Preface

This book was born out of the need for advancing the current state of research and practice on knowledge management as related to effective design of new organization forms. It integrates cutting-edge research and best practices being defined and improvised by leading worldwide experts, researchers and practitioners. The articles in this book represent a small percentage of about 150 articles and proposals that were selected through multiple phases of editorial review, as well as double blind peer-review process. Each of those articles represents original and unpublished work of authors with reputed backgrounds and expertise relevant to their contributions. The process through which this book was born represents an epitome of the theme of the book: more than 100 persons located in various countries across the world collaborated ‘virtually’ through the Internet and WWW from the beginning to the completion of this knowledge aggregation, validation, sharing, compilation and dissemination process.

This book is unique in being the first work of its kind that synthesizes the latest original thinking in knowledge management and the design of information technology and Internet-enabled new organization forms. The scholarly and practitioner contributions to this work represent the first focused and integrated attempt to answer the issues about applying knowledge management for enabling ‘anytime, anywhere, anyhow’ organizations. These issues will be of relevance to all researchers, scholars, managers, executives and entrepreneurs interested in understanding how information technologies and knowledge management can enable effective design and emergence of virtual organizations, virtual teams and communities of practice. Within this perspective, the focus is on understanding how knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, knowledge acquisition, knowledge exchange, and knowledge transfer can be better understood and applied for enabling new organization forms including virtual web, virtual corporation, Net broker, and business networks.

The first section of the book covers frameworks, models, analyses, cases studies and research on the integration of knowledge management within virtual organizations, virtual teams and virtual communities of practice. Key themes covered in this section include business model innovation; design of virtual organization forms, including virtual corporations, Net-based models, virtual teams and inter-organizational networks; strategies and technologies for knowledge management; tools,
techniques and methodologies for enabling knowledge capture, knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer as well as related collaboration, competition and co-opetition at intra- and inter-organizational levels. The focus of the second section is on key success factors that are important for enabling knowledge management and realizing virtual models of business transformation. Key knowledge management themes addressed in this section relate to organizational transformation; analysis and design of knowledge systems and processes; role of organizational control systems; creating successful communities of practice; role of internal and external employees and customers in creation of organizational knowledge; knowledge acquisition and management; and information quality issues.

The backdrop of this project is the @Brint.com Web portal and virtual community of practice, which started as a ‘real world’ prototype of the virtual organization with explicit focus on knowledge management. Over the last three to four years, this portal has been extensively reviewed in worldwide media for defining the first online compilations of content on this topic and serving as a haven for what is now the largest global virtual community of practice on these issues. Our face-to-face and virtual interactions on these issues with worldwide scholars, corporations, governments, conference organizers, publishers, and journalists over the last few years defined the need for this seminal work on the theme of knowledge management and virtual organizations. Several members of the global community of @Brint.com are represented among the authors and reviewers who contributed to this project.

Most of the authors of chapters included in this book also served as referees for articles written by other authors. Thanks go to all those who provided constructive and comprehensive reviews. However, some of the reviewers must be mentioned as their reviews set the benchmark. Besides the editor of this project, reviewers who provided the most comprehensive, critical and constructive comments include in no specific order: Ron Rice of Rutgers University School of Communication, Information and Library Studies; Mark Nissen, George Zolla and Kishore Sengupta, all of Naval PostGraduate School at Monterey; Bishwajit Choudhary of Norwegian School of Management; Kristen Bell DeTienne of Brigham Young University Marriott School of Management; Ulrich J. Franke of Cranfield University School of Management; Karin Breu of Cranfield School of Management Information Systems Research Center; Karim Hirji of IBM Canada; Brendan Kitts of Brandeis University and Datasage; Karen Lyons, a senior information technology and knowledge management consultant; and, Christopher McLachlan of University of Trier Marketing
Deep appreciation and gratitude is due to Mini Malhotra, president of @Brint.com LLC, for ongoing sponsorship in terms of generous allocation of on-line and off-line Internet, WWW, hardware and software resources; technical and personnel communication infrastructure; and other editorial support services for coordination of this one-year-long project of global proportions. Special thanks also go to the publishing team at Idea Group Publishing, in particular to Jan Travers, who continuously prodded via e-mail for keeping the project on schedule, and to Mehdi Khosrowpour, whose enthusiasm motivated me to initially accept his invitation for taking on this project. Support of the department of Information Technology and Operations Management at Florida Atlantic University is acknowledged for article archival server space in the completely virtual on-line review process.

With the mission of contributing to the substantive issues of relevance to practitioners, researchers and scholars of business, management, organizations and information systems, we are facilitating a multi-channel forum for creation and dissemination of knowledge on these issues. Besides this book, there are a number of other scholarly and practitioner publications that are, and have been, in the works, details about which are accessible at www.brint.com. Based on your interest in knowledge management and new organization forms, I welcome you to join the global community of practice of the Knowledge Management Think Tank (at forums.brint.com) and the Knowledge Executives Network, and share your significant on-line initiatives, events, programs and publications with the world through the WWW Virtual Library on Knowledge Management (at km.brint.com).

Yours virtually,

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