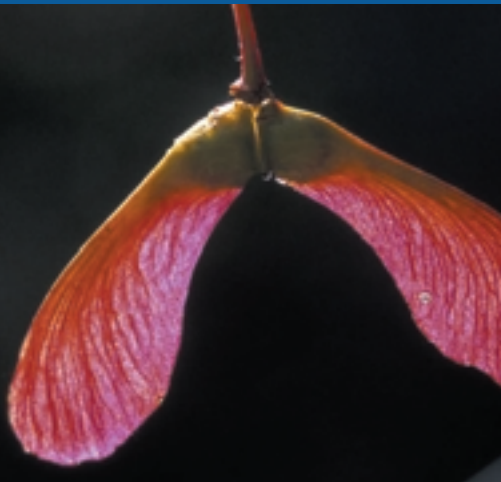




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## The knowledge world

The purpose of the Global Knowledge Review is to keep you updated on the changes taking place at the leading edge of the 'knowledge world'.

Not just in San Francisco, Boston, Sydney or London but globally – also in Bangalore, Singapore, Rio de Janeiro, Cape Town, Dubai, Moscow and more.

Each issue of the Global Knowledge Review will bring you 'highly personal' articles from diverse contributors around the world. People who are looking to share with you their thoughts, ideas and insights and in doing so provide a global perspective from different cultures, in business, the public sector, academia and all areas of human endeavour.

The aim? Not just to share knowledge but to help support and inspire you; to confirm or challenge your views; to open you to new perspectives; and new ways of seeing the world. And ultimately to spurn you to action.

The editors of GKR would like to thank the contributors for their work. If you have any comment on any of the articles in this issue or would like to suggest topics, please email [usatcomment@globalknowledgereview.com](mailto:usatcomment@globalknowledgereview.com).

## Welcome to the first issue of Global Knowledge Review

You may have noticed over the last decade that people are increasingly taking responsibility for their own performance and learning. You are probably one of them.

You no longer wait for instructions from your manager as to what to do next or what course to attend. You simply get on and do what needs to be done. You take the initiative to seek out the knowledge you need and to develop your personal capabilities.

What motivates you is the ability to be yourself, to speak in your own voice and to learn and develop in your own way and at your own pace.

You are a "knowledge worker" and see yourself as a "business of one". To you "managing knowledge means managing yourself." You have taken full responsibility for your working life.

You continually strive to understand the world about you and to modify your work practices and behaviors to better meet your personal objectives and those of your organization. No one really tells you what to do anymore and certainly not how to do it. You do not take "no" for an answer. You are self-motivated.

Thanks to the internet, e-mail, instant messaging and mobile technologies such as laptops, wi-fi, cell phones, text messaging and inexpensive travel you are no longer tied by time and space. You can work globally, anywhere, anytime and increasingly you do.

You are no longer limited in your access to other people and ideas. Social network platforms, weblogs,

wikis and collaboration tools help you to connect, communicate and collaborate with like-minded and not so like-minded people around the globe.

Change is fast, rampant and often unexpected. Organizational and personal competition is intense.

This has led to your recognition of the need to rapidly learn and adapt – to understand more deeply than to know more – to be more creative and innovative. And to recognize the critical importance of 'knowledge and learning disciplines' such as

- learning
- personal mastery
- social networking
- creativity and innovation
- effective use of communication technologies
- collaboration and knowledge sharing

It is in this context that the Global Knowledge Review has been conceived. It is for people like you, that the GKR is designed – individual knowledge workers who have taken responsibility for their working lives

The purpose of the Global Knowledge Review is to keep you updated on the changes taking place at the leading edge of the 'knowledge world'.

Producing the GKR is going to be tremendous fun and a great learning opportunity for all those involved in its production.

**I hope you enjoy it too!**  
David Gurteen



## How do you establish a proper learning environment?



### By Jo Singel

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Jo heads up the Knowledge Management function within Corporate Human Resources. She has extensive background in Leadership and Management Development, Organizational Learning and Change Management. She works in partnership with lines of business and technology to provide best-in-class knowledge management practices to achieve business efficiencies of cost, time and resources.

## Every day miracles learning and the human condition

In the early days of my interest in helping organizations build cultures supporting collaboration and good teamwork, I spent considerable time working on my personal development. What I learned in various seminars took time to fully surface in my corporate work. However, once new thinking takes hold, it's difficult to ignore.

