

knowldgWORKS News Number 38 January 2001  
Taking Stock

+++++

Table of Contents

KnowBits

- A. Editorial Schedule
- B. New Report in February
- C. The Prototypical Knowledge Management Organization - A Reference Report Available From ACCSYS Corporation

This Week's Topic - Taking Stock in the New Year

+++++

KnowBits

A. Editorial Schedule

We are starting 2001 off with an editorial schedule. Here is what we are planning for knowldgWORKS this year.

January 2001	Taking Stock
February 2001	KM Thinking for Management
March 2001	KM Patterns
April 2001	Technology Review
May 2001	KM and Artificial Intelligence
June 2001	Personal KM Pointers
July 2001	Knowledge Creation
August 2001	Technology Review
September 2001	Applying Whole Brain Technology to KM
October 2001	Knowledge Validation
November 2001	Knowledge Management Training
December 2001	2001 in Perspective

The editorial schedule is being published to promote your participation. If you would like to submit something for a topic, please do so and we will consider your submissions. Submissions are due on the 1st of the month. Please email your submissions to [rkaplan@accsys-corp.com](mailto:rkaplan@accsys-corp.com).

B. New Report in February

Given the interest in the first report, "The Prototypical Knowledge Management Organization" we plan to release a second report in February. This one, entitled, "On Constructing a Knowledge Base," will focus in detail on significant issues relating to developing knowledge bases in the context of knowledge management. Although most knowledge bases that have been developed in the context of knowledge management are fairly informal constructions, more formalized approaches can be used to create repositories for knowledge. In this report we will define what we mean when we use the term knowledge base, suggest some initial content items for a knowledge base, describe some structural possibilities, and expose some of the types of representations that can be used. This report will be available in February.

C. The Prototypical Knowledge Management Organization - A Reference Report Available From ACCSYS Corporation

As part of my ongoing effort to create useful reference materials for those of us involved in knowledge management, I have prepared a report entitled, "The Prototypical Knowledge Management Organization," that is available for purchase. The report costs \$25 and can be downloaded from the ACCSYS Corporation web site at <http://www.accsys-corp.com>. A brief synopsis of the report follows.

Synopsis: The Prototypical Knowledge Management Organization. Dr. R. Kaplan. ACCSYS Corporation. May 2000.

This report focuses on the "design" of a prototypical knowledge management organization. The objective of this report is to design an organization that would support a complete knowledge management effort and describe its necessary personnel . The report presents an organizational design and provides 11 detailed job descriptions. The content of the report could be used as the basis for a company's own knowledge management effort. In addition, the report also describes a "starter" or "seed" organization that would serve as the beginnings of a knowledge management group within a larger organization.

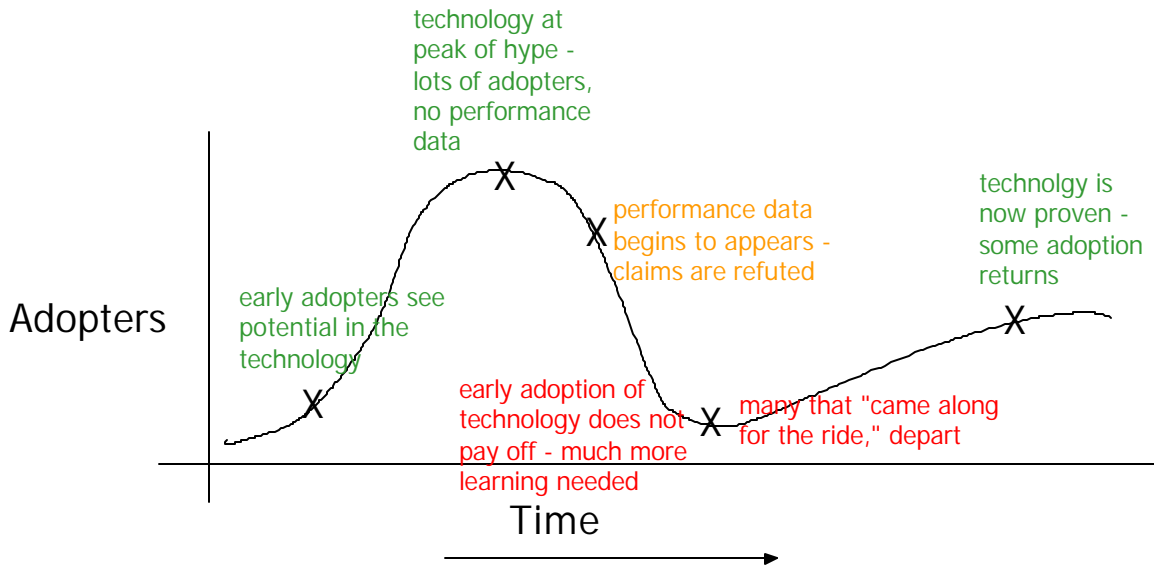
+++++

knowldgWORKS News Number 38 January 2001  
Taking Stock

A comment in a recent major business publication about knowledge management stated that investment in any company developing knowledge management products would be foolhardy at this point in time. What does a statement like this say about the state of knowledge management?

