

knowldgWORKS News (Formerly the ACCSYS Knowledge Management Newsletter)

Volume 1 Number 5

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KnowBits

### A Name Change

We are changing the name of the newsletter. Why? Simply because we wanted to make the name more reflective of what the newsletter is about, namely making knowledge work. Our focus and goals for the newsletter are not changing, although the name change does give more latitude in the discussion, because making knowledge work is not only an organizational problem, but also an individual problem. Hopefully, by changing the name we can also avoid some of the confusion that currently surrounds knowledge management.

### New Developments

Last week's newsletter has led me to do some thinking about the framework and what tools could be useful for knowledge work. I came up with two so far - one of the tools is a knowledge work assessment - a list of approximately 100 questions to consider prior to starting and even during a knowledge-based project. The other is a knowledge-based project template. These are works in progress and I will be reporting on them in up and coming newsletters. Let me know if you have any interest in these.

### The Path

I had lunch with a colleague last week and part of our discussion was about knowledge management. My colleague said that he had been doing a lot of reading about knowledge management from Gartner/Giga/Forrester/Meta. Words like "the Gartner Way," and "the Meta Approach" wafted through the conversation. I guess you could call this newsletter the "ACCSYS Path to Knowledge Enlightenment." There are many ways to solve problems in knowledge work. Best practices are meant to define frameworks. Typically the users of a best practice must interpret how it can fit their need. The trick is to find

and use what works. And if it does not work, to learn from that. Through this process, knowledge work is done.

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Volume 1 Number 5 Dr. Randy M. Kaplan

## Activities to Leverage Knowledge

To get the most out of individual or organizational knowledge, what do you need to do? When thinking about knowledge work, what are some of the tasks and activities you might consider? At a conceptual level, leveraging knowledge is really about identifying, capturing, organizing, and disseminating knowledge to make better use of it.

### 1. Identify Knowledge

Do you know where your knowledge resides? Have you identified critical sources of knowledge in the organization? Sources of knowledge can be formal or informal. Formal knowledge is usually found in documented form. Informal knowledge usually resides in informal networks of people. It is important to have an idea of where knowledge resides. You might not want to change its location but you do need to be able to tap into it when needed.

One way to identify significant or valuable knowledge is to create maps of your overall business processes. These maps should be at whatever level of detail is most helpful. Once you have the process maps, you can identify the enabling knowledge, and who has that knowledge. Enabling knowledge is that knowledge which enables parts of the business processes. For all the informal knowledge elements you have identified, determine how difficult it would be to replace this knowledge. This will allow you to focus on the knowledge that is both critical and difficult to replace.

### 2. Capture Knowledge

Once you have identified the knowledge in your organization, you need to capture it. As an example, let's consider personal knowledge. If I read several papers and articles in an evening, I may want to include some or all of them as part of my personal knowledge base. I save an article by scanning it into a document database. By doing

this I've captured information that may be valuable to me at some time in the future.

Capturing knowledge organizationally is more complex. To capture expert knowledge you might need to institute a knowledge acquisition process. To share knowledge among a group of individuals you might create a discussion list. When setting up a discussion list you need to encourage the people with the knowledge to participate, and you may need to provide some incentive or reward for sharing their knowledge.

The challenge of capturing knowledge from people is to understand how to encourage them to share their valuable knowledge. In the understanding about how people can be encouraged to do this, you need also to understand the organizational culture. Is it a culture that encourages openness? Does it embrace learning? If not, it might be very difficult to get individuals to share valuable knowledge.

Automated techniques for capturing knowledge may offer some benefit. For example, data mining techniques might be used to identify patterns in databases that in turn could be used by management to make organizational decisions.

### 3. Organizing Knowledge

One of the greatest challenges of this information-overloaded world is to figure out how to find the information we need when we need it. As you identify and capture knowledge you also need to plan how you will locate the knowledge when it is needed. If people cannot find the information when they need it, it is of no value.

To organize the knowledge you need a classification scheme that will make sense to all potential users of the knowledge. The larger the pool of knowledge the more important it may be to use a classification scheme created by someone trained in information retrieval - perhaps a librarian.

You must also consider ways to represent relationships between pieces of knowledge in your knowledge repository, and ways to search your knowledge. This may lead to using an Internet-based technology as your delivery vehicle.

When considering the representation of knowledge, it is important to clearly understand how people will use the knowledge. Is it important for people to see relationships among the knowledge entries? Or is it more important to get to a particular entry in the knowledge base? Each of these may require a different approach to organizing the knowledge.

#### 4. Disseminating and Delivering Knowledge

What mechanisms do you plan to use to deliver knowledge to others? This newsletter, for example, uses a combination of things. If I send it to you without your having requested it then I am "pushing" the information to you. If you made a specific request for this newsletter then you are "pulling" the information.

If you decide to deliver knowledge directly to users, then you may decide to deliver pointers to the knowledge instead of the knowledge itself. For example, some web newsletters contain summary information about topics of interest but point to more complete information via web links. This is a push-pull delivery model.

Another possibility for delivery involves delivering the knowledge but also soliciting new or related knowledge. This delivery model is a push-pull-capture model.

Obviously, how and to whom you deliver knowledge depends on your purpose. Service technicians may need timely information about certain kinds of repairs pushed to them as efficiently as possible. The most important thing to consider is your audience and purpose.

Don't rule out more conventional means to disseminate to deliver knowledge to its users. Providing a hardcopy version may be a preferred way to receive information in an organization. On the other hand, providing a telephone - based response system might provide you audience with a means to access knowledge rapidly.

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Have any specific questions about these activities? Want to add to this list? Please send email to [rkaplan@accsys-corp.com](mailto:rkaplan@accsys-corp.com). I want to hear and share some of your ideas and questions.

If you are interested in learning more about knowledge work, subscribe to this newsletter by sending email to [infoac@accsys-corp.com](mailto:infoac@accsys-corp.com). Send the message: Subscribe KWORKS-NEWS <your email address> or go to <http://www.accsys-corp.com/getintouch.htm>, fill out the form, and in the comments area, enter Subscribe KWORKS-NEWS <your email address>. If you know of anyone interested in knowledge work, please pass this newsletter on.

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to [infoac@accsys-corp.com](mailto:infoac@accsys-corp.com).

Next week's issue: "Neats vs. Scruffys"

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