it as long as you say where you got it from.
Reciprocity: I will answer on the understanding that you will grant me an equivalent transaction in the future, or some form of transferable credit.
Shared Perception of Value: We both know that this value has real potential value if exploited.

Those who fail to commit to above elements tend to find their questions ignored in networks because they have nothing to contribute.

I think there is something missing potentially from your triage before you get into your two questions, which is about energy. Do I care enough about your question to provide a response, do I care enough to put energy into exploring your question: in other words it needs to be a good question.

I like your approach. Have you looked at the electronic Knowledge Market prototype that BT was involved in, back in 1998?

What are you learning from applying your method of the Three R's?

Date: Mon Sep 22, 2003 10:19 am

Subject: FW: [AOK_K-Net] Problem Framing Clarification

From: Jack Ring

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] Problem Framing Clarification

Most people can discern a problem situation (something is wrong, here) but then too often confuse the symptom (stomach ache) with the problem (ketosis) with root cause (gluttony) with underlying system (fear of X).

I would like to hear more about what Victor means by 'problem framing' because I suspect his notion of problem framing may be quite different from the simplistic 'problem' notion described regarding the KMCI's KLC framework.

Date: Tue Sep 23, 2003 7:12 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Strange and Familiar Pairing - Victor Newman

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Re: Problem Framing Clarification - Jack Ring

Great question. I like your analogy. When I talk about problem-framing, I tend to mean a process of stating a problem so that it becomes possible to work on it, to develop a response or a solution. As Gordon & Prince suggested, [there are only 2 key words in creative techniques: strange and familiar, if the problem is strange, use a familiar](#)

[technique; if the problem is too familiar, use a strange/ unfamiliar technique to see it.](#)

This is analogous to the 9-dot problem and the need to a) model the problem, b) view from a novel perspective, c) question assumptions and develop breakout interpretations of the problem, and so on.

I like to work with a large mind or problem-map, where the client is encouraged to talk about the problem with the cues of the 5W+1H (what, why, when, who, where, and how). This usually uses 6 flipcharts masking-taped together and involves up to 2 listeners who listen for the gaps and hidden themes around motivation and personalities that the client has hinted at, but not articulated. This session usually has a break at 45 minutes, and then continues for no more than an additional 30 minutes. We then step back in silence, have a cup of coffee, throw a few rugby-balls around and then go for a walk. Sometimes, I introduce some fun cues around interpretation like WIBFI, or WIBAI (wouldn't it be funny/ awful if...): these turn out in retrospect to have cut to the core of the problem, and I have learnt to listen and record these "jokes" without writing them down.

I tend to use a simple preliminary box-frame with 4 boxes that differentiates problems as being either "Open" (any creative solution is acceptable), "Closed" (a particular type of solution is the only one that will be accepted), "Deviation" (something unusual happened and we don't want it to happen again); and "Difference" (we want to move to a different state, and don't know how to do it". The idea is to then characterise the problem through discussing within which 2 of the 4 boxes it sits. The idea is to explore the levels of freedom of solution interpretation and then through classifying as deviation or difference to select another collection of tools that are appropriate. Sometimes the client just wants to implement something he has read about in HBR, and the fun bit is to frame the problem so that they are honest with themselves about their motivation.

Either way, [I find that I keep going back to purpose and visualising success, the rest tends to be a variant on Goal Orientation described in another response.](#)

Victor.

Date: Fri Sep 26, 2003 7:57 am

Subject: [SuperKnowledge: KM Still in Taxonomy Stage - Jack Ring](#)

From: **Jack Ring**

Subject: Re:Communicating Shared Purpose - Newman

IMO, most [KM is still in the taxonomy stage and cannot yet spell ontology](#) (suspecting it is some form of semantic cancer) thus is not leading the charge toward unifying meaning, understanding and learning in organizations of two or more persons. Ashby's law of requisite variety says the solver must be more agile than is the problem.

Date: Tue Sep 30, 2003 4:39 pm

Subject: [SuperKnowledge: Agility vs. the Mutants - Victor Newman](#)

From: Victor Newman

Re:SuperKnowledge: KM Still in Taxonomy Stage - Jack Ring

That's a great observation. Mmh. [Problem Solving agility and how to develop it...especially with problems that keep mutating?](#)

Date: Wed Sep 17, 2003 7:25 pm

Subject: KM Terminology – Daniel Jonas

From Daniel Jonas

Subject: Another Idea for Research Topic

I have to say that the biggest barrier to working in the KM field is the heavy terminology - there has to be some way of establishing a shared language between KM practitioners and the great unwashed. [We're all very jargon-heavy, which I think is a problem - and it prevents useful people talking to us.](#) It is also a major reason for people thinking that KM is almost totally an IT discipline. In fact, as far as I'm concerned, it's not a discipline at all - rather a tradition (I wrote a paper on "Historical KM" recently) and a coalition of the like-minded. Perhaps a good topic for research might be on ways of creating and deepening dialogue in order to 'evangelise' for KM.

Daniel Jonas

Date: Thu Sep 18, 2003 8:05 am

Subject: KM Terminology - Paul Cripwell

From: Paul Cripwell

Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 241 - Other Issues

I have to say that the biggest barrier to working in the KM field is the heavy terminology...

I sympathize with you Daniel on the "jargon-rich" field of KM. Unfortunately I can't provide an answer, but your comments have invoked a response which also harkens back to earlier discussions about finding the "right" term for what we are doing.

IMHO, KM is an overarching precept, principle, culture and philosophy. As such it describes a way of thinking, rather than a particular feature. Much of the discussion surrounding individual terms is an effort to hang a specific name on a specific topic, all of which are under the KM banner. I think it is the "great unwashed" that are demanding this specificity, but the generalists (who talk amongst ourselves at AOK and others) want something different.

Personnaly I like the KM term, if nothing else, but for all its faults. (No we can't MANAGE knowledge!). [There was a recent set of documents from Europe \(www.knowledgeboard.com\) that included a whole host of definitions. Perhaps we](#)

[should gather all these terms together into a common glossary](#). I didn't necessarily agree with the Europeans, but it is a start.

Let's keep KM as the guiding principle. I would hope that those who truly understand for what it is, and isn't, will slowly rise above the rest, especially the IT world. (But then again, there was always Beta!).

Cheers Paul

Date: Thu Sep 18, 2003 1:30 pm

Subject: OTHER: Research Topics - Victor Newman

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Re: Other Issues: Defending KM Terms - Paul Cripwell

I wonder if we are missing an obvious trick in the way we look at taxonomies and building lexicons. If we go back to the (slightly misunderstood) story of Whorf and the Netsilik eskimoese apparently having a large number of euphemisms or words for we call "snow", then any collection of KM terms needs to be connected to their context of application, and not ordered by alphabet. The deeper "snow" reality was that these different native words were apparently entirely accurate in denoting a specific snow-state in terms of what it was recently, was now, and likely to be soon. In their context, getting "snow" wrong meant extinction within their environment.

