

Defining knowledge management: Toward an applied compendium

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to chronicle the depth and breadth of applied knowledge management definitions penned by researchers and practitioners alike. Once these definitions are part of the body of knowledge they become accessible to academics conducting research, to organizations considering knowledge management, and to other interested parties who wish to learn more about the subject. All of the definitions are freely available from open access sources. Collectively the definitions represent the thoughts of authors in at least 13 countries and from 23 domains. The collection of definitions highlight the truly multidisciplinary nature of knowledge management. The initial analysis revealed the four most common verbs were use, create, share, and manage. The most common nouns were knowledge, process, organization, and information.

Keywords: knowledge management, definitions, applied, KM

*Authors' Note: When we wrote our book *A Leader's Guide to Knowledge Management* (Girard & Girard, 2009) we deliberately did not include a definition for knowledge management. At the time, we believed the tools, techniques, and tactics for creating and exchanging organizational knowledge were much more important than the labels. Since the book's publication we have had the privilege of sharing our findings with hundreds of managers from dozens of organizations. Over the years we have learned that many managers want or perhaps even need a definition. We decided it is not for us to question their motive, but rather to help these managers in their quest. The genesis of this project was a web-based list of definitions; however, we believe a necessary evolution is the publication of a more formal list in a journal. We hope others will add to the compendium and take on value-added tasks of analyzing the collections.*

Introduction

Knowledge management, as a field of study, has now existed for more than 30 years. It has moved beyond an academic theory to an essential component of organizational life. In his seminal essay *Where did knowledge management come from?* Larry Prusak suggested a “good milestone to mark the beginning of the knowledge management timeline is a conference held in Boston in early 1993” ((Prusak, 2001, p. 1003). As Prusak correctly highlighted, “nothing comes from nothing,” so of course there had been prior interest in the idea; however, the Boston event was likely the first event dedicated to knowledge management. Almost certainly it was at this event that groups of practitioners and academics met to draft a definition for the new domain. Fast forward three decades when groups of academics and practitioners continue to meet in an attempt to scribe the ever-eluding definition.

The primary aim of the project was to demonstrate the depth, breadth, and international nature of knowledge management. This work is the first attempt to catalog, within the academic literature, knowledge management definitions, especially those with an applied orientation. We hope that other researchers will build on this foundation with a view to cataloging the many definitions in use today and in the future. To ensure that all interested parties would have access to the source material, only definitions that are widely available on the Internet were considered. Some might question the exclusion of some oft-cited definitions that are locked in the academic vaults we call journals; however, given the field is about sharing, it seemed rather oxymoronic to discuss definitions that many people cannot access.

There is no suggestion that every knowledge management definition penned in the past three decades has been considered. The major goal was to consider a wide variety of definitions in terms of originating discipline and country. We opted to present the definitions by domain, which we acknowledge is very subjective. In addition we have listed the country of origin, which again is rather subjective as it is usually based on the lead author or publisher's country of origin. In both cases the categorization is simply a way to highlight the depth and breadth of the definitions. We encourage other researchers to offer additional ways to organize the collection. That said, the categorization is important as many researchers and practitioners suggest knowledge management is a multidisciplinary field drawing from many subject areas.

The Definitions

To begin the journey, some of the classic and most cited definitions were considered:

Knowledge Management is therefore a conscious strategy of getting the right knowledge to the right people at the right time and helping people share and put information into action in ways that strive to improve organizational performance (O'Dell & Grayson, 1998). (USA, Management)

Davenport and Prusak (1998, p. 163): Knowledge Management draws from existing resources that your organization may already have in place-good information systems management, organizational change management, and human resources management practices (USA, Management)

The new millennium ushered in a wide variety of knowledge management definitions. Below are a selection of definitions, by discipline, that highlight the depth and breadth of thinking in the domain. More than 100 definitions were analyzed and included below. Following each definition is the citation and the country of origin. It is worth noting that many of the definitions are not as precise as some researchers may demand. Arguably, some of the definitions are more descriptive in nature and less precise than ideal. Nevertheless, this is the nature of the real world and we decided to focus on the task of collecting rather than the task of criticizing or reconstructing. Finally, we have included the reference for each of the definitions to facilitate further discovery.