An instructor shared sage advice. He said no matter what change (the kind of change that involves learning something new) we want to implement, we would be encountering three driving forces of the human condition: the need to be right, to be in control and to look good. When the trainer mouthed these words, I looked around the room and thought – hmmm, I wonder if these people “get it”? I felt as if a gong had gone off in my head! As I recall, no one looked particularly moved – a slight curl of the lips – no earth shattering reaction. That was my first clue. Maybe this wasn't going to be easy.

I began by categorizing everyone I knew. My husband was “look good”; friends were “be right”. I am “control”. Now what? So what if we succumb to these behaviors, what does it really mean in terms of “change” and “learning”? How can this knowledge make a difference in my dealings with people, and my helping teams thrive and learn?

In working with this concept over the years, I've discovered several important uses. To provide context, in my Knowledge Management work, I conduct After Action Reviews in which people share what worked well and didn't work well, what they learned, and what they will do differently as a result. I ask them to make these lessons learned visible to others, either in a public database or website. I ask them to raise their hand and challenge what another may have said that didn't reflect their interpretation of the reality of the situation. In training sessions, I ask them to put aside what they already know to learn something new, to trust that I know what it is that I'm talking about and to listen to what others have to share. I ask them to be open to changing their own behaviors, habits or ways of doing their work. When you think about it, that's a lot to ask.

The idea of “being right, in control and looking good”

are a part of who we are and how we operate as human beings. So how does a “being right” individual react to a request to publicly participate in an After Action Review which asks us to talk about why a particular project or event didn't turn out the way we intended? Or, if I'm particularly intent on “looking good”, how will I react to someone putting me into a situation where I'm going to have to learn something new? What if I don't get it right the first time? What if I mess up? What will people think? Or, if, as a manager, I hold dear to the mantra of “always be in control”? Just how comfortable will I be allowing my thinking to be displayed in a public website or database?

Bearing in mind this aspect of the human condition, I decided to learn all I could about how I operate and what blocks my own progress and, in turn, what may block others. My quest became focused on finding out everything I could on how adults “learn”. Although I am still learning there are several things I keep top of mind when working with any manager, leader, team or implementing any initiative.

I learned that “environment” is the make or break factor. People must feel psychologically safe – that they are exposed to non-punitive, free of judgment and non-finger pointing behavior. The space is physically set up so that everyone can see one another – no talking behind heads. Sitting in a circle is best for communication. The sessions allow time for self-reflection. People who need to “do something” have tasks to complete. Everything is organized, yet open to change – maintaining a high degree of flexibility is ideal. Ground rules are established with clear and agreed upon goals. Follow-up sessions are set-up to test what was learned. The learning is supported – articles, resources, and websites are supplied. Follow-up individual coaching is provided. Experienced facilitation allows for everyone to be heard, ensuring the “undiscussables” are aired publicly and honestly.

There are many ways to establish a learning environment. When I focus on those things that respect and honor who we are as human beings, amazing results occur. These become the everyday miracles that make my work worthwhile. **K**



KM seems to be dying even before it has matured.

## The future of KM – driving strategic renewal of organizations

I have followed KM from the very beginning in the early 1990s and the current state of makes me very sad. It seems that it is so obvious why KM is so important for the sustainability of organizations – so why is it so slow to mature and why is there so much disappointment around it while it is still in its infancy?

If we want to save KM, we need first to acknowledge these hard facts and only then move quickly from problem to solution before it is too late.

### • What are the barriers to KM?

First the fact that it deals with intangibles... This is the tragic irony of our field. By definition it is very difficult. Very few people are happy to deal with intangibles. The real revolution of letting go of the old management models of the tangible world that are no longer working in a world of intangibles has hardly begun.

Here is a little personal story about it.

I had recently a conversation with one of my associates who is going abroad to continue her studies. I asked her for feedback and insights how we could manage our consulting firm better. She said – bring in a manager. Now this is very interesting. I always try to practice what I preach, so it is natural for me to let my team self manage, let the tasks be divided in a self organized way, as we have all learnt from complexity theories. It seems that my own employees look for more command and control! It left me with food for thought...

Another barrier to KM growth is the waste of resources on IT support for KM. Organizations that looked for quick fixes got enthusiastic with KM and the fantasy that they could now store all the knowledge of their employees. They went looking for an easy solution and bought a KM software, installed it and were eagerly waiting to see all the knowledge of employees captured. And then were disappointed to discover the system stayed pretty empty.

This is of course no surprise for those of us that understand that knowledge workers will participate in KM only if it focuses on their own needs, if it supports their work, if it

frees their time for creative work.