[It is only when we can cluster terms by purpose that they will begin to have meaning.](#)

This could also include categorisation by mythic purpose, i.e. "Knowledge Sharing" is based upon the myth of encyclopaedism and millenarianism: if the whole is integrated, then heaven will appear on earth (tongue firmly in cheek). The term promotes altruism that ignores the power of say, inviting folks to build knowledge in order to innovate (purposive context).

So let's consider categorising by purpose or message!

Date: Mon Sep 22, 2003 12:21 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Collaboration without Communication? - Jack Ring

From: Jack Ring

Subject: Re: Who Cares What KMers Speak? - Paul Cripwell

It seems to me that Paul Cripwell's point is that as long as 'we' understand it is not important that 'they' understand. This way 'we' can keep 'them' dependent on 'us.' But if knowledge production is somehow dependent on knowledge utilization, how does one get the synergy with a caste system? [Isn't collaboration required?](#) And preferably the step beyond collaboration, Combustion, a better idea?

Date: Tue Sep 23, 2003 7:14 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: KM Clergy and Laity - Victor Newman

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Collaboration without Communication? - Jack Ring

Building on Jack Ring and Paul Cripwell's thoughtful comments on the language of KM: I think there is an understandable tendency to group people into either KM clergy and laity, and I can see it from both perspectives. There is a kind of clerical arrogance of fatigue that experts find themselves projecting when a new member of a CoP asks a fundamental question that the expert has already answered previously at meetings that happened before the new member joined the group.

There are probably two types of "clergy" those involved in applying and building doctrine and those who police existing doctrine, and for both the language is a short-hand for structured thinking, whereas for the laity who are becoming practitioners sometimes by default in their own organisations (because there is no-one else who shares the passion) find themselves alienated by the practitioner language, and want to cut to the chase and make it happen, and have a strong feeling that something vital is being hidden or lost.

The problem around language can be about knowing. Wittgenstein (the comic philosopher) observed that language is a cloak for meaning, and this runs true in KM. I can know things, but not believe them, I can believe them but not necessarily make them a choice within my repertoire. One of the stories about management cynicism and change in "The Knowledge Activist's Handbook", chapter 4.8 "Pain is the Spur" observes that senior managers in a company were cynical about introducing new management techniques, not because they had ever implemented them, but because they had had them explained to them at company conferences but nothing had happened as a result. They understood the language in a surface way and could be cynical, but they did not have the understanding of someone who had gone through the necessary understanding to move beyond comprehension (knowing), to believing (knowledge-in-action/ through experience that some things really work), to doing (adding choice bits of of knowledge-in-action to their private repertoire) and applying it again.

I suspect that the knowledge around KM is still fairly superficial, and tells us more about the speaker and their world, than about KM itself, and that the language of KM tends to project the idea that the problems within it have already been specified and solved.

Maybe the real problem is that the language of KM is just not weird enough to provoke folks into thinking for themselves and learning to build their own dogma.

Victor.

Date: Wed Sep 24, 2003 8:09 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Talk Our Language; Then Theirs - Paul Cripwell

From: Paul Cripwell

Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 245

Jack Ring wrote:

>It seems to me that Paul Cripwell's point is that as long as 'we' understand >it is not important that 'they' understand. This way 'we' can keep 'them' >dependent on 'us.' But if knowledge production is somehow dependent on >knowledge utilization, how does one get the synergy with a caste system? >Isn't collaboration required? And preferably the step beyond collaboration, >Combustion, a better idea

You make an excellent point Jack, and I agree. In fact this is the kind of situation that the IT departments most often find themselves in. (Though in their case I think they have too frequently taken the "high road", and if the laity don't understand then tough.)

While I think it is only necessary to keep the definition discussion amongst KMer's, I think it is important to recognize that the laity exists, and is our market. In that regard we must talk their language and not our own.

Cheers Paul

Date: Wed Sep 24, 2003 9:16 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Clarification - Jack Ring

From: Jack Ring

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] SuperKnowledge: Talk Our Language; Then Theirs - Paul Cripwell

I do not want to bore readers about this but I think I did not make my point clearly enough.

I claim that in high performance knowledge production and utilization there is no 'laity.' Any person who considers themselves a KM'er and considers others not KM'ers cannot possibly be learning at a maximum rate thus is a second class KM'er. Best to not use the concept of 'laity' at all.

Date: Fri Sep 26, 2003 7:52 am

Subject: FW: [AOK_K-Net] SuperKnowledge: Clarification - Jack Ring

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Re: Clarification and "Laity"- Jack Ring

Quite right. I was being mischievous. My original context for this term was my witnessing marxist academics discussing the power of political correctness to manipulate the perception of the non-laity, by which they meant everyone else.

Date: Wed Sep 24, 2003 8:35 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: K-in-Action v. K-inaction -- Judith Meskill

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

Subject: Re: SuperKnowledge: KM Clergy and Laity - Victor Newman

> They understood > the language in a surface way and could be cynical, but they did not have > the understanding of someone who had gone through the necessary > understanding to move beyond comprehension (knowing), to believing > (knowledge-in-action/ through experience that some things really work), to > doing (adding choice bits of of knowledge-in-action to their private > repertoire) and applying it again. >

Ah what havoc the drop of a hyphen can wreck turning knowledge-in-action into knowledge-inaction ... Often there is too much of the latter and not enough of the former. Which in turn often exacerbates those positionally powerful bottlenecks we spoke of earlier. Speaking of knowledge languaging Victor, I would value hearing your thoughts and feelings on "knowledge management" and "knowledge work". I have a weblog in which I track, on a daily basis, the utilization of a number of "knowledge" terms in the news.

(knowledge economy, knowledge sharing, knowledge building, knowledge management, knowledge work, knowledge workers, knowledge revolution) [Lately I have been noticing some fairly interesting trends. Internationally, references to "knowledge based economy" are burgeoning.](#) Thanks...

Date: Fri Sep 26, 2003 7:50 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Example of the Old KBE - Victor Newman

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Re: K-in-Action v. K-inaction -- Judith Meskill

Judith,

I must admit to some feelings of incredulity when I hear folks talking about the Knowledge-Based Economy. Let me give you an example: 2 years ago some archaeologists in the East of London, excavated a knight's glove and a banana from the site of a medieval rubbish-dump. What was interesting was the banana. How had it got there? Now there is a possibility that it was locally-grown (remember the 200-year weather cycle meant that parts of the middle-ages were warmer than today). Alternatively, someone was importing bananas, knew when to pick them for transportation, how to move them without damaging them, and could predict that the journey was regular enough for the bananas to be ripe on arrival. If that's not part of a knowledge-based economy, then what is?

