



Chapter VIII

Enterprise Knowledge Management for Emergent Organizations: An Ontology-Driven Approach

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Abstract

Lately, some knowledge management (KM) solutions suggest strategies to identify and acquire the invaluable organizational knowledge. These statements seem especially true in the case of emergent organizational forms for which the beginning of the new century has brought about a paradigm change in which capital and work are no longer the only fundamental bases for successful management. Although this has caught the attention of both the industrialists and researchers, an important gap exists between these two domains, mainly due to the lack of understanding of the KM concept and the activities that it implies by organizational managers.

Several KM models have appeared in the research field, but none of them includes all the necessary aspects for an effective KM. This chapter presents a distributed knowledge management conceptual model that encompasses the key factors for KM in emergent organizations and proposes the means to implement them. Moreover, to address heterogeneity, documentation overload and lack of context, we propose onto-DOM, a question-answering ontology-based strategy within a distributed organizational memory (DOM).

Introduction

Nowadays, few would question the validity of the assertion that we currently live in a knowledge-based society. Organizational experts agree that knowledge is one of the most important resources that contribute to the competitive advantage of an organization but, at the same time, is a multifaceted concept with multilayered meanings. It has also been argued that only those organizations that can develop best practices for managing this complex concept of knowledge will be the ones to ride today's "competitive wave" (Sarker, Sarker, Nicholson, & Joshi, 2005).

These statements seem especially true in the case of emergent organizational forms for which the beginning of the new century has brought about a paradigm change in which capital and work are no longer the only fundamental bases for successful management. Globalization is another factor that has significant implications for organizational knowledge management. In this global scenario, the trend towards knowledge-intensive products makes critical an efficient knowledge management (KM) to bundle knowledge in the design, production, and delivery of goods and services.

Now, organizations strongly depend on their skill to identify and adequately use the knowledge they possess and, over the past two decades, KM has captured enterprises' attention as one of the most promising ways to reach success in this information era. In this context, companies are beginning to understand the importance of knowledge as an organizational asset that makes it possible to obtain a sustainable competitive advantage (Bolloju, Khalifa, & Turban, 2002). For this reason, KM is no longer just an idea in industry leaders' minds, it has become a requirement to survive in today's competitive environment (Desouza, 2003).

There are already a large number of KM activities implemented in organizations, which often lack a strategic perspective. KM seems to "absorb" all kinds of theoretical approaches as well as practical activities, measures, and technologies without very much deep consideration as to its strategic or business value. There are also a number of authors who pragmatically suggest a series of KM activities, efforts, or strategies without very much differentiation between these concepts. Most of

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