Accounting

The process of connecting people to people and people to information to create a competitive advantage (Siegel & Shim, 2010). USA

Aerospace

Knowledge management, loosely defined, is a disciplined, holistic approach to using expertise effectively for competitive advantage. At Boeing, knowledge management is made up of a comprehensive system of processes, tools, methods and techniques that enable employees to capture and share information effectively (Arkell, 2007). USA

Archivists

Knowledge Management: The administration and oversight of an organization's intellectual capital by managing information and its use in order to maximize its value (Pearce-Moses, 2005, p. 225). USA

Artificial Intelligence

Knowledge management involves the identification and analysis of available and required knowledge assets and knowledge asset related processes, and the subsequent planning and control of actions to develop both the assets and the processes so as to fulfil organizational objectives (Macintosh, 1999). United Kingdom

Content Management

Knowledge management is the practice of ensuring insights, results and learning within an organization is captured and made available for staff to find, use, update, adopt and integrate into company processes. Knowledge management often aligned with training and learning, as well as innovation and research initiatives ("Knowledge Management, Elcom,"). Australia

The term knowledge management describes the generation, storage, control and provision of knowledge within a company ("Knowledge Management, Bitfarm Archiv,"). Germany

Defense

[KM is] an integrated systematic approach which, when applied to an organization, enables the optimal use of timely, accurate and relevant information; it also facilitates knowledge discovery and innovation, fosters the development of a learning organization and enhances understanding by integrating all sources of information, as well as individual and collective knowledge and experience (Blodgett, Crowell, & Lahaise, 2005). Canada

Knowledge management (KM) is the process of enabling knowledge flow to enhance shared understanding, learning, and decision making (*Knowledge Management Operations*, 2012). USA

Development

Knowledge management is explicit and systematic management of processes enabling vital individual and collective knowledge resources to be identified, created, stored, shared, and used for benefit. Its practical expression is the fusion of information management and organizational learning (Serrat, 2009). International

Knowledge Management is the systematic process and strategy for finding, capturing, organizing, distilling and presenting data, information and knowledge for a specific purpose and to serve a specific organization or community (D. King, 2005). USA.

Knowledge management (KM) is an umbrella term encompassing the many unique but related facets of creating, organizing, sharing, and using information and experiences ("What is Knowledge Management (KM)?,") USA

Knowledge management is the way organizations create, capture, enhance, and reuse knowledge to achieve organizational objectives ("Knowledge Management in ADB," 2004, p. 13). International

Knowledge management is a discipline that promotes an integrated approach to the creation, capture, organization, access and use of an organization's information assets. These assets include structured databases, textual information such as policy and procedure documents, and most importantly, the tacit knowledge and expertise resident in the heads of individual employees ("What is Knowledge management?," 2012). International

Knowledge Management (KM) is the systematic management of processes enabling vital individual and collective knowledge resources to be identified, created, stored, shared, and used for the benefit of the actors involved ("Glossary: Knowledge Management and Sharing," 2012). International

Education

[KM is] a set of practices that helps to improve the use and sharing of data and information in decision making (Petrides & Nodine, 2003). USA

Knowledge management is the planning, organizing, motivating, and controlling of people, processes and systems in the organization to ensure that its knowledge-related assets are improved and effectively employed (W. R. King, 2009, p. 6). USA

The process of knowledge management begins with the identification and classification of the types of the knowledge which currently exist in the organization followed by the understanding of where and how the knowledge exists (Little, 2010). USA

The systematic process of finding, selecting, organizing, distilling and presenting information in a way that improves an employee's comprehension in a specific area of interest ("Knowledge management - glossary, Knowledgepoint," 2007). Australia

Knowledge management: The process of capturing, organizing, and storing information and experiences of workers and groups within an organization and making it available to others. By collecting those artifacts in a central or distributed electronic environment (often in a database

called a knowledge base), KM aims to help a company gain competitive advantage ("knowledge management, An e-learning glossary," 2014). United Kingdom

Energy

[KM is the] systematic and integral approximation which permits to identify, manage and share the knowledge within an organization, and to interconnect people to create new collective knowledge useful to the objectives of the group (Sbaffoni, 2010). International

Knowledge Management is a term applied to any initiative involving people, processes and technology that leverages the knowledge within an organisation to achieve business results. KM practice requires vision and organisational communities aided by leadership ("E&P Knowledge Management - What's it all About?," 2001). France

Engineering

Knowledge Management is about the protection, development and exploitation of knowledge assets (Katsoulakos & Zevgolis, 2004). Cyprus