KBE is not new, the triumph of capitalism is its ability to create a dynamic economy based on knowledge. The fun bit is where knowledge was created for survival within one

context (metal working, cannon-casting for the Royal Navy) led to technologies that revolutionised the world (the Industrial Revolution).

Unlike Hermann Goering on culture, I don't reach for my revolver when I hear the phrase "Knowledge-Based Economy", but I sometimes wonder just what other economies are there

Victor.

Date: Fri Sep 26, 2003 10:48 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Incredible Knowledge Buzz - Judith Meskill

From: Judith Meskill

Subject: Re: SuperKnowledge: Example of the Old KBE - Victor Newman

Victor,

I am equally incredulous of all of the KBE buzz and left wondering whether this buzz is just a signal that other economies - especially those we call "third world" economies are adopting a United States propensity to buzz and not build - more talking less doing

I believe that everything we do is based on knowledge in one manner or another. [It's the buzz that I find interesting right now and I am busy recording snippets and artifacts of this virtual, news oriented hum from various cultures on the planet who have access to the internet.](#)

If this buzz - around what we are doing, or intending to do, regarding creating an environment for knowledge to build and thrive as a viable asset for our governments, educational systems, workplaces, and individual lives - were a genuine effort to swarm to a less damaged hive, i would be the first to cheer.

Thanks for the "banana" story Victor, it made the archaeologist in me smile (i always loved digging around in the ten thousand year old garbage pits - brief glimpses into the private lives of our ancestors.)

Best Regards, Judith

Date: Tue Sep 30, 2003 4:41 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Lanaguage of Abstraction - Victor Newman

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Re: SuperKnowledge: Incredible Knowledge Buzz - Judith Meskill

Judith,

Yes, this disconnection between words and language does seem to apply to the use of KM as a language of abstraction, and at the risk of re-heating the dialogue about KM clergy and laity, there seems to be a connection between clergy with high caste-status, having an abstract language, clean hands and fingernails and undertaking symbolic forms of work..

You can see why I prefer to be a knowledge activist rather than a knowledge bishop.

Victor.

Date: Thu Sep 25, 2003 11:52 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Don't Know 'itis' from 'osis' but Know Pain - Galen McPherson

From: Galen McPherson, senior business analyst, MSX International, U.S.

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 247

I have been watching this group dialog for a while without participation, but I feel it is time to join in, at least briefly.

In Paul Cripwell's [and others'] discussions surrounding language, clerics and laity, it struck me that the best analogy is not necessarily the clergy, but more the medical profession. While it is important that doctors have a very specific and mutually understood "jargon" that allows concise communication, it is also important to maintain a "bedside manner" for those not as well versed.

I may or may not know the difference between medial and distal, or what distinguishes an -"itis" from an "-osis", but I do know what hurts, and I hope the doctor can help me understand what the remedy is intended to accomplish. We should, I think, insist on a well-developed "intra-" vocabulary and taxonomy and structure that we can agree on, while understanding that the "extra-" community [with no hint at judging intellect or quality, merely exposure to the topic] will need a more understandable approach.

Date: Fri Sep 26, 2003 7:54 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Connective Language - Victor Newman

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Re: Don't Know 'itis' from 'osis' but Know Pain - Galen McPherson

Galen makes a great point here. Perhaps it's time to write the Bumper Book of Knowledge Management. The medical/ clinician perspective is valuable and brings up the issues of the need for a KM language that connects diagnosis, classification of conditions/ problems and treatment/ solutions.

Date: Sun Sep 21, 2003 6:06 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Language Key to Problem Framing - Kurt Rieger
From: Kurt Rieger, Director, ATP Management Design - Business Integration,
Subject: Defending KM terms - Paul Cripwell Subject: Problem framing techniques -
Mark McElroy

[Language, terminology and learning go hand in glove - it's the key to KM and problem framing.](#) In my work I am fully aware that I should develop new language - but who would understand - If we take quantitative and qualitative reliability ? ? ? - plant and people reliability respectively then I should introduce terms for customer, supply chain and processes of a business reliability that start with Qua . . . To get the message across it was simpler (KISS - keep it simple stupid - a saying we have in Australia) to stick with terminology the management team already knows and can understand. We should go back to KISS and call quantitative reliability Plant reliability, etc. everyone? can handle that one and do something with it - within their own knowledge base - leading to problem solving whilst they are small problems. But it could lead to problem framing if let go for too long - problems do not go away - they change shape, form and the Ostrich approach does not help at all. Thank goodness some problems are solved by themselves (introduction of technology) or change and they do go away. But do we learn these lessons

However it is essential to standardise language so that confusion, errors, stuff-ups and misinterpretation are kept to the minimum - standardisation is the key to SK and problem recognition. I use the term problem recognition as a precursor to problem framing. But there are two types of problem recognition processes - predictive and reactive. In large organisations - 35000+ people I have gained experience by observing people with predictive problem solving capability - in 80% + of cases the recognition was ignored, but within 2 years the problem was recognised reactively . . . too late . . . huge cost to solve problem. The point I am making is: - time is a key factor in learning and problem recognition.

I am convinced that predictive problem recognition is tied to the life cycle learning of people within specific 'groups' (backgrounds / family / traditions) - an area that is becoming essential in this electronic age - the best people may not have formal qualification - technology is racing too fast - education system slow? = time lag = risk. [We also need to link knowledge to risks of running a business and the introduction of electronic safety related systems added several degrees of complexity to risk /SK management.](#)

However predicting problems is now becoming a legal obligation in many countries (for electronic safety related systems) - so its high time to manage the life cycle of knowledge specific to an industry, it's people and it's technology. SK and it's control, specific to a business is essential to growth and survival in the long term.

Date: Mon Sep 22, 2003 10:17 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Who Cares What KMers Speak? - Paul Cripwell

From: Paul Cripwell

Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 244

Response to Kurt and defining terms.

I partially disagree with your approach Kurt. (This is the great thing about this forum, disagreement is an asset, not a liability).

