Chapter VIII

Application Cases in Government

This chapter concentrates on knowledge-flow visualization and analysis in the public sector. We look first at a military organization involved with maritime warfare. The discussion turns then to examine a federal government agency involved with a knowledge management program. The third case examines a public service organization involved with large-scale IT integration. In each case, we draw from secondary data sources for background. This should prove helpful to the reader who is interested in following up to consider more details than presented in this volume. We also draw from our own research and professional experience to fill in missing information, and we apply principles and techniques of this book to contribute new insights through examination of knowledge flows in the cases. Each application case concludes with exercises to stimulate critical thought, learning, and discussion.

Military Organization and Maritime Warfare

We draw from Nissen (2002b) for the background of this case. We first summarize important events and issues for context. Visualization and analysis of key knowledge flows follows, with interpretation of management implica-
tions discussed subsequently. The section closes with exercises pertaining specifically to this application case.

**Context**

The military of a large industrialized nation is comprised of several services (e.g., Army, Navy, Air Force). It conducts many military endeavors using a composite organization called the Joint Task Force (JTF). The JTF integrates units from multiple services under a common commander to accomplish a substantial undertaking (e.g., requiring months or years to accomplish). Many joint operations also include coalitions of military forces from allied nations. In many respects, the JTF reflects a project organization. Work tasks and people are organized around a specific product of the organization; in this case, the “product” pertains to accomplishing objectives of warfare (e.g., defending territory, countering threat, projecting power). Such project organization is similar to the business case involving new-product development. In other respects, the organization of a JTF is virtual. Diverse people and units come together to compose a temporary organization focused on achieving limited objectives. After the mission is accomplished or abandoned, the organization disbands. Such temporary organization is similar to the business case involving feature-film production. In still other respects, the JTF reflects a matrix organization. While diverse units are organized under a JTF Commander, they continue an enduring affiliation with their home organizations. Such matrix organization is similar to the business case involving technology transfer. Unlike the matrix from organization theory, however, people in the military have only one boss at a time.

The organization of a task force is relatively large (e.g., 10,000 people or more) and hierarchical in nature. The JTF is organized functionally for division of labor; relies upon standardized procedures for coordination; employs large technical and support staff organizations; utilizes centralized decision making; and maintains a unified chain of command. In these respects, it represents a classic machine bureaucracy (Mintzberg, 1980), but this military organization also depends heavily upon professionalism for quality and reliability of its work processes. It is steeped in tradition, with very strong cultural norming forces at every level. Attention to detail by senior-level managers — many refer to this as “micromanagement” — abounds. “Because lives are at stake,” one senior officer in the case says, “commanders and officers at every level immerse themselves in the details of plans and operations.” Direct supervision, through
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