Knowledge management is a process whereby an enterprise methodically gathers, organizes, analyzes and shares knowledge relevant to its business environment and operating disciplines ("Knowledge Management, CA,"). Australia

Finance

The process of creating, institutionalizing, and distributing knowledge among people for the purpose of improving and organizing business processes and practices ("knowledge management - Investment & Finance Definition," 2010). USA

[KM is] 1. use of organization's knowledge for competitive advantage 2. the coordination and exploitation of an organization's knowledge resources, in order to create benefit and competitive advantage ("knowledge management," 2009). International

General

Knowledge management: efficient handling of information and resources within a commercial organization ("knowledge management. Oxford Dictionaries.,"). United Kingdom

Knowledge management (KM) is the process of capturing, developing, sharing, and effectively using organisational knowledge ("Knowledge management," 2014). International

Knowledge management: the way in which knowledge is organized and used within a company, or the study of how to effectively organize and use it ("knowledge management. Cambridge Dictionaries.,"). United Kingdom

Knowledge Management: the technologies involved in creating, disseminating, and utilizing knowledge data; also any enterprise involved in this ("knowledge management. Dictionary.com,"). USA

Knowledge management is the process used by organizations to get, show and put to work information within the organization ("knowledge-management, Your Dictionary, "). USA

Government

[KM is] the constant challenge to identify, rescue, create, access, develop, preserve, disseminate, promote, use and reuse knowledge in order to answer to our audiences delivering an excellent service (Kraft & Donoso, 2012). Chile

A trans-disciplinary approach to improving organisational outcomes and learning through maximising the use of knowledge. It involves the design, implementation and review of social and technological activities and processes to improve the creating, sharing and applying or using of knowledge. Knowledge management is concerned with innovation and sharing behaviours, managing complexity and ambiguity through knowledge networks and connections, exploring smart processes and deploying people-centric technologies ("Recordkeeping In Brief 26 - An introduction to knowledge management for records managers," 2009). Australia

Knowledge Management is: Discipline that seeks to improve the performance of individuals and organizations by maintaining and leveraging present and future value of knowledge assets, encompassing both human and automated activities (*Knowledge Management Glossary, NASA Wiki*, 2014). USA

Knowledge Management is: Process an organization uses to optimize its intellectual capital to achieve organizational objectives (*Knowledge Management Glossary, NASA Wiki*, 2014). USA

Knowledge Management (KM)— A systematic process of finding, selecting, organizing, distilling and presenting information which involves the design, review and implementation of both social and technological processes to improve the application of knowledge (*Knowledge Management: Glossary of Terms*, 2012, p. 5). India

Knowledge management (KM) is generally defined as a set of new organizational practices with wide relevance in the knowledge economy. Knowledge management deals with any intentional set of practices and processes designed to optimize the use of knowledge, in other words, to increase allocative efficiency in the area of knowledge production, distribution and use (Young, 2013, p. 3). International

Health

WHO uses the term [knowledge management] to describe how the secretariat uses technology to enable people to create, capture, store, retrieve, use and share knowledge ("Department of Knowledge Management and Sharing (KMS, "). International

Knowledge management is a set of principles, tools and practices that enable people to create knowledge, and to share, translate and apply what they know to create value and improve effectiveness ("WHO knowledge management glossary," 2006). International

Human Resources

Knowledge management is the process of efficiently organising, analysing, retrieving, using and – in some cases – monetising knowledge ("Knowledge Management definition, HRZone,"). United Kingdom

KM is a discipline that promotes an integrated approach to identify, manage, share and leverage an organization's knowledge and information assets through policies, organizational structures, procedures, applications and technologies. Knowledge needs to be shared; employees need to be ready, willing and able to share it and the organization needs a culture that promotes knowledge-sharing in a climate of trust and openness ("knowledge management, An e-learning glossary," 2014). USA

Information and Library Science

The management of information resources, services, systems and technologies using various technologies and tools through activities such as information acquisition/creation, information retrieval and storage, data mining, classification and cataloguing, and information use in different information handling institutions or centers such as libraries, archives and museums (Onyancha & Ocholla, 2009). South Africa

Knowledge Management (KM) refers to a multi-disciplined approach to achieving organizational objectives by making the best use of knowledge (Liu, 2007). USA