Another barrier to KM is the focus on reuse of existing knowledge rather than creating value through innovation or new knowledge. The focus on high productivity of existing knowledge has an element of greed in it.

In the mid 1990s during the first generation of KM, companies first discovered the meaning of knowledge as the creator of wealth. In addition they discovered that when people leave, their knowledge goes with them. The issue was how to turn individual knowledge into organizational knowledge, how to turn tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge.

This trend neglected the fact that people must want to share their knowledge and if they don't – no fancy software will convince them to, and the KM system will stay empty.

So what should we do to make KM the real leading activity of every manager in every organization? It seems we have to start with some unlearning. We need to let go of old management concepts that were fine in Taylor's time, (Frederick Taylor wrote *The Principles of Scientific Management* in 1911) when most of the workers were doing manual work. We have to let go of command and control. We have to understand that knowledge work is actually all voluntary work. You can make people come to work on time and leave on time, but they have to choose to contribute the best of their brain work. They have to choose to please a client, to help a colleague, to share their lessons learnt from their mistakes with their team. This is the challenge of KM. It has first to create awareness that we need to look for new forms of organizations. New work environments where knowledge workers are happy to create and share knowledge. We have to realize that by hiring people we have not hired their knowledge, but we have the opportunity to make them volunteer their knowledge, as they develop their own knowledge.

If we do not want KM to die we have to lead quickly a management revolution in the knowledge age for the sustainability of KM and indeed the sustainability of organizations themselves. **K**



### Dr. Edna Pasher

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# Canada

A former E&Y CKO surveys front-line employees in knowledge-intensive roles and reports back what they told him.



## Dave Pollard

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Dave Pollard was the Canadian CKO and Global Director of Knowledge Innovation at Ernst & Young from 1994-2003, following twenty years as an Entrepreneurial Services leader. His new business, Meeting of Minds, offers Knowledge Management, Business Innovation and Entrepreneurship advisory services.

## Notes:

1 David J. Snowden, Managing Serendipity, [http://www.waterweb.org/wis/wis6/papers/Snowden\\_03\\_1.pdf](http://www.waterweb.org/wis/wis6/papers/Snowden_03_1.pdf), 2003

2 Dave Pollard, Personal Productivity Improvement, <http://blogs.salon.com/0002007/images/PPIBusCase.doc>, 2003

## What Do Knowledge Workers Want?

A couple of years ago I began to sense that there was something wrong with the way business was implementing Knowledge Management. At the time Ernst & Young was recognized as a global leader in the discipline, and its Center for Business Knowledge (CBK) had won many awards for what it had done. The CBK had pulled together 600 full-time knowledge workers, from researchers and intranet managers to database purchasers and community-of-practice coordinators, and together they oversaw all knowledge content, architecture and infrastructure of the 100,000-strong global firm.

But the budget and headcount of the CBK was being slashed year after year, even as firm revenues soared. There was therefore no money to do anything new, and an apparent growing dissatisfaction with some of the things that the CBK was attempting to do. In fact there was dissatisfaction with the whole concept of 'managing knowledge' and 'achieving a knowledge culture'. So although the firm was already doing a lot of regular surveys of knowledge use and 'customer satisfaction', it wasn't getting useful information from non-users. So I conducted a small, intensive survey of 118 front-line practitioners, followed by a conversation with each respondent, to try to discover what was wrong. When I had assembled the results, most of the architects of the CBK said I was misinterpreting, and putting too negative a spin on, the survey findings, and the proposals I made to address these results were shelved. But in subsequent discussions both with E&Y's front-line practitioners and (since I left E&Y last December) with knowledge leaders and workers in other organizations across a variety of industries, I kept hearing the same messages, loud and clear. Here is what they told me:

1. "I can't find anything". When I asked people what they meant by that, they said:

- "I can't even find stuff on my own hard drive. I don't know how or where to look or how to organize material so I can find it later when I need it. Courses and manuals don't teach that – they're too general

and technical."

- "Most knowledge tools are way too complex for occasional users like me."
- "Most of what I want is stuff from outside the company. It may not even exist, but I don't know because I couldn't reliably find it if it did."

