BOOK REVIEW

Knowledge and Information Technology Management: Human and Social Perspective

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Knowledge and Information Technology Management: Human and Social Perspective

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Binding together a wide variety of topics, Knowledge and Information Technology Management helps the reader navigate from the very roots of knowledge management to the cutting-edge use of technology in managing information generated at the workplace. Despite this variety in the subject matter of individual research papers, the common theme focusing on knowledge and information technology management — has been very adequately captured by the book’s title. The collection of papers is unique in that researchers from around the world present knowledge management frameworks and models with a technology focus. This global perspective could have been further strengthened through the inclusion of a few more viewpoints from developing countries, which would have given the reader a richer perspective and better insight into the workings of the organizations in the lesser-developed parts of the world.

A glance at the contents page gives a clear picture of the book: Section I: Introduction to Knowledge and Information Technology Management; Section II: Integration of Business and Knowledge/Information Technology Management; Section III: Knowledge and Information Technology Management in Virtual Enterprises; Section IV: Knowledge Management in E-Commerce Environment; and Section V: Human and Social Aspects of Knowledge and Information Technology Management.

This book presents the information technology management models in two settings: first, in a conceptual setting, and second, as it is applied and tested in a realistic and tangible organizational setting, ranging from manufacturing to rigid hierarchies (as found in the military). The latter presentation is strengthened with the help of cases or demonstrated through actual implementation. Lacking is the inclusion of a research work focusing on the foundations of knowl-
edge management, artifacts of a style that are abundant in *Harvard Business Review on Knowledge Management*. However, by maintaining a focus on the technological aspects, this collection nicely complements that review. Thus, practitioners, researchers or analysts and academics equally should benefit from this collection.

Professionals from the industry will find the practical emphasis on e-business especially handy, as issues of managing knowledge and its sources internal and external to an organization are presented. Focusing on the internal sources, one view is on managing the technology used for product development or production integration to retain information and knowledge, as portrayed in the framework shown in Chapter 4 developed by the team from Hong Kong Polytechnic. The other internal view concentrates on organizational culture, where knowledge creation, dissemination and storage matters related to the use of technology in forming strategy are discussed. These areas tend to be important in setting the stage for incorporating technology, and this issue is partly addressed through the inclusion of Shaw and Tuggle’s work in Section II, and in the concluding chapter focusing on bureaucratic environments.

The final internal view concentrates on managing teams in an e-collaborative environment; associations that can be established in physical or virtual settings. The last few chapters of Section II and most of Section III discuss human and infrastructure issues, and frameworks that can be applied to manage virtual workers and the information that flows between them. This facilitates and provides support and pointers to any organization faced with these issues or to companies inclined toward incorporating a cyber setting in their collaborating efforts. Also in this context, researchers from Hong Kong’s Polytechnic (Chapter 27) discuss some aspects of managing global software teams for startups based in less-developed regions of the world.

The external view focuses on managing knowledge generated through interactions with other businesses, clients or suppliers, with an expected emphasis on the increasing role of the Internet in enhancing the availability and reach of e-commerce. Support for this view comes from the three works provided in Section Four of this book, with the last one focusing more on managerial and cultural issues. Related issues, such as money transactions, security and individual privacy then become a natural extension of this process and have been appropriately included here in the first half of Section Five. The impact of the changes within an organization or within communities, as has been brought about by growth of e-commerce tools, is also discussed in the shape of conceptual frameworks.

Graduate students exploring research topics in the areas of management of technology for gathering information and disseminating knowledge will particularly benefit from the wide variety of issues and topics that have been examined and addressed here. Of particular help will be the theoretical part of these research works, where models are drawn up based on previous works from the literature. A majority of the works found in this collection also discusses future trends and directions for their research. Thus, students doing research projects can use these models and the research pointers to come up with their own frameworks and models, or perhaps use the case studies to refine the practical implementation of their projects. Or, simply, the literature review that the authors use to justify their research can provide useful starting points or references to other works. The
inclusion of discussions at the beginning of most of these papers is another help, as such works provide research directions to future researchers by clustering together relevant efforts.

Muhammad Asim Qayyum is a doctoral candidate in concluding stages with the Faculty of Information Studies, University of Toronto. Qayyum’s advisor is Professor Lynne Howarth, who recently finished her tenure as dean of the faculty. Professor Howarth is actively involved in exploring metadata creation to manage knowledge. Qayyum’s primary research work investigates the interaction between users of electronic documents and electronic applications in an individual or collaborative setting. The focus is on improving information sharing, organization and management of the generated knowledge and its dissemination through a refined digital library interface. Qayyum started a degree in computer engineering, but has worked in the field of information systems, leading to an MBA with specialization in MIS. Since then, Qayyum has worked in the area of software engineering and design, and in developing organizational knowledge management systems.