Before the end of the year I attended a meeting of a knowledge management group. This group has existed for at least two years, and its members were still debating what knowledge management means..

The Gartner Group, an information technology advisory service, describes the concept of a "technology hype curve." This curve represents the life of a new technology from the time it comes into existence until the time it is supplanted by a newer technology. Early in the appearance of a new technology, there are a few so-called "early adopters" of the technology. As time goes along the number of adopters grows at a rapid rate as the new technology becomes known to a wider audience. Associated with the dissemination of technology come claims of what the technology can do - usually claims offered by vendors providing products based on the technology. The claims may be unsubstantiated given the newness of the technology, but they are nonetheless attractive. As the truth of the claims are verified, the number of adopters will reach a peak, eventually to fall-off as it is realized that the technology does not meet all of the original claims. The fall-off continues until there still remain some believers who will essentially create the basis for the "real" value in the technology. This trough makes it appear as if the technology is dying off - no longer a hot technology. Eventually, if the technology had any promise, adopters will return, albeit at a slower pace, to take advantage of the true benefits of the technology.



**Figure 1 - Technology Adoption Hype Curve**

We can use the technology hype curve as one means to describe the current state of knowledge management.

At some point knowledge management was on the leading edge of the technology hype curve characterized by rapid growth of adopters trying to get the payoff from knowledge management. There was quite a bit of hype about knowledge management and how it could bring a company to the "next level." An important learning on the part of most practitioners of knowledge management was that it took quite a bit of effort to have a successful knowledge management project and that the changes needed to achieve positive results were primarily cultural. As projects were finished and payoffs were not seen, or as project sponsors moved on before a knowledge management effort could become engrained into a culture, the initial adoption of knowledge management as a key technology in business began to drop off.

From the looks of the technology hype curve, we are over the peak time of knowledge management adoption and now heading toward the trough. We can see some of the signs of this, for example, when a publication initially dedicated to knowledge management spreads its focus to customer relationship management. We can also see signs of this when consulting firms are no longer touting, i.e. putting advertising dollars into, knowledge management services as

a fundamental service. The practices are still there; they are just no longer a primary focus.

In 1999 I compiled a list of knowledge management publications. This list can be seen at [www.accsys-corp.com](http://www.accsys-corp.com). The list currently consists of about 100 entries. Interestingly enough, if I was to update it today, there are now more than 400 published or to be published works about knowledge management. So, in this regard, there is still great interest in understanding this discipline. But at the same time if you examine the list of entries you will see that knowledge management incorporates a wider variety of subject matter. Among the most recent publications is one called, "Expert Systems (6 Volume Set) The Technology of Knowledge Management for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." This work, not yet published, is available for \$1500. It is true that expert systems may be tangentially related to knowledge management, but it is not at all clear how expert systems and knowledge management relate to one another. I would conclude from this that there is still confusion about the exact nature of knowledge management.

It is strange for me to think of some of the chief executives I have worked with directly or indirectly and of how little they know about or think about the knowledge in their companies. If our economy is truly transitioning from an industrial/information economy to a knowledge economy, then mustn't corporations begin to embrace knowledge as their true product? In my assessment, many company executives think only about their product - a strategy that makes it extremely difficult for them to think beyond the current generation of products.

Where does that leave us? As practitioners and interested parties we have quite a lot of work to do. Now that we are past the hype we can begin to work on efforts of community and knowledge that bear fruit for our organizations and ourselves. Focus on the knowledge - where it is, what it is - leverage its value, and magnifying it throughout the community. If we are to see progress in 2001, then the progress should be measured by the true benefits we can derive from the knowledge we use and the knowledge we create.

+++++

The knowldgWORKS News is written in its entirety by Randy Kaplan and edited by Harriet Trenholm. Suggestions for the newsletter should be sent to [rkaplan@accsys-corp.com](mailto:rkaplan@accsys-corp.com). All suggestions will be considered and always appreciated.

If you are interested in learning more about knowledge work, subscribe to this newsletter by sending email to:

[knowldgWORKSNews-on@lists.webvalence.com](mailto:knowldgWORKSNews-on@lists.webvalence.com).

To unsubscribe send an e-mail to: [knowldgWORKSNews-off@lists.webvalence.com](mailto:knowldgWORKSNews-off@lists.webvalence.com).

You may type an x in the subject or body if your e-mail program requires.

Previous issues of the knowldgWORKS News are archived at <http://www.accsys-corp.com>.

+++++  
Published by Dr. Randy M. Kaplan, and ACCSYS Corporation. This newsletter is the property of ACCSYS Corporation. No part may be reproduced in any form or media without permission from ACCSYS Corporation. Copyright (c) 1999-2001 ACCSYS Corporation. All rights reserved.