Knowledge management (KM) is like beauty - in the eye of the beholder. There is no universally accepted definition of the term, perhaps reflecting its essential character, its unique interpretation by the organisation that adopts the philosophy (Abell & Oxbrow, 2006, p. 33). United Kingdom

Information Management

A Knowledge Management System is one that provides the user with the explicit information required, in exactly the form required, at precisely the time the user needs it (McKenna, 1997). USA

KM is a newly emerging, interdisciplinary business model dealing with all aspects of knowledge within the context of the firm, including knowledge creation, codification, sharing, and how these activities promote learning and innovation (Hernandez, Liang, Prescott, & Kirch, 1999). USA

The ability of an organization to manage, store, value, and distribute knowledge (Liebowitz & Wilcox, 1997). USA

Information Technology

KM is the process through which organizations generate value from their intellectual and knowledge-based assets (Levinson, 2007). USA

[KM is] organizing an organization's information and knowledge holistically (Koenig, 2012). USA

KM is the overall task of managing the processes of knowledge creation, storage and sharing, as well as the related activities (Kucza, 2001). Finland

Knowledge management (KM) is a business process that formalizes the management and use of an enterprise's intellectual assets. KM promotes a collaborative and integrative approach to the creation, capture, organization, access and use of information assets, including the tacit, uncaptured knowledge of people ("knowledge management. Gartner IT Glossary.,"). USA

Knowledge Management aims to gather, analyze, store and share knowledge and information within an organization. The primary purpose of Knowledge Management is to improve efficiency by reducing the need to rediscover knowledge ("knowledge management. IT Process Wiki,"). Germany

Knowledge management is the name of a concept in which an enterprise consciously and comprehensively gathers, organizes, shares, and analyzes its knowledge in terms of resources, documents, and people skills ("Knowledge Management, TechTarget,"). USA

Knowledge Management (KM) is the process through which information is generated and shared with ITS staff when they respond to and resolve incidents TS ("knowledge management, ITS "). USA

Enterprise knowledge management (EKM) is a fairly broad term in IT that refers to any solutions or systems that deal with organizing data into structures that build knowledge within a business ("Enterprise Knowledge Management, Technopedia,"). Canada

An umbrella term for making more efficient use of the human knowledge that exists within an organization. Knowledge management is the 21st century equivalent of information management. It is essentially an industry trying to distinguish itself with specialized groupware and business intelligence (BI) products that offer a wide range of solutions ("knowledge management, PC Magazine Encyclopedia,"). USA

Knowledge management is the practice of identifying, creating, communicating, socializing, measuring and improving knowledge to support strategic objectives (Mar, 2013). USA

[Knowledge management is] a method to simplify and improve the process of creating, sharing, distributing, capturing, and understanding knowledge in a company (Gottschalk, 2005, p. 1). USA

The objective of IT Knowledge Management is to create, maintain and make available concise and actionable information to users and IT support groups in order to resolve service disruptions quickly and respond to customer queries satisfactorily (McGlynn, 2013). United Kingdom

Knowledge Management: The process responsible for sharing perspectives, ideas, experience and information, and for ensuring that these are available in the right place and at the right time. The knowledge management process enables informed decisions, and improves efficiency by reducing the need to rediscover knowledge ("knowledge management, Axelos Common Glossary," 2012). United Kingdom

Knowledge Management is the identification and analysis of available and required knowledge assets, knowledge asset related processes, or the subsequent planning and control of actions to develop both the assets and the processes ("Knowledge Management, IBM Glossary, "). USA

The professional discipline that involves working with, in or on any aspect of planning, delivering, operating or supporting for one or more Knowledge Items or any and all solutions put in place to deal with such items("Knowledge Management, IF4IT," 2009). International

The solution set that a person or organization puts in place to manage one or more Knowledge Items.("Knowledge Management, IF4IT," 2009). International

The process or processes put in place by a person or organization to assist in the management, coordination, control, delivery, or support of one or more Knowledge Items.("Knowledge Management, IF4IT," 2009). International

The Enterprise Capability that represents the general ability or functional capacity for a Resource or Organization to deal with or handle one or more Knowledge Items. ("Knowledge Management, IF4IT," 2009). International