[While I do agree that proper terminology, definitions, nomenclature, are essential, I do not agree that "everyone" has to understand and use them.](#)

Let us take the position that we (KM'ers) represent the epitome of knowledge (and wisdom?) with respect to KM. As long as we understand all the complicated concepts amongst ourselves and create processes and programs to implement, why do we have to define our terminology to everyone else. As long as they understand why what is happening, is happening, and in their own language, who cares what we (KM'ers) talk about

Cheers Paul

Date: Mon Sep 22, 2003 10:22 am

Subject: [SuperKnowledge: Problems Reappear Like Dead Cats - Victor Newman](#)

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Re: Language Key to Problem Framing - Kurt Rieger

Kurt,

I like the British Army KISS approach, although it is often misunderstood. Folks tend to think it's about keeping things simple, because people are stupid. In reality it's about keeping things simple, because otherwise you introduce complexity that contains ambiguity that will make smart people stupid. The key is to make the language work.

On problem recognition: I occasionally use my old Task, Process, Behavioural System and finally Environmental Cause and Effect levels of problem recognition. I explain this fully in "Made to Measure Problem Solving" Gower Publications: 1995.

In effect, problems re-appear like dead cats because someone, somewhere is being rewarded to make decisions that deliver dead cats that litter the organisation. Find that person, work with them to understand that they are the source of waste, build a new cause and effect model around success and move on. Problems stay dead cats because they stay trapped at the more immediate levels of task, or process.

[Your point about predictive problem recognition and solving capability is interesting, and largely explained by the tendency that we all have to solve only the next, obvious](#)

problem as it emerges: rather like the problem of implementation being the tendency to avoid visualising the full implementation because it is simply too stressful.

Predictive problem recognition could modify the BoxLogic methodology I am playing with. In other words, let's explore the consequences of staying in the existing strategic box.

Victor.

Date: Thu Sep 25, 2003 6:08 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: To Paul, Victor, John - Kurt Rieger

From: Kurt Rieger, ATP Management Design

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 245 Response to: Paul Cripwell, Victor Newman, John Barrett

Hi Paul - - - Language can do 'funny' things - disagreement is the wrong term - in this case learning is a better term. If we go back to the basic concept of this two week dialog - KM is in the interest / an instrument to gain a competitive advantage over competitors then the term 'everyone' is a best fit for top down bottom up decision making that suits a particular situation as it applies to a piece of equipment, a procedure or instruction, R&D/knowledge of work in progress, hazard management - anything within a particular unit of functional business producing outcomes (I use the term functional deliberately - because functional organisation & language connectivity is another subject matter that plays a part in gaining a competitive advantage and building new knowledge)

Hi Victor - I thoroughly enjoy these sessions - knowledge building exercise and your dead cats - love the analogy - My work is about making language work in business (kiss for bottom up participation and gathering /collecting 'special's knowledge into the SKM system) - in my case industrial organisations that make use of hi tech equipment be it in mining, power, oil/gas, exploration. . . . manufacturing (note: construction is part of the life cycle), medical or R&D - language to make a functional business unit function by design - to eliminate dead cats, reinventing the wheel etc. for the life of a particular business unit to make and keep it competitive in this global market place. (You will say can't be done - hundreds have said it - but I)

Building of new knowledge - funny it's always based on existing knowledge, failure, accident, investigation, regulation - we just need to know where to find it, then interpret it. In industrial organisations dead cats and interpretations are a costly barrier (\$\$\$\$\$) in building new knowledge - confusion rains - what's right, what's wrong - I say unnecessary decisions if we only can get language to work for us (with the aid of computer technology - a marriage between people and technology - sharing of K - decision support / monitoring to implement facilitation)- it took 20 years of R&D and testing for functional business units that use hi tech business solutions.

Hi John - I feel for you - I am almost sure - your problem started before you got started . . . with the specification for your project, now it is a matter of 'making language work for you' in a way that 'everyone' can recall all the actions and interactions of your (teams) work. You must pin your hope on - that in some years time other people can make use of your data, information for decision support - yes your 'dead cat' will be revived under a slightly different specification - which of course is written by people that have Kbuilding barriers because they do not know of or learned (I got my big spoon in action) how to make 'language' work for them.

We build a cattle dog (catalogue) that can sniff it out for future generations - sorry about the cattle dog but you want it to find the dead cat. Have a laugh - - there is nothing you can do about the project

Regards Kurt

Date: Mon Sep 22, 2003 8:04 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Speak Up Oh Silent Ones - Jerry Ash

From: Jerry Ash

Hi Victor and All.

Thanks again for spending this time with us, Victor. On the second Monday I always begin fretting about the fleeting of time and the possibility I may have, in some measure, squandered a golden opportunity.

So it is today.

The Dialogue has not gone where I would have wanted it to go, and so I need to break my self-imposed rule of staying in the background. At least for me, I feel compelled to capture as much of your thoughts on knowledge _building_ as possible.

I think there are all kinds of knowledge and knowledge processes and value-added that are delivered through knowledge work in many different ways. Yet, we all talk mostly (sometimes only) about knowledge "sharing." I've often thought that knowledge _creation_ has much higher end value than any other kind of knowledge work. It's one thing to "share" knowledge -- "You show me mine, I'll show you yours" -- or even to combine it "Let's put what _we_ know in a single pile on the table, and then we will have a bigger pile!" **But the most exciting prospect of all is for your knowledge and my knowledge and more knowledge we find outside our circle to be brought together to create NEW knowledge!**

That, I suspect, is what you are aiming for at Pfizer. Pharmaceuticals are in the business of discovery! Not how to produce more, cheaper, faster, but how to develop new and improved products that do it better! Sometimes finally, even for the first time!

If you gathered up all the "knowledges," and divided them out among boxes of "good, better and best," my bet is the "best" would be the knowledge that leads to innovation and market leadership. That would be newly created knowledge, would it not

Are these thoughts in tune with your "knowledge building?"

Either way, Victor, I'm not looking so much for you to "share" your knowledge. I'm looking for you (for a few days, anyway) to help me think of ways (words carefully chosen) I can become a knowledge builder.

Am I the only one out there with these needs? Speak up oh silent ones!

Jerry

Date: Mon Sep 22, 2003 10:13 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Generating 'Know,' not 'Know-How' - Jack Ring

From: Jack Ring

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Speak Up Oh Silent Ones - Jerry Ash

Jerry makes an extremely valuable point.

[In his new book "Intuition at Work," Gary Klein describes specific exercises a person can do to become more proficient at generating 'know' as distinct from 'know how.'](#)

Jack

Book Description from Amazon.com At times in our careers, we've all been aware of a "gut feeling" guiding our decisions. Too often, we dismiss these feelings as "hunches" and therefore untrustworthy. But renowned researcher Gary Klein reveals that, in fact, 90 percent of the critical decisions we make is based on our intuition. In his new book, "Intuition at Work", Klein shows that intuition, far from being an innate "sixth sense," is a learnable--and essential--skill. Based on interviews with senior executives who make important judgments swiftly, as well as firefighters, emergency medical staff, soldiers, and others who often face decisions with immediate life-and-death implications, Klein demonstrates that the expertise to recognize patterns and other cues that enable us--intuitively--to make the right decisions--is a natural extension of experience.

