

# Chapter 4

## Social Networks and Knowledge Management: An Explorative Study in Library Systems

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter gives a brief introduction to Knowledge Management (KM) and its components, emphasizing the role Social Networks (SNs) can play on KM. The authors will delineate the benefits of collaboration between the concept of Social Networking and the process of KM. With the advent of Web 2.0 technologies, it is a natural evolutionary outcome that SNs have driven the advancement of KM, and conversely KM has driven the advancement of SNs. In certain instances, SNs and KM have a symbiotic relationship whereby one cannot exist without the other. Moreover, an impact analysis will be performed to show that while SNs are an outcome of KM, both require each other in order to succeed where Social Software fits. This chapter is particularly intended to cater to the needs of librarians in a corporate environment and to show the impact and benefits of SNs and KM in the information world.*

### INTRODUCTION

Knowledge Management (KM) is the process of gathering, managing and sharing stakeholders' knowledge capital within an organization. It promotes a collaborative and integrated approach to knowledge creation, capture, organizational access

and use (and re-use) of an enterprise's knowledge assets. KM is not only about Knowledge Technology; rather it is a facilitator for achieving strategic business objectives (Gunjal, 2005). In addition, knowledge sharing in an organization enhances existing organizational business processes, introduces more efficient and effective business

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processes and removes redundant processes (Gunjal, 2005).

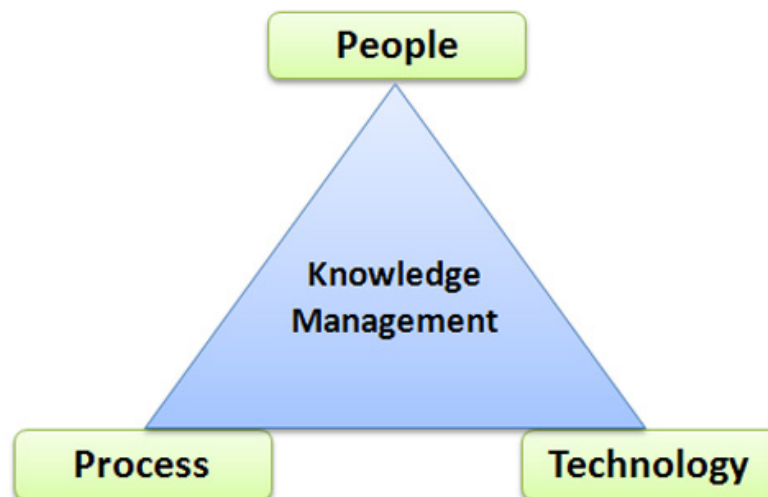
Based on actual experiences of the leading global KM case-studies, the components of KM can be categorized into three components - People, Processes and Technology (*see Figure 1*).

- **People:** The biggest challenge in KM is to ensure participation by employees in knowledge sharing, collaboration and reuse, to achieve business goals.
- **Processes:** These include standard processes for knowledge-contribution, content management (accepting content, maintaining quality, keeping content updated, deleting or archiving obsolete content, document/information retrieval, membership in communities of practice, implementation projects based on knowledge-reuse, methodology and standard formats to document best-practices and case studies, etc.
- **Technology:** KM technology solutions are facilitators for achieving strategic business objectives. KM provides functionality to support knowledge-sharing, collaboration, workflow, and document-management across an enterprise (Gunjal, 2005).

Social Networking plays an important role in enabling the KM process, which is mainly seen with the advent of Web 2.0 technology. Social Media are tools that provide users with knowledge on a local and global scale. The incorporation of Social Software in organizations not only benefits users, but also benefits the organizations themselves as well as other organizations it may collaborate with. When implemented efficiently, SNs have a great potential for building brands and capital, especially in a market considered to be sluggish in growth. Moreover, most organizations make use of Web X.0 technology in their KM approaches to enable their employees with knowledge sharing processes. This technology enhances KM usage and evaluation. Thus, the authors focus on this particular relation between SNs and KM to study the possible implications of SNs to KM.

The rest of this chapter is structured as follows: the next sections outline the basic features of SN services. To continue, authors will provide an overview of the most important integrated SNs, underlining the basic scope they serve. While discussing SN services, the authors will concentrate on virtual environments as an important part of SN, where Second Life is presented as a case study.

*Figure 1. Components of KM*



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