Law

The purpose of knowledge management in law firms (or corporate/government law departments) — aligned with the firm's specific operational and strategic goals — is to: provide support for faster, more effective legal services to clients (internal and external), thereby increasing profit margins for the firm at the same time as attracting and retaining clients; promote legal information literacy to make the work lives of lawyers and other firm members more productive, thereby indirectly nurturing employee retention and knowledge sharing; establish best practices and standards for legal services, thereby reducing the risk of errors and malpractice (Tjaden, 2009, p. 6). Canada

Management

Knowledge management is a process that must take account of the mechanisms and structures needed to handle knowledge while, at the same time, paying regard to the processes and players influencing the knowledge one is seeking to manage(Christensen, 2003, p. 3). Denmark

Knowledge management is the name of a concept in which an enterprise consciously and comprehensively gathers, organizes, shares, and analyzes its knowledge in terms of resources, documents, and people skills (Rouse, 2013). USA

Strategies and processes designed to identify, capture, structure, value, leverage, and share an organization's intellectual assets to enhance its performance and competitiveness. It is based on two critical activities: (1) capture and documentation of individual explicit and tacit knowledge, and (2) its dissemination within the organization ("knowledge management. Business Dictionary Online.,"). USA

Knowledge management is the deliberate and systematic coordination of an organization ' s people, technology, processes, and organizational structure in order to add value through reuse and innovation. This is achieved through the promotion of creating, sharing, and applying

knowledge as well as through the feeding of valuable lessons learned and best practices into corporate memory in order to foster continued organizational learning (Dalkir, 2011, p. 4). USA

The philosophy of knowledge management is made up of both the collect function (data and information dimensions) and the connect function (knowledge and wisdom function) (April & Izadi, 2004, p. 14). South Africa

Knowledge management is the systematic underpinning, observatism, measurement and optimization of the company's knowledge economies (Demarest, 1997, p. 321). United Kingdom

Knowledge management is the *explicit* and *systematic* management of *vital knowledge* and its associated *processes* of creating, gathering, organizing, diffusion, use and exploitation (Skyrme, 2003). United Kingdom

Knowledge Management is the way you manage your organisation, when you understand the value of your knowledge (Milton, 2009). United Kingdom

Knowledge management is the systematic management of an organization's knowledge assets for the purpose of creating value and meeting tactical & strategic requirements; it consists of the initiatives, processes, strategies, and systems that sustain and enhance the storage, assessment, sharing, refinement, and creation of knowledge (Frost, 2010). Denmark

The process of systematically capturing, describing, organizing, and sharing knowledge – making it useful, usable, adaptable, and re-useable (Clobridge, 2013). USA

Knowledge Management (KM) is the set of professional practices which improves the capabilities of the organization's human resources and enhances their ability to share what they know (Burton, 1998). USA

KM is first and foremost a branch of management, which makes it a social science. Moreover, it is a branch of management that seeks to improve performance in business by enhancing an organization's capacity to learn, innovate, and solve problems (Firestone). USA

[KM is] the systematic process by which knowledge needed for an organization to succeed is created, captured, shared and leveraged (Rumizen, 2002, p. 6). USA

Knowledge Management is the systematic, explicit, and deliberate building, renewal, and application of knowledge to maximize an enterprise's knowledge-related effectiveness and returns from its knowledge and intellectual capital assets ((Wiig, 2004). USA

Knowledge management is achieving organizational goals through the strategy-driven motivation and facilitation of (knowledge-) workers to develop, enhance and use their capability to interpret data and information (by using available sources of information, experience, skills, culture, character, personality, feelings, etc.) through a process of giving meaning to these data and information (uit Beijerse, 1999). Germany

The purpose of knowledge management is to provide support for improved decision making and innovation throughout the organization. This is achieved through the effective management of human intuition and experience augmented by the provision of information, processes and technology together with training and mentoring programmes (Snowden, 2009). United Kingdom

Knowledge Management draws from existing resources that your organization may already have in place-good information systems management, organizational change management, and human resources management practices (Davenport & Prusak, 1998, p. 163). USA

Knowledge management involves efficiently connecting those who know with those who need to know, and converting personal knowledge into organisational knowledge (Cairncross, 2002). USA

Knowledge management is a conscious, hopefully consistent, strategy implemented to gather, store and retrieve knowledge and then help distribute the information and knowledge to those who need it in a timely manner (Stuhlman, 2012). USA

Knowledge management is about knowledge transfers, between explicit and tacit, between individual and collective (Wang, 2007). Sweden

