



BOOK REVIEW

Strategic Knowledge Management Technology

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This book states its domain as the ‘planning, use, control and benefits of IT to support knowledge work in the organisation’ with the ‘aim of competitive advantage from knowledge management systems’. Very commendable; and that is just what it addresses. The convergence of the notions of knowledge management (KM) and strategy with IS/IT is an important issue and the book clearly focuses there.

Structurally, the text starts from discussion of three schools of KM: the Economic (e.g., Intellectual Capital – Stewart, 1987), Organizational (e.g., Managing Knowledge – Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) and Strategic (e.g., Competitive Strategy – Earl, 2001). It then moves to considering knowledge as a resource. Within this, as well as the conventional explicit/tacit knowledge distinction, the author argues for *core*, *advanced* and *innovative* as categories of knowledge. The text moves on to the (potential) IS/IT contribution. Gottschalk suggests that the adoption of such technology in KM has four stages: (I) the provision of end-user tools, followed by support to (II) who knows what, (III) what they know, and (IV) how they think (although why he plots these to an absolute 1990–2020, rather than relative, timescale is not clear). The four stages are then related to a series of 32 benchmarks concerning the IS/IT contribution, the variables of each of which are expanded.

A pivotal element of the argument is the mapping of potential contributions onto a matrix of the core/advanced/innovative categories against a classification of knowledge types used by Edwards & Mahling (1997): Administrative, Declarative, Procedural and Analytical. This is presented in two forms, separately addressing systems and software contributions. The discussion then follows through to strategy and implementation.

More could have been made of the notion of mapping the potential IS/IT contribution to the phases of a KM process (of which there are many variants). Gottschalk quotes only Alavi & Leidner’s (2001) process view: Creation, Storage/Retrieval, Transfer, Application. Personally, in this context, I have a preference for Densford’s (1996) view of the process as Identifying, Capturing, Leveraging and Using knowledge – but mainly because it enables me better to position decision support tools. The KM process steps can be mapped against general system types (such as Transaction Processing Systems, Routine Reporting Systems, Decision Support Systems (DSS), Office Automation Systems) or against some other taxonomy of systems or technologies, for example Databases, DSS, Groupware. This can be a fruitful way of drawing out IS/IT potential.

However, that criticism should be kept in perspective. This is a well-focused, usefully constructed book which could be employed across a range of undergraduate or postgraduate courses in IS, IT, Business/

Management Studies, or KM itself. The discussion includes a number of case studies, as well as a useful appendix of 55 mini-case studies. Whether the book is also suitable as 'self-help for practitioners', to quote

its introduction, will very much depend on the practitioner!

Overall, a very worthwhile addition to IS/IT and KM resources.

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