

Book Review

Knowledge Management in Theory and Practice (2nd ed.). Kimiz Dalkir. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 485 pp. \$55.00 (ISBN 978-0-262-01598-0)

This book is a very useful overview of the field of Knowledge Management (KM). It is well suited to be a textbook for a course on KM. The chapters start with a set of learning objectives and an introduction, and conclude with lists of key points and discussion points. The book concludes with a list of KM resources and a list of case studies. For an instructor, this is very useful because the number of case studies written in the area of KM is surprisingly small. Such studies can be difficult to come across, often being perceived by their authors as relating primarily to ICT (information and communication technology), and not being tagged with terms that relate well to KM.

The book is unfortunately ill served by Jay Liebowitz's foreword, entitled "Can Knowledge Management Survive?" Not only the title but the text as well is wishy-washy and uninformative. The author of the book is clearly of the mind that KM has evolved to be a bona fide discipline (p. 398), but the foreword does not match that conviction. Surprisingly, Liebowitz makes no use of the well-publicized bibliometric data (Ponzi & Koenig, 2002; Koenig, 2008) showing that after its explosive growth phase in the 1990s, use of the KM literature in the business world has grown steadily and continues to do so. Had those data been included, the foreword would have been far more appropriate and far more positive and persuasive.

There are a number of things that could be improved—there always are—but these should be considered primarily as a list of suggestions for the third edition, not as major criticisms. The section on KM history is a bit superficial and gets some things wrong. For example, the first KM conference was not in 1994, sponsored by the KM Network, but in 1993, sponsored by Ernst & Young (Koenig & Neveroski, 2008). The discussion of Expertise Locator systems, a key component of KM as it is practiced, is very brief and almost lost in the chapter on "Knowledge Sharing and Communities of Practice"; it is almost unlocatable from the table of contents. This topic is large enough to deserve its own chapter.

Similarly, although the chapter on KM tools is on the whole quite good, the section on content management tools is remarkably brief, less than one page. Considering that Bob Boiko's *Content Management Bible* is 996 pages, less than one page seems a bit too modest.

Unfortunately, the book continues the misuse of the term "tacit," started by Nonaka (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). This use bifurcates the KM domain into explicit and tacit, when we would be much better served if we thought of the continuum from explicit to implicit to tacit (Hawamdeh & Refai, 2008; Keen & Tan, 2007; Wilson, 2002).

The discussion of why KM is particularly important today (pp. 22, 23), gives four reasons but does not mention baby boomer retirement and organizational knowledge loss, a key KM driver in the current environment. The topic is not ignored; it does come up in other contexts, but it should have been emphasized here.

But enough of quibbles. The use of boxed text with numerous examples make it particularly useful as a textbook. Several areas are covered very well. Specifically the chapter on the KM cycle is very well done and informative, as is the chapter on KM models. The chapter on "The Role of Organizational Culture," an extremely important topic, is excellent, although it is surprising that Davenport and Prusak's (1998) *Working Knowledge* is not cited.

The bottom line is that this is a very useful and informative work that both brings new material to the attention of the KM veteran, but also serves very well as a textbook and as an introduction to the field.

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