Through a three-tiered process called the "Excelleration Program," Klein provides readers with the tools they need to build the intuitive skills that will help them make tough choices, spot potential problems, manage uncertainty, and size up situations quickly. Klein also shows how to communicate such decisions more effectively, coach others in the art of intuition, and recognize and defend against an overdependence on information technology.

The first book to demystify the role of intuition in decision making, "Intuition at Work" is essential reading for those who wish to develop their intuition skills, wherever they are in the organizational hierarchy.

Date: Mon Sep 22, 2003 2:35 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Two Aspects of Deliberation - Jack Vinson

From: Jack Vinson, Knowledge Manager, Bioprocess Support Group, Pfizer

Subject: SuperKnowledge: two aspects of deliberation

Deliberate discussion of what is important to the organization? What an idea!

In recent talks at the local KMPro chapter meetings, the KM leads from both Allstate Insurance and Hewitt Associates spoke about their method of doing this. [Mark Clare \(Allstate\)](#) did it most clearly by tying the concept of knowledge to the concept of risk that is well understood throughout the culture of Allstate. Insurance companies are in the business of managing risk and assigning value to various forms of risk. [If Mark Clare is able to re-cast the KM problem as a problem of managing risk to the organization, he goes a long way towards giving people a better way to talk about knowledge that represents real value to the organization.](#)

And having clear "knowledge about knowledge," people and organizations can begin making better decisions. For me I hear the personal effectiveness ideas of "intentional living" from the Dale Carnegie world. If I know what I am doing and why I am doing it, and that I am doing things which are important to me, then I am much more likely to be living happy, joyous and free.

Jack

Date: Tue Sep 23, 2003 7:13 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Basis for Autonomous Behavior - Victor Newman

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Re: Two Aspects of Deliberation - Jack Vinson

Jack,

This links in nicely with the idea of the business strategy being one side of the coin, and the knowledge strategy (what we need to know, and what capability to we need to deliver it) being the other.

I like the reframing of the KM problem as "how to manage risk", I suppose there is probably an outcomes component of the KM problem in a way that explains purpose, ie. "how to manage risk so that.."

I realise that I am probably influenced by experiencing the British Army's delegation of responsibility down to section level and the individual, due to our small size, that emphasises the importance of framing the objective so that the team can develop their own strategy to make it happen. [Understanding and restating the "Why" is a great basis for autonomous behaviour under difficult circumstances.](#)

Victor.

Date: Tue Sep 23, 2003 12:29 pm

Subject: Superknowledge: ('Knowledge') Engineering - Jack Vinson

From: Jack Vinson

Subject: Superknowledge: engineering

In the comments today, I hear a familiar thread from my chemical engineering background.

Predictive problem detection sounds a lot like automated fault detection in production facilities. There are a number of ways to go about it, but the basic idea is to set up a computer to monitor the sensors around the facility and sound an alarm when something looks like it is going haywire. (Ideally, you spot something before it gets to the "haywire" stage.)

Knowledge? The better detection systems had built-in understanding of how the plant is expected to behave, so that it could watch the sensors and other activity in the plant (controllers, switches, etc) and know what to expect. When the facility behaves in some other way, then there is a problem and you go into diagnosis mode. Again, the better systems have a variety of tools to do this: history of past problems, models of errors, etc.

The other comments had to do with Business Process Reengineering and Victor's lack of confidence in its value. Specifically, he mentioned that the work he has seen has focused on efficiency, rather than on innovation. [To me, the issue is a matter of focus -- what is really important to the overall success of the organization.](#) Improving the efficiency of a business process that has no impact on the bottom line of the business is not terribly helpful. [The focus should be on increasing throughput, decreasing operating expenses and decreasing investment/inventory.](#) In terms of throughput, look for the bottlenecks, ask if they should be bottlenecks, and move from there. (This should sound familiar to advocates of Theory of Constraints and Goldratt.)

I don't know if this forwards the discussion, but it is a fun connection.

Jack Vinson

Date: Fri Sep 26, 2003 5:17 am

Subject: Superknowledge: The Great Knowledge Leadership Novel - Victor Newman

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Re: ('Knowledge') Engineering - Jack Vinson

Jack,

You have demonstrated how even I cannot escape from my industrial intellectual legacy. [I suppose I should share another story that led to my tendency to be wary of optimising throughput.](#)

I was on my second lean-production implementation in partnership with a Japanese automotive business, and facilitating the business strategy. In a moment of silence, I articulated and synthesised the discussion on the business strategy as "to demonstrate our lean capability so as to become the natural choice of local assembly partner with the parent organisation, and secure the next generation of vehicles.... " It suddenly hit me that being lean for someone else means that all you have to sell is capacity to do someone else's work. I reflected on the emergent strategy that some believe Intel had with assembler-companies: to create the innovative product prototype, build market demand, then suck competitors into assembling your product for market and thus distract them from innovating.

I then began to realise that there is a point where efficiency can kill. Finally, there is a story that the German Wehrmacht reached its apogee of killing-power in April 1945: its firepower per soldier was never higher, its ability to force its enemies into costly attrition remained until the end in May. And yet, the Wehrmacht's strategy was completely ineffective, the war was to all effects already over.

[The trick is to manage knowledge leadership lifecycles, understanding decay so that the cut-off point for outsourcing an activity when its efficiency is no longer investing in, is understood. And remaining aware of the need to fill the evolving vacuum of innovation with new knowledge forms.](#) I suspect that Goldrat succeeded with his ideas through using the novel form to get his 2 simple messages across.

I wonder if we should consider writing the great Knowledge Leadership or SuperKnowledge novel? And consider who will play the key characters in the film-version?: Jason Statham (from The Transporter), Johnny Depp?, Keanu Reeves & Patrick Swayze (reprising "Point-Break"), with guest appearances from Steve Jobs, and Michael Porter. Naturally it will be produced and directed by a Frenchman or a New Zealander ;or we may have to clone Don Simpson from his own DNA.

Victor.

Date: Thu Sep 25, 2003 11:45 am

Subject: [SuperKnowledge: Dialogue Ends Friday - Jerry Ash](#)

From: [Jerry Ash](#)

Subject: Dialogue Ends Friday

Hi Everyone.

