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Tools for Personal Knowledge Effectiveness - Part II  
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## Some Other Tools

As I have continued in my consideration of better ways to manage my personal knowledge, one of the problems I have is the management of notes. Notes are often the only record of certain kinds of knowledge, and are easily misplaced, misfiled, and otherwise lost. As part of the fabric of personal knowledge, notes are extremely important and should be treated as such. Therefore, a knowledge management solution needs to manage "notes" or the knowledge contained in notes.

For years I have taken paper notes. If you are anything like me, you have files and file boxes full of notes you have taken. Most of these notes are probably more in the class of information, but more current notes may have significantly more value and thus should be organized in the class of potential forms of knowledge.

When the Apple Newton Messagepad appeared on the scene I thought it would solve my notes "knowledge management" problem. In fact, to a large extent the Messagepad was a perfect solution to the notes problem. It could (imperfectly) translate handwriting into text. And it could search any text notes it had. As the evolution of the Newton Messagepad progressed, its handwriting recognition improved markedly. The last model that was produced (Messagepad 2100) could perform recognition at 95% accuracy. And like its ancestors, the store was not only infinitely searchable but also could be substantially grown with larger and larger memory cards. Notes could be faxed and note text could be transferred to a word processor. The

Newton was an extremely thoughtful device. Unfortunately, thoughtfulness alone is not enough to sustain a product and of course the Newton had a rapid demise leading the way to such abominations as the Palm Pilot and the various Windows CE devices. But I digress and editorialize.

Even though the accuracy of the Newton markedly improved, it was never a perfect solution for the purpose of note taking. In other words, paper, as a medium for note taking still offered significant advantages. But paper is a lousy media for organization. So the question still remains, how can the notes "knowledge management" problem be solved?

I have found that an important knowledge management tool is the personal organizer.

In some ways the personal organizers that people use are like religions. If you choose a particular organizer, then this is the "organizer religion" to which you adhere. So, you might be a Franklin Planner user, and someone else might use the Time Design system, and someone else yet another flavor. Since a planner is a recent addition to my arsenal, the one I selected is the Time Design system. This choice was made for no better reason than my wife has been using the system for about ten years now and I have always been impressed with its ability to keep her organized. What I learned about upon committing to the Time Design system is that it is a system in the true sense in that it is governed by a process of use centered on projects. Furthermore it includes what Time Design calls a "Data Bank" The data bank is that place in the system where notes can be filed and organized. Notes are also tied back to the projects that are being managed by the system.

As I began to use the system, I realized how powerful it was as a tool for knowledge/potential knowledge management. It certainly provided me with a means, in real time, to organize knowledge and potential knowledge as I collected them during my typical day. Although it does not have to be a planning system, some means of collecting and organizing all the little pieces of paper that are created during the day is a requirement of any set of knowledge management tools.

As you can see from my discussion I would consider the most important aspects of a personal knowledge management

tool set to be those tools required for collecting and organizing potential knowledge/knowledge as it is discovered. It is impossible to predict, for the most part, when a particular piece of potential knowledge/knowledge will be needed. One simple example of this is directions for traveling to a particular place. If you are anything like me, places you have traveled to on a frequent basis do not require you to have directions. You have this knowledge in your memory and can "execute" it when needed. For example, today I need to travel to New York. As I have done this many times, I don't need to get directions or instructions for getting to New York. On the other hand, if I have to meet a new colleague in a city I have not been to, then I will need directions. I may have to visit this colleague infrequently, so what do I do about directions? The little note that contains the directions need to be saved for a future possible use - or each time I need them, I could get the directions again. For me, saving the directions for future use is preferable to asking for directions each time I have to get there.

The second group of tools that are necessary for knowledge management are the tools used for retrieving knowledge, and these tools are just as important as the tools for capturing knowledge. Once I record and save my directions, for example, how do I get them back? Where do I put them so I can retrieve them? This set of personal knowledge management tools will be discussed in a future issue of knowldgWORKS news.

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