Knowledge Management Models or Models of Knowledge?

A critical review of the literature.

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Outline of Presentation

• What is a Model?
• Six Models
• Some Conclusions
• Questions
What is a Model?

‘A theory has only the alternatives of being wrong or right. A model has a third possibility: it may be right but irrelevant.’

Manfred Eigen, Chemist, 1972
A model is an intellectual construct in artefact form that provides an abstract, highly formalised, often visual, yet simplified representation of a phenomenon and its interactions.


Despres, C & Chauvel, D 2000, Knowledge horizons: the present and the promise of knowledge management, Butterworth Heinemann, Boston, pp. 55-86.
Types of Models

• There are three types of model: mathematical models, descriptive models, and graphical models.


• Models can be either prescriptive or predictive.


Six Models
‘Data consists of symbols that represent objects, events, and/or their properties. They are the products of observation ...’ (Ackoff 1996, pp. 28-29).

‘Information is contained in descriptions, in answers to questions that begin with such words as who, what, where, when, and how many ...’ (Ackoff 1996, pp. 28-29).


The Six Knows


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McElroy’s Model

Frid’s Model


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Tiwana’s Model

PHASE 1
INFRASTRUCTURE EVALUATION

1. Analyse the Existing Infrastructure
2. Align Knowledge Management and Business Strategy

PHASE 2
KM SYSTEM ANALYSIS
DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

3. Design the Knowledge Management Infrastructure
4. Audit Existing Knowledge Assets and Systems
5. Design the Knowledge Management Team
6. Create the Knowledge Management Blueprint
7. Develop the Knowledge Management Blueprint

PHASE 3
DEPLOYMENT

8. Deploy Using the Results-Driven Incremental Methodology
9. Manage Change, Culture and Reward Structures

PHASE 4
EVALUATION

10. Evaluate Performance, Measure ROI and Incrementally Refine the KMS

Some Conclusions

‘If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties’.

Sir Francis Bacon, English Philosopher, 1605.
Definitional Problems

‘Confusion about what data, information, and knowledge are – how they differ, what the words mean – has resulted in enormous expenditures on technology initiatives that rarely deliver what the firms spending the money needed or thought they were getting’.

Definitional Problems

‘Has knowledge management (KM) been done? Of course KM has been done… But whether formal interventions claiming the label KM are bona fide instances of KM practice is another matter entirely. To answer that question, we need to have clear, non-contradictory ideas about the nature of knowledge, knowledge processing and KM’.

Model Problems

‘At the risk of oversimplification, generic knowledge models typically focus on KM from knowledge life cycle perspectives. These models are important in enriching our understandings on the essentials of KM activities; yet do not provide an integrative perspective for actual KM implementation’.

‘… practitioners do not find many applicable or useful concepts, frameworks and models. Finding a reasonably grounded and practically applicable theoretical foundation for developing, exploring, and evaluating knowledge management processes, IT applications, and KMS persists as a challenging task.’

The Importance

• ‘knowledge management project failure is a reality that both practitioners and researchers have to reckon with’.


• 84% of knowledge management initiatives have failed.


• Implementing a knowledge management initiative has a significant cost in time and resources. The complete initiative often costs several million dollars.
Questions

‘The real questions refuse to be placated... They are the questions asked most frequently and answered most inadequately, the ones that reveal their true natures slowly, reluctantly, most often against your will’.