

PREFACE

The field of knowledge management is relatively new and evolving. What makes it attractive to a wide range of audience is its relevance to today's competitive business environment, as well as its association with disciplines such as information technology, communication, cognitive science, information science, engineering, business, and management. Knowledge management can be viewed as an interdisciplinary subject dealing with various aspects of knowledge processes such as knowledge creation, discovery, capture, sharing, organization, retention, and utilization. Some of these processes are technical in nature and require technical skills that need to come from technical disciplines like information technology, information science, and engineering. Others are considered human centric and require soft skills that need to come from disciplines like communication, cognitive science, business, and management.

The divergence between a practitioner's and an academic's approach to knowledge management is very important to the development and future of the profession. Very often practitioners perceive academics as mostly dealing with basic research and theoretical work that might not have direct applications to real world problems. The ivory tower concept, which is often used to describe academia, symbolizes detachment and it is an indication of someone losing touch with reality and not being able to relate theories to practice. On the other hand, academics might sometimes perceive practitioners' work as being shallow and lacking the theoretical and scientific foundation. Such perceptions could be problematic for emerging disciplines that need to fuse theory with practice. In an emerging field like knowledge management and in the absence of a defined professional qualification, anyone can claim to be an expert in the field. It is important to understand that the role of academia is not only in eliminating illiteracy but also providing graduates with the foundational knowledge and the necessary skills that can gain them entry to their chosen area of practice.

For knowledge management as a discipline to succeed, it needs to draw upon the support of many theoretical and methodological areas with pragmatic considerations of expertise required to conduct business. Keeping that in mind, the International Conference on Knowledge Management (ICKM) started in 2002 with the objective of bringing the academics and practitioners together to share knowledge and exchange ideas. The conference's aim is to encourage collaboration and address issues relevant to today's pressing problems, while delivering tangible benefits to both communities. The outcome, which can be measured through the presentations, publications, and feedback, is a testimony of the benefits of having both communities working in concert.

The collection of papers included in this book from the 2006 International Conference on Knowledge Management, held in Greenwich, London, represents some of the best work by researchers and practitioners in the field of knowledge management. Their subject matter covers a wide range of topics, including: social network analysis and technologies; innovation and creativity; KM tools and technologies; collaboration and knowledge sharing; issues in KM education and training; knowledge discovery (data mining, data warehousing, intelligent agents); knowledge organization (meta data, taxonomies, ontology); and social and psychological dimensions. This book will appeal to information and knowledge management professionals, as well as academicians, practitioners, and researchers who are looking for a deeper understanding of knowledge management research and its practical applications.

Suliman Hawamdeh, Ph.D
Professor and Program Coordinator
University of Oklahoma