Knowledge Management (KM) is a newly emerging, interdisciplinary business model that has knowledge within the framework of an organization as its focus (Awad & Ghaziri, 2007, p. 26). India

Knowledge Management: The creation and subsequent management of an environment which encourages knowledge to be created, shared, learnt, enhanced, organised and utilised for the benefit of the organisation and its customers. This definition assumes that knowledge cannot be managed in the traditional sense but that an organisation can optimise the value of its knowledge through an appropriate blend of leadership, values, culture, processes, tools and skills to support knowledge access and use. Managing this stock of Intellectual capital (q.v.) in an organisation as it flows and grows is the domain of knowledge management. The way that stocks of intellectual capital change and evolve over time is then dependent on knowledge management strategies in knowledge creation, access and use (Young, 2003). United Kingdom

Knowledge management seeks to increase organizational capability to use knowledge as a source of competitive advantage. The field has risen to prominence along with the "knowledge worker," who is someone who does work which involves knowledge which is socially complex, causally ambiguous, and tacit. Relevant theories include social capital theory and the resource-based view of the firm. Practitioner approaches to knowledge management emphasize ways of creating, diffusing, using, and evaluating knowledge (Sillince, 2007). USA

Knowledge Management (KM) refers to practices used by organizations to find, create, and distribute knowledge for reuse, awareness, and learning across the organization ("Knowledge Management, APO P-Glossary, "). International

Knowledge Management (KM): Planned and ongoing management of activities and processes for leveraging knowledge to enhance competitiveness through better use and creation of individual and collective knowledge resources ("European Guide to good Practice in Knowledge Management - Part 5: KM Terminology," 2004, p. 11). International

[Knowledge Management] is the development and distribution of knowledge across an organization ("What is Knowledge Management? How Private Social Networks Help," 2012). USA

Knowledge Management is therefore a conscious strategy of getting the right knowledge to the right people at the right time and helping people share and put information into action in ways that strive to improve organizational performance (O'Dell & Grayson, 1998). USA

[KM is] a systematic effort to enable information and knowledge to grow, flow, and create value (O'Dell & Hubert, 2011). USA

Knowledge management is a process that must take account of the mechanisms and structures needed to handle knowledge while, at the same time, paying regard to the processes and players influencing the knowledge one is seeking to manage(Christensen, 2003, p. 3). Denmark

The facilitation and support of processes for creating, sustaining, sharing, and renewing of organizational knowledge in order to generate economic wealth, create value, or improve performance (Allee, 2003, p. 264). USA

Knowledge management is an integrated, systematic process for identifying, collecting, storing, retrieving, and transforming Information and Knowledge assets into Knowledge that is readily accessible in order to improve the performance of the organization (Prior, 2010). Australia

Systematic approaches to help information and knowledge emerge and flow to the right people, at the right time, in the right context, in the right amount and at the right cost so they can act more efficiently and effectively (Smith, 2009). USA

Knowledge management is the leveraging of collective wisdom to increase responsiveness and innovation ("The Language of Knowledge," 2005). USA

Knowledge management (KM) may refer to the ways organizations gather, manage, and use the knowledge or business intelligence that they acquire. The term also specifies an approach to improving organizational outcomes and organizational learning by introducing a range of specific processes and practices for identifying and capturing knowledge, know-how, expertise and other intellectual capital, and for making such knowledge assets available for transfer and reuse across the organization ("Knowledge Management, Tenrox, "). Canada

Science and Technology

Knowledge management is the conversion of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge and sharing it within the organization (Uriarte, 2008, p. 13). Japan

Knowledge management is the process through which organizations generate value from their intellectual and knowledge-based assets (Uriarte, 2008, p. 13). Japan

Social

Social knowledge management can be defined as applying social media in the knowledge management context to identify, share, document, transfer, develop, use or evaluate knowledge ("Social Knowledge Management, Wikipedia," 2014). International

Statistics

Knowledge management involves activities related to the capture, use and sharing of knowledge by the organisation. It involves the management both of external linkages and of knowledge flows within the enterprise, including methods and procedures for seeking external knowledge and for establishing closer relationships with other enterprises (suppliers, competitors), customers or research institutions. In addition to practices for gaining new knowledge, knowledge management involves methods for sharing and using knowledge, including establishing value systems for sharing knowledge and practices for codifying routines ("knowledge management. OECD Glosary of Statistical Terms," 2005). International Organization

