Chapter 22

Supporting Knowledge Creation: Combining Place, Community and Process

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The chapter identifies the three major components of knowledge sharing and creation within enterprises as a combination of place, community and process. The way these are combined will depend on the particular goal and enterprise structure. The chapter then claims that computer support systems must provide user driven methods to easily integrate these components to fit in with organizational culture and knowledge goal. It then describes a way to provide this kind of environment.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management is now becoming almost a requirement in most enterprises, although in many cases its meaning to the enterprise in a clearly expressed paradigm is not obvious (McAdam and McCreedy, 1999). To many, knowledge management is based on the paradigm of collecting information and making it easily accessible using Intranet technologies and document management software. Many writers (Riggins, 1998) argue that knowledge creation within enterprises must go beyond this simple paradigm. It must include ways to combine the tacit knowledge within the enterprise with explicit knowledge using a process that eventually leads to an identified goal. It must also facilitate such combination towards a goal. Knowledge management must thus be a combination of place,

community and process. The place provides the environment where tacit and explicit knowledge, which are combined within the organizational context. The community supports all people with the necessary tacit knowledge, whereas process ensures that their activities are coordinated and supported with necessary tools.

The chapter emphasizes business processes that are not predefined but require knowledge creation within the business process steps. The paper refers to such processes as knowledge intensive processes. The chapter proposes a way to create places that bring together explicit and tacit knowledge within steps of knowledge intensive processes and describes a system that includes functionality found increasingly necessary in knowledge creation environments. Such functionality calls for easy customization of work places to provide ways for teams to work together within enterprise contexts.

A PARADIGM FOR KNOWLEDGE SHARING

The paper sees knowledge intensive processes as going beyond workflows often found in enterprise processes and emphasizes the idea of place where all objects are brought together and various parts of the business process. This idea is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 illustrates two ways of modeling a supply chain. The traditional view is seen on the left with suppliers providing parts to producers and their partners and then produce goods going on to the client. This view requires the process as made up of a number of two-way relationships that make up the supply chain.
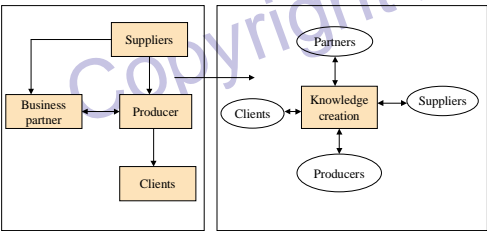
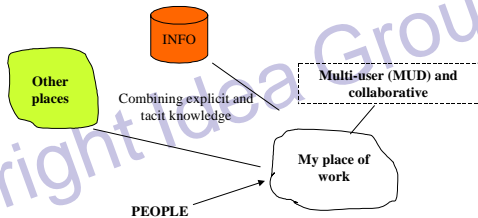*Figure 1: Towards knowledge sharing*

Figure 2: A place of work

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