The Dialogue is scheduled to end on Friday. Those of you who are corresponding online at Yahoo.com will have Thursday and Friday to wrap up your thoughts. Those who are posting by email will have Friday only.

I'll be out of touch this weekend through Tuesday, and so I will not be able to process late posts. However, as always, you are encouraged to continue in open discussion in the interim. The next STAR Series begins October 20.

Thanks.

Jerry

Date: Thu Sep 25, 2003 1:17 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Been There, Glad to Go Back Again - Jerry Ash

From: Jerry Ash

Subject: That Language Thing Again

Hi Everyone.

During the last couple of Dialogues, I have simultaneously been involved in writing STARS -- now calling it [CHAMPIONS of the New Order](#): What they're telling business leaders. It is [based on the dialogues of 2001-2002](#).

As I've been "listening" to you currently and reliving the old discussions, I have been thinking how much those of you who were not with us "back then" have missed. And, how much the rest of us have forgotten. That's one of the reasons for the book. More importantly, it is evidence to me that we are still struggling with "the language," "the meaning," "the killer message."

Anyway, the 16 Chapters are complete and [I am now pulling "gems" from each of them, distributing them in subject boxes such as "sharing," "managing," and the subject of this post - "communicating."](#) From the "gems" I will write the book's Conclusion.

At any rate, I thought I would share with you what I have so far in the "communicating" gems box (unedited). Each quote has the author's last name only and the chapter it came from. Enjoy:

Communication =====

We may now have come to a point, in human thinking or evolution, that we are attempting to understand all of our surroundings and to put them into a simple context that people can understand. Hawthorne CH16 -- most people don't know someone else

needs this information, either because the other communication processes are so ineffective, or because they are not aware what other people are doing. Vinson CH15 -- Among the many reasons given so far for people not sharing their knowledge, I have not seen this one: they lack the skills. I have worked with more than one highly knowledgeable individual who had great difficulty communicating knowledge in a way others could understand. Jaede CH15 -- I always know more than I can say, even after I have said it, and I can always say more than I can write down. This is one of the basic operating principles of knowledge management, regrettably not fully understood in the second generation. The process of moving from my head, to my mouth to my hands inevitably involves some loss of content, and frequently involves a massive loss of context. Once we recognize this we can start to rethink the nature of knowledge management. Snowden CH13 -- Managing context involves the recognition that knowledge cannot be disembodied from human agency either as giver or receiver; content is the exact opposite. Context management takes control of what we know, but cannot fully say or write down. Content management organizes that which can be written.

Narrative management lies somewhere in between. It manages what we can say in conversation and in declamation. It is also a cheaper and less onerous task to capture than written knowledge and its use is closer to the natural patterns of knowledge acquisition in organizations because:

- * it is easier and less onerous to capture, because I can record to a video camera in ten minutes what it will otherwise take two weeks to get around to spending an hour or so writing up; and

- *it is a natural process, in that when we face a new task, or encounter a problem we go and find people to talk to, to ask questions to provide context-sensitive answers and advice that cannot be provided by past project reviews and idealized statements of best practice. Snowden CH13 -- It was crystal clear to me that the executives were being polite, but they didn't get it. It was also crystal clear to me this was not their fault. Joe Katzman CH13 -- "boilerplate" presentation, with all the usual buzz words and key phrases. But practically none of it was written using terms and concepts that the organization would understand. Robertson CH13 -- If a model is rooted in the stories of an organization's histories and its possible futures (narrative techniques) then the model has meaning to that group. My approach is to get the organization to tell stories and then to populate a framework with those stories, draw boundaries between spaces and then move forward to action. Snowden CH13 -- Knowledge management is the creation of shared context. Without shared context no communication can take place. Information degenerates to data. I do not see knowledge as some higher form of information, but rather, the means by which we create meaning out of data through communication. Snowden CH13 -- When we are trying to "sell" any project, it must make sense to our colleagues and to the people who hold the purse strings. To do this, we need to sell the financial end to our accountants, the efficient work processes to our business process people, and the work benefits to the people who will actually use the results of the project. Vinson CH13

[Jerry ("live"): Jack, that is one of the most precious "gems" I've put in any of my boxes!!!!]

-- I have to communicate to my senior management in terms that they will accept using the communication style most likely to gain their acceptance. If I give them a presentation that does not speak in the way that they want to listen, the message that I am sending will be lost in the "noise" of my presentation. Tucker CH13 -- Although I send the same message in the lunchroom that I send in the boardroom, I tailor my comments to match the communication styles of my intended audience. If I fail to do so, then I lose credibility. Tucker CH13 -- This is a discussion among people interested in KM, so the language changes from a general discussion with business people. I am also a mix of practitioner, academic and researcher and with a philosophy degree to boot. Snowden CH13

=====

What continues to confound me is that (with the exception of Snowden and Denning) communication gets very little "play" in the KM media and among professional communicators (corporate business communicators, marketing, PR and the like); they just don't seem to be in the game. If KM is to become integrated into the business of every silo, the communication silo is still on disconnect, squandering its skills on yesterday's job!

Jerry

Date: Wed Oct 1, 2003 8:22 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Etidros Nitghmrae - Bernice Johnston [+Jerry Ash]

From: Bernice Johnston

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 250

While I was reading the ongoing struggles we have to communicate, make clear, define, etc., I received the following email. [Perhaps we struggle too much.](#)

Aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttae in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoetnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be at the rghit pclae. The rset can be a total mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe.

Amzanig, huh

Bernice

[Jerry Ash: Thanks, Bernice. A friend of mine sent me a version of this and I hesitated passing it along to this group since it has been "making the rounds" on the Internet. But, it is interesting in light of our discussion about words and meanings. I wonder how many

people would easily unscramble itnelcetaul cpactial, hruesicits, and itnredscipenlray?

Date: Fri Sep 26, 2003 5:22 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Communicating Shared Purpose - Newman

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Talk Our Language; Then Theirs - Paul Cripwell

I think the key is create a shared purpose that unites all specialisms using unambiguous language. The trick then is to triage the purpose into chunks that can be worked on concurrently, and map out key dependencies. Let the specialists use their languages where it counts.

I wonder if the underlying issue is that KM is jockeying for primacy in the linguistic warfare stakes, and that it hasn't necessarily demonstrated that it is a worthy meta-language that connects everything else to deliver new market value?

Date: Fri Sep 26, 2003 5:52 am

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Buzzwards-Meaningless or Meaningful? - Jerry Ash

From: Jerry Ash

Victor, I think you are hitting the nail on the head when you say the key to sharing language is sharing purpose. And that reaches much deeper than the question of "how you say it?" Underlying the question is how we embed the concepts of knowledge work where it happens (or isn't, yet). And so, when we take it to the workplace, we must not invade with our "foreign" linguistics or give the slightest signal that we have come to claim superiority or supremacy (I know you used "primacy") in someone else's domain. Knowledge work is all about individual, frontline initiative, not the primacy of hierarchy.