Systems Thinking

Knowledge Management consists of all the activities required to develop, maintain, and evolve the environment described above, and support its interaction with people (Bellinger, 2009). USA

Analysis

Having collected over 100 definitions, the second task was to analyze the words used to craft the definitions. A word parsing tool was used to create a list of words contained in the collection. The resultant list was modified using the following rules:

- The word combination “knowledge management” was eliminated from all definitions to ensure the emphasis of the individual words knowledge and management were not exaggerated.
- Root word combinations were grouped, for example, *create*, *created* and *creation* were grouped as *create*.
- All prepositions and pronouns were removed
- Only words appearing at least four times were included in the list

Table 1 – List of words used to define knowledge management

knowledge	112	people	18	intellectual	10	enterprise	8
organization	69	practice	18	learning	10	making	8
process	50	improve	15	right	10	order	8
information	44	systematic	15	activities	9	support	8
use	40	capture	14	involves	9	term	8
share	36	value	14	technology	9	advantage	7
create	33	resources	12	approach	8	be	7
manage	30	organizing	11	available	8	capital	7
assets	19	business	10	data	8	competitive	7

explicit	7
innovation	7
organization's	7
time	7
access	6
any	6
both	6
collective	6
company	6
develop	6
discipline	6
effectively	6
enhance	6
human	6

individual	6
need	6
objectives	6
performance	6
purpose	6
social	6
systems	6
tacit	6
can	5
definition	5
firm	5
identify	5
more	5
related	5

required	5
reuse	5
set	5
specific	5
such	5
tools	5
way	5
achieve	4
across	4
all	4
enable	4
environment	4
experience	4
expertise	4

how	4
including	4
integrated	4
know	4
other	4
planning	4
promotes	4
skills	4
storage	4
store	4
understanding	4
well	4

If we consider only the words that appear at least 30 times then we might create the following definitions:

Knowledge Management is the process of creating, sharing, using and managing the knowledge and information of an organization.

Knowledge Management is the management process of creating, sharing and using organizational information and knowledge.

Many will consider the above definitions as terse, while others will argue they are recursive, and still others will suggest they are too general. Nevertheless, the initial analysis of open source knowledge management definitions suggested that the verbs of use, create, share, and manage appeared most frequently. Similarly the most common nouns were knowledge, process, organization, and information.

Limitations

The major limitation of this project is the methodology for collecting the definitions. To ensure that all interested parties would have access to the source material, only definitions that were widely available on the Internet were considered. The collection should be considered a convenience sample as there was no attempt to include every definition penned. All of the definitions considered were in the English language.

Recommendation for Future Research

Our analysis of the collection is trivial. There is much more that could be done to expand and study the collection, including:

1. Conduct an intracategory analysis, especially for the categories of management and information technology.
2. Conduct an intercategory analysis, for example comparing the management domain with the information technology.
3. Refine or perhaps subdivide the categories, especially for the categories of management and information technology.
4. Conduct a country or region analysis, for example comparing Asian and North American definitions.
5. Compare this collection to non-English definitions.
6. Expand the compendium and analysis to include definitions not available through open access sources.

Conclusion

From a humble beginning about three decades ago, knowledge management has developed from a premature concept into a mainstream organizational necessity. Over the course of time the exact nature of the term has evolved. In the past decade the responsibility for establishing a precise applied meaning of the domain has passed from academics to practitioners. The latter have massaged the early academic definitions to meet the wants and needs of their particular constituents. This project is an early attempt to record the applied definitions that have progressed to ensure they are available to academics and practitioners alike.

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JoAnn Girard is the co-founder and managing partner of Sagology (www.sagology.com), a firm that focuses on connecting people with people to collaborate and share knowledge. She has worked on a variety of knowledge intensive research projects, which considered issues such as information anxiety, enterprise dementia, and organizational memories. Prior to forming Sagology, JoAnn was co-founder of two successful technology companies. Yacht-club.net developed and hosted web presences for yachting companies in the USA, England, Scotland, Spain, Gibraltar, and Greece. Quid Pro Quo Software developed educational and edutainment software, including their flagship game Trivia Mania. Before entering the high-tech arena JoAnn worked in the travel industry and as a school librarian. The experience she gained in these information intensive positions proved especially valuable as she considers the knowledge challenges confronting executives today.