

## BOOK REVIEW

# The Essentials of Knowledge Management

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*The Essentials of Knowledge Management*

*J.S. Edwards*

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The Essentials of Knowledge Management is a book that presents foundation knowledge on the knowledge management discipline and associated issues. Directed primarily to Knowledge Management (KM) researchers, academics, and graduate students, it is also useful for KM practitioners seeking to understand fundamental issues in KM.

The book consists of 14 chapters that originally appeared as papers in the journals "Knowledge Management Research and Practice" and "European Journal of Information Systems" and an introductory chapter used to set the stage for the book. The 14 chapters are organized into sections. Part I is Foundations and has two chapters, "Management Knowledge and Knowledge Management: Realism and Forms of Truth," by John Mingers; and "The Theoretical Foundations of Knowledge Management," by Richard Baskerville and Alina Dulipovici. Part II is Strategic Issues and has five chapters: "The Knowledge-creating Theory Revisited: Knowledge Creation as a Synthesizing Process," by Ikujiro Nonaka and Ryoko Toyama; "Absorptive Capacity: A Proposed Operationalization," by Jean-Pierre Noblet, Eric Simon, and Robert Parent; "Knowledge as a Measurable Object in Business Contexts: A Stock and Flow Approach," by Ettore Bolisani and Alessandro Oltramari; "A Conceptual Framework for Unlearning in a Homecare Setting," Juan Gabriel Cegarra-Navarro, Anthony K.P. Wensley, and Maria Teresa Sanchez Palo; "A Study of Knowledge Management Enablers Across Countries," Remy Magnier-Watanabe, Caroline Benton, and Dai Senoo. Part III, Understanding Knowledge Transfer/Sharing, has two papers: "Transfer of Knowledge in Knowledge Management Systems: Unexpected Issues and Suggested Studies," G.P. Huber and "A Measure of Knowledge Sharing Behavior: Scale Development and

Validation,” Jialin Yi. Part IV, People or Technology Approaches, has two papers: “Reproducing Knowledge: Xerox and the Study of Knowledge Management,” Anthony Cox and “Managing Large Amounts of Knowledge Objects: Cognitive and Organizational Problems,” Antonella Padova and Enrico Scarso. Part V, New Technological Development, has three papers: “Codifying Collaborative Knowledge Using Wikipedia as a Basis for Automated Ontology Learning,” Tao Guo, David G. Schwartz, Frada Burstein, and Henry Linger; “Deciding to Use an Enterprise Wiki: the Role of Social Institutions and Scripts,” Paul Jackson and Jane Klobas, and “The Role of Social Networks in Knowledge Creation,” Julia Nieves and Javier Osorio.

Overall I like this book and think it is a good addition to any KM reference library. The book is very readable and is very clear in what it is saying (although it is best if the reader has some background in KM research and theory). There are authors who are notable KM thinkers such as GP. Huber and Ikujiro Nonaka; both of which provide added insight into the areas of knowledge creation and knowledge transfer. There are also notable KM researchers such as Richard Baskerville, Frada Burstein, Henry Linger, John Mingers, and David G. Schwartz. I notably like the chapter from Baskerville and Dulipovici as it provides a pretty good summary on the foundational knowledge for KM and does a fairly good job of establishing the boundary on what is in the KM discipline. I also like the chapter from Mingers as it provides a very interesting discussion on the different meanings of truth and how knowledge users determine truth. Another interesting article is from Navarro, Wensley, and Palo on unlearning as many of us focus on how not to lose knowledge but not on how to unlearn something once we have determined that the knowledge was wrong. Additionally, the remaining chapters provide a fairly good discussion on some of the key topics and issues in KM such as knowledge creation, classification, storage, transfer, sharing; and to a lesser degree the measurement of KM.

There are two limitations to the book that affects its usefulness to KM researchers. The first is that the book does not truly cover the essentials of KM. Obviously missing are articles addressing KM governance, leadership, security, strategy, success, and system design and implementation. All these issues are significant to managing KM. Also, technologies are weakly covered focusing on wiki's and while KM is known to use technology but not be a technology solution, there are more technologies showing promise such as mobile KM, non-structured databases, big data, and artificial intelligence. The second issue is that the book is weakly grounded in the KM literature. Serenko and Bontis (2013) list over 20 KM journals. Because the book articles are selected from a single KM journal the references used are focused on KM Research and Practice. The only other KM journal getting multiple mentions is the Journal of Knowledge Management. Another predominant source of KM references used are KM books and given the time it takes to publish books and the lower peer review standard used to assess book quality the currency and validity of books are less than that of articles. Jennex (2015) considers these literature reviews of convenience and unfortunately none of the book articles document how the literature reviews were conducted so it is impossible for the reader to determine if the authors truly understood the appropriate KM literature. This is significant as IJKM readers are well aware that IJKM authors have heavily covered many of the areas discussed by the book and the book's failure to include them significantly affects the validity of the book. That said the book does not claim to be an all-inclusive book nor does it claim that its articles are thorough review articles. I must admit that this is a criticism that can be leveled at any book that is generated from a single or even a couple of KM journals. Jennex and Croasdell (2005) discussed the need for the creation of a KM body of knowledge and made that a goal of IJKM. This means we need to do a better job of integrating all the KM journals. I have started this at IJKM by becoming tougher on performing literature reviews and am using a literature review of convenience as a reason for rejection during initial assessment of new submissions. I am also requiring that methodology sections also discuss the

method used to conduct the literature review. This all said the value I see in the book for IJKM readers are articles on truth, KM foundations, and unlearning.

To conclude, “The Essentials of Knowledge Management” is a good book for KM researchers. There are interesting chapters and for those not familiar with KM Research and Practice a good book to become familiar with the content and quality of the journal.

## REFERENCES

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