

Table of Contents

1. KnowBits
 - a. We're Back
 - b. Changes to knowldgWORKS News
 - c. The competition to define knowledge management
 - d. KM World reviews knowldgWORKS News
2. Eating Our Own Dog Food

KnowBits

- a. We're back. All rested and ready for more knowledge work. For those of you that joined us during the break, have a look at our back issues at <http://www.accsys-corp.com>. It is amazing what a couple of weeks of walking on a beach somewhere will do for one's psyche. It should be a part of best practices for knowledge work. This week's column is about "Eating Our Own Dog Food." Please forgive the phrase but it is one that aptly describes the phenomena that as formulators of process (whether they be automated or not) we hardly ever try them out ourselves. Maybe it is a good idea to do that before unleashing some process to the masses. Just a thought.
- b. Over the next few issues we are going to be making some minor changes to the news. You may have noticed one already - a table of contents. We will also be making the news shorter and more focused. In some cases we may divide what would have been a single newsletter into more than one. Hopefully the changes will make the news more readable and useful to you. As always feedback from you is highly desirable.
- c. Out in another corner of cyberspace, a contest has begin. The corner is the Intranet-km discussion group and the contest is to define knowledge management as succinctly (my word) as possible. This is relevant to this week's topic because it is an example of a part of the knowledge-work community to collaboratively come up with a definition of knowledge management.
- d. knowldgWORKS News was reviewed by KM World. Go to the KM World web site at <http://www.kmworld.com> and see our 4* review. The KM World site is one of the best resources on the web for knowledge management news and resources. It is definitely worth a book mark !

Randy Kaplan, Publisher, knowldgWORKS News

Volume 1 Number 10
Topic: General (Process)
"Eating Our Own Dog Food"

Typical Scenario ("Best of All Worlds" (Maybe even a best practice))

1. Client identifies a need.
2. Requirements are gathered.
3. Proposal is written.
4. Proposal is returned to client. Client accepts.

5. System is designed and implemented.
6. Client gives feedback about the system.
7. System is tweaked.
8. Implementers never use the system.

I wonder about this sequence quite a bit as I look out on the space we call knowledge management. I do not debate that there are many examples of knowledge work discussion groups that are focal points of information and maybe even some knowledge. But my sense of all of this is that there is a great deal of fragmentation, and knowledge management exists as a series of discrete points in space as opposed to a connected whole.

As you are aware, my view of knowledge management is that it begins with the individual and radiates out from individual to groups and to organizations. The extent to which this radiation occurs is dependent on many factors including the willingness of the individual to practice knowledge work on a personal level, the willingness of an individual to share what they believe is valuable knowledge with the organization, the tendency of the organization to value the shared knowledge, and so on. There are, of course, many more factors in this integration process.

From that standpoint, a question that comes to mind is if I were going to practice knowledge work, what would that work look like? What projects could I identify that would provide value to me as a knowledge work professional and also have potential value to the knowledge work communities in which I participate? If I refer to my opening best practices, however, instead of identifying projects at this point, I should be identifying my need. Here is a statement of my need.

I want to demonstrate one or more knowledge work principles that would yield individual and group value to the knowledge work community.

Since I am, in this case, both the client and the one providing the service, I now need to gather requirements and create a proposal. When considering what knowledge work methods, processes, or tools could satisfy this need, I consider the following possibilities:

1. Develop a taxonomy of knowledge work and provide a framework in which to understand knowledge work.
2. Map the knowledge work knowledge space.
3. Develop a knowledge work value chain.
4. Develop a knowledge valuation model and apply it to the knowledge space.

As an individual goal, any one of these would fulfill the need, and I would also guess that any of these efforts might provide value to all or part of the knowledge work community.

As I indicated earlier, I perceive knowledge work as being highly fragmented, and I think the ability to visualize the big picture would be of great value. The project is defined as follows. First, define a knowledge work taxonomy--what are the major/minor categories of knowledge work and how do they relate to one another? In this phase of the project, my goal will be to come up with a preliminary hierarchy (strawman) of the elements of knowledge work, to define hierarchical elements and to relate them to one another. The deliverable will be a visual map of the taxonomy that will enable a view of the entire knowledge-work space. As a strawman, I would propose you, the readers will want to make

modifications to the taxonomy. As the community makes modifications the taxonomy will evolve.

The second part of this project is to map the knowledge-work space. My goal for this part of the project is to create a visual representation of the knowledge-work space using the knowledge work taxonomy. Because the value of the representation would be enhanced if it were linked to the parts of the knowledge-work space to which it refers, the deliverable for the second part of this project will be a live HTML-based visual map of the knowledge-work space.

Project Kickoff

Having defined the project, goals and deliverables, it is time to begin. From time to time I will give updates about this project in this newsletter. During the next couple of weeks I will complete the strawman of the taxonomy and will deliver it in an issue of the newsletter. I would expect this readership to have comments about the taxonomy that will be incorporated. The benefit to all of us in the knowledge work community is that we will be practicing what we preach. I will devote some web pages to this project on the ACCSYS Web Site and let you know when and where they are posted.

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

Next week's issue: Back To Basics

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

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