Nevertheless, hierarchy and territorialism will not soon go away; and so, we must learn to work around and within the way things are. Sharing purpose will get the knowledge advocate a lot further than "speaking in mysterious foreign tongues and concepts."

And so, it's not just the language but the attitude that encounters resistance. Our language is very useful shorthand for us, but let's leave it behind when we step into new territory. Then we need to make our case in words that make sense and matter to those we want to influence.

Jerry

P.S. [If you can't translate a KM buzzword into common language, you have to wonder if the word itself has meaning.](#)

Date: Tue Sep 30, 2003 4:37 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: 3 Buzzwords and You're Out! - Victor Newman

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] SuperKnowledge: Buzzwards-Meaningless or Meaningful? - Jerry Ash

I just want to add to your final comment on translation of KM "buzz words": If you can't translate a KM buzz-word into something with meaning without using 2 unconnected analogies to illustrate it, then maybe the idea behind the buzz-word is bogus.

When I used to chair Org.Learning conferences, I would apply a three-strikes policy on the use of analogies or metaphors. Use 3, and I would have to close the session.

Date: Wed Oct 1, 2003 8:04 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Minding the Metaphors - Daniel Jonas [+Jerry Ash]

From: Daniel Jonas, consultant, Angelic Services, Ltd., London

Subject: Re: SuperKnowledge: 3 Buzzwords and You're Out! - Victor Newman

>If you can't translate a KM buzz-word into something with meaning >without using 2 unconnected analogies to illustrate it, then maybe >the idea behind the buzz-word is bogus.

This is a fair enough thing to do IMHO, except that sometimes unconnected analogies serve the purpose of *triangulation* of ideas - rather like the debate we're having about KM "clergy" and "laity". Now, as a keen employer of religious ontologies (I think that's the right word) for clarificatory purposes) I think this particular metaphor serves to help. I might also apply the showbiz metaphor of "inside/outside the velvet rope" to emphasise a different aspect of this behaviour. Similarly, I might also utilise a genetic metaphor for the spread of KM memes. All of these serve their purposes. if used together, they are vulnerable to accusations of metaphor-mixing, but all have value and serve a demystificatory purpose, even if they aren't necessarily part of a coherent "meta-metaphor".

>When I used to chair Org.Learning conferences, I would apply a >three-strikes policy on the use of analogies or metaphors. Use 3, and >I would have to close the session.

You see, for me, this prevents anyone triangulating. Metaphors are rich, but all we have to do is remember that they remain metaphors. *Extended* metaphors, however, usually do not bear close examination -- for example, if there are KM clergy and laity, what's the KM eucharist? Who's the KM Pope? (step up, jerry!) is there a KM congregation for the doctrine of the faith? *I think it's just a question (as in religion) of not getting carried away with the elegance of our metaphors at the expense of the clarity of our ideas.*

Daniel

[Jerry Ash:

You invited me step up. I'll say this: any word, expression, metaphor, story that gets the point across is okay by me. I like your thought of a demystifying purpose, and I abhor jargon that does the opposite -- that mystifies (accidentally or on purpose). I'm a KM maven, spreading "the word" about the knowledge phenomenon at the opening of the 21s century. I'm only interested in the language of understanding.]

Date: Wed Oct 1, 2003 8:05 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Value of Metaphor, Analogy - David Jones

From: David Jones

Subject: On Metaphor and Analogy

I consider these very useful communication and teaching aids and would never lump them in with acronyms. There are some things that are not easily explained, and need imagery for transmission and comprehension. See Lao Tzu, Sun Tzu and Chuang Tzu for example.

Date: Fri Oct 3, 2003 4:17 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: What Isn't a Metaphor? - Jack Ring

From: Jack Ring

David Jones said:

>I consider these very useful communication and teaching aids and >would never lump them in with acronyms. There are some things that >are not easily explained, and need imagery for transmission and >comprehension. See Lao Tzu, Sun Tzu and Chuang Tzu for example.

David Makes a valuable distinction. [As the US national poet said a couple of years ago, "What isn't metaphor?"](#)

Date: Wed Oct 1, 2003 8:00 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Shopping for Knowledge - David Hawthorne

From: David Hawthorne, president, HCI, and academic adviser, NYU, U.S.

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 251

Shopping for knowledge

I stuttered severely as a child and suffered the usual cruel treatment by other children and thoughtless adults. My father, who also stuttered severely as a child, told me, "You can't control what other people do. You can only manage how you respond." As a child, I wasn't very good at this "managing" business, and I suffered needlessly. Nevertheless, I

slowly began to bring my stuttering under control and the cruel experiences associated with it subsided.

In high school my commercial law teacher, Mrs. Godshaw, used to interrupt us boisterous boys in the back of the room with the pointed question, "Is it something you can manage, or would you like me to manage it for you?"

These two anecdotes, I think, go to heart of the one of the issues raised in the recent dialog about SuperKnowledge. [We can't actually control knowledge but we can manage how we respond to it.](#)

I still hear a lot of the language of control (share, gather, order, decide, restrict, spread, teach, value and so on) in our discussions about the organizational and personal use of knowledge, as if we get to choose what knowledge is or is not. Whatever it is, it is not our definition that brings it into existence. There's the knowledge we know (i.e. that we admit as knowledge) and the knowledge that we don't know (i.e. we either aren't aware of it yet, haven't acted on it, or just haven't made sense of it). Whatever knowledge is in its infinite variety, it is only distinguished by how we choose to respond to it.

Virtually all the knowledge we choose to act on today was either unknown or "wrong" at some earlier time. And much of what we choose to act on today will turn out to be "wrong" later. So, exactly what the heck are we managing? I think my father would say, "We are managing how we come to understand the world around us and our position in it and we are managing how we choose to respond to it in the belief that our actions matter and, in some measure, influence our experience of those conditions." If I were a business, government, or some other type of social organization: I would constantly question whether or not I really know what I think I know, and whether or not my actions -- based on what I think I know -- make sense, given how I wish to see my position altered.

I've been doing some research lately into retailing and I am appalled by how much of the counsel being offered to retailers involves ways to manipulate or control consumer behavior -- as if humans are no more than lab rats.

While more than 52 million Americans rushed to place their phone numbers on a Do-Not-Call list, retailers and retail technology vendors gushed over new methods of tracking consumers with mobile retailing technologies that would invade the consumers' consciousness through his/her PDA, mobile telephone, movies, music, landscape and generally, anything that may be in his or her field of vision, touch, smell, hearing -- as if consumers are not entitled to have their own thought space. Why -- when 52 million people are willing to throw tens of thousands of other people out of work in order to avoid marketing messages -- are we contemplating spending millions more dollars on invading other regions of their lives. Do we think they will appreciate having a smart tag on a sweater at the Gap call us on our mobile as we walk by: "Miss Jones, if you have a minute, the pink angora sweater you've been looking for is right here in the store. Take a left at the next isle. Buy it now, and receive an additional 25% off. "Sorry, I promised to pick up my daughter from daycare promptly at six."

In short, we are gaining much more knowledge about consumer behavior. What will matter is not how we manage the knowledge but how we manage our response to it. An Ernst & Young report I was reading said, "...the purpose of retailing is to get the consumer to buy..." Really? Is the purpose of shopping to buy? I've watched a lot of shopping behavior over the years, and it seems to me that men and women shop for a wide variety of reasons, and buying something is often the least of them. Shopping is a very social act for many people. If you want to reduce the likelihood that I will "buy" keep thrusting buying opportunities in my face. Telemarketers destroyed telemarketing, not the consumer. Now I wonder if knowledge managers can avoid destroying Knowledge Management.

-David Hawthorne

Date: Sun Sep 28, 2003 6:45 am
Subject: SuperKnowledge: Thanks Victor!
From: Jerry Ash
Subject: Our Appreciation

Victor, this has been a great two weeks and you took us into territory we have either never been or needed to return to. On behalf of the members of AOK, I thank you for the gift of your time, experience and knowledge. You were already an active member of AOK, communicating with us long before your own turn in the STAR Seat came, and I hope we will remain worthy of your attention.

Everyone, please join me in thanking Victor Newman. Use the Reply Function online or in your email browser window and type a simple "Thank You." Say more if you will. The luminaries who volunteer for this duty get nothing more than the enjoyment of the exchange and an occasional cudo. Oh, there's one other thing you could do -- buy Victor's book! Encourage others to buy Victor's book, "The Knowledge Activist's Handbook":

<http://www.kwork.org/Store/featured.html>

NEXT UP: Melissie Rumizen, October 20-31

Melissie is Knowledge Strategist at Buckman Labs (Remember Bob Buckman's turn in the STAR Seat?), and author of "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Knowledge Management."

I have asked Melissie if she will take us "Back to Basics." AOK is a wonderful mix of knowledge practitioners, ranging from the expert to the newbie. I'm hoping this upcoming Dialogue will bring the newbies out of the woodwork and return the rest of us to the perspective of fundamentals LOST!

Thanks again Victor. And, thanks to the rest of you who brought your own thoughts to the table. It wouldn't be a DI-alogue without you.

Jerry

Date: Tue Sep 30, 2003 4:46 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Wrap Up - Chant 'Competitive Advantage!' - Victor Newman

From: Victor Newman

Subject: Re: SuperKnowledge: Thanks Victor!

Jerry,

Thank you for the invitation to participate, and also for the masterly advice and mediation.

As part of closure, some learnings from me: I suspect that the SuperKnowledge Declaration may have been a bridge too far for some folks and I should have synthesised the argument down to the need to be clearer about what we want KM or managing knowledge to do.

What has been exciting for me has been the emerging issues of problem-framing and language. I feel now that the language of problem-framing and problem-solving is one of the missing family of KM. Similarly, I believe that the disciplines and language of change tend to be absent from KM methodologies and their absence is due to a form of self-policing, which is not sustainable in the long term.

My choice of defining KM as the "deliberate management of knowledge to deliver specific outcomes" does allow us, I feel to begin at the beginning by asking ourselves the fundamental question of "what do I really want"? and to take it from there.

The fundamental challenge isn't to create more KM clergy, but to encourage action through pragmatic language and personal practice. Maybe the KM theme of 2004 will be "Personal Knowledge Management"

If I leave a warning, it will be similar to my story about dissatisfaction with BPR implementations that transformed processes that were largely routine. There will always be a temptation to apply ideas about knowledge to things that don't make a difference. One of the lessons that I learnt from being a remedial TQM consultant back in the late 80s was: never to apply a good tool to something that didn't matter. Folks would value the tool and its thinking, accordingly. The key idea behind SuperKnowledge was the idea of building knowledge leadership around competitive advantage, and it remains key.

So remember, whenever the conspiracy of tedium around KM starts to bite, inhale deeply and then as you exhale, chant: "competitive advantage, competitive advantage, competitive advantage" and take it from there.

Victor.

Date: Wed Oct 1, 2003 8:06 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: Thanks; KMCI Approach - Mark McElroy

From: Mark McElroy

Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 251

Hello Victor:

First, thanks for your contributions to this forum. Good stuff.

Second, you said:

"What has been exciting for me has been the emerging issues of problem-framing and language. I feel now that the language of problem-framing and problem-solving is one of the missing family of KM."

Again I remind you, KMCI has been formulating an approach to KM for five years now that is, by any other definition, 'problem centric.' Here again is a reference model for knowledge processing that shows the role of problems in learning and innovation:

<http://www.macroinnovation.com/images/KnowledgeLife8.01.03.pdf>

Thus, if KM is to have any impact on knowledge processing in organizations, it must first enhance 'problem claim formulation,' not just the production of answers. [So the missing family you speak of in KM turns out not be missing at all.](#)

Regards,

Mark

Date: Wed Oct 1, 2003 8:07 pm

Subject: SuperKnowledge: More Thank You Notes

THANK YOU NOTES:

From: Madelyn Blair, Ph.D., Pelerie Inc., U.S.

Jerry,

I'd like to join you in thanking Victor. I have rarely enjoyed the postings so well as this recent conversation.

From: Marnix Catteeuw, knowledge manager,Interbrew, Leuven,Belgium

Thanks Victor, Yes indeed I did buy the book

----- From: Kurt Rieger, Australia

Thank you Victor - This has been my first KM session - food for thought and I will stick my neck out -a long long way - My gut feeling is there is a need for organisational leadership that will lead to innovation in SKM Business performance measurement is my hobby and I found Professor Graham Hubbard's book 'The First XI - winning organisations in Australia' - interesting reading it is useful in the light of the works I have read by Professor Dorothy Barton and Professor Rosabeth Moss Kantor.

Great Stuff - thanks again. Kurt Rieger

From Jack Ring,U.S.

Victor, Thanks for showing us an aspect of KM that is very important. It was refreshing to get above the IT view of KM. Buying your book.