2. "Except for very prescriptive content like policies, regulations, standard procedures and directories (the stuff that senior people either already know or delegate someone junior to look up for them), most of the content in our databases is of low value. I get what I need more effectively from conversations with customers, colleagues and trusted outsiders" When I asked why they thought that was the case, they said:

- "Documents in databases lack context. Better just to get the name of the author, or the expert, and talk to them directly instead of trying to read through people's work products."
- "It's not written or organized in a format for effective re-use."
- "People tend to over-estimate the value and quality of what they've written and contributed. Preparing your own work products from scratch is often better and faster than trying to re-work someone else's."

In other words, as Dave Snowden of the Cynefin Centre has argued<sup>1</sup>, 'best practices' are (unless the task is highly prescriptive or repetitive) usually in the eye of the beholder, and largely unintelligible to everyone else.

3. "Knowledge gathering is not the best use of my time. I get my assistant or my subordinates to do most of my information searching and gathering. I know the tools let me do it myself, and by delegating this work sometimes important knowledge is lost in translation, and there may be errors, inefficiencies and omissions, but I don't have the time, patience or skill to do it myself."

4. "Other than talking to people directly, my best internal knowledge sources are private stocks – small databases I share with a few other specialists which I wouldn't trust others to see, because they'd misconstrue

...▶ page 5



or misuse them."

*I can't find anything.*

*I get what I need more effectively from conversations.*

*Knowledge gathering isn't the best use of my time.*

*I prefer private knowledge stocks that I don't trust others enough to share.*

This is enough to get CKOs pulling their hair out. The only good news for knowledge managers is that, except for the problem of not being able to find anything, front line people seem not to expect much from KM (at least not anymore), and are reasonably happy with the knowledge 'current state'. That explains why few people complained about the CBK, but everyone wanted to cut its budget.

What, if anything, can be done about these four pervasive knowledge problems? Let's look first at the instinctive reaction of KM professionals to these four problems:

1. Mandatory training for all in the use of knowledge tools and databases. Add more search functionality to the tools.
2. Bribe or coerce front-line people to contribute more and better content.
3. Don't let people delegate, and teach them so that 'do-it-yourself' becomes easier.
4. Don't allow private stocks.

These are, of course, naïve solutions. Things happen the way they do for a reason, training only works if people are self-motivated to learn, coercion and prohibitions merely drive prohibited behaviours 'underground', and bribes only work for a short time and often produce lip-service rather than real compliance.

There are better answers, but they're heretical, aren't easy, aren't cheap, and, hardest of all, they require management and KM leaders to understand and accommodate front-line knowledge behaviours instead of trying to change them. Here are a few of those answers:

1. Change the job of knowledge professionals – assign your researchers, analysts, librarians, CoP coordinators and database managers and knowledge

trainers to go out and meet one-on-one with front-line practitioners, listen to and observe their 'knowledge work' and provide **individualized coaching** to show them, in the context of their particular job, how to more effectively organize the information on their hard drive, how to do research, how to find stuff. Teach 'em how to fish instead of catching fish for them. I'm so convinced of the value of this (and so is everyone else I propose this to, except, alas, the people who would have to pay for it), that I've written a paper<sup>2</sup> on the subject.

2. Except for the prescriptive stuff (policies, regulations, directories and SOPs), quit collecting stuff centrally, quit browbeating people to contribute knowledge, and redesign the knowledge architecture to **accommodate the private stocks**, the knowledge that people really value. Respect the concerns about the confidentiality of this knowledge – they're more likely to reflect concerns that misuse could hurt the company than concerns that shared knowledge is lost power or lost authority. You'll probably find a lot more of these private stocks than you thought existed, and your respect will surface them and allow you, as a knowledge professional, to do what you do best: helping to better organize and communicate knowledge that's valuable and available.
3. **Help people connect to experts** inside and outside the organization. Focus on capturing the organization's (and the world's) know-who instead of the know-how and know-what. That's a difficult task that will require ingenuity, because you're going to need to find ways to 'automatically' identify those experts and obtain (and keep current) their contact information. Trying to coerce people to post and keep their personal competency and contact information current is, in most companies, an impossible task. Find a way to 'harvest' that information instead.
4. **Accommodate reintermediation**. People delegate when it makes sense, and rather than trying to stop

it, acknowledge that knowledge gathering is a skill, that it has a value, and that it has a cost. Identify and help train the delegates, instead of (or at least before) trying to train the delegators to do it themselves.

Peter Drucker identified improving front-line knowledge worker effectiveness as the number one management challenge for this century. KM professionals have the opportunity and responsibility to lead the charge in this important task, and to do so in a way that understands and supports the company's existing knowledge culture, instead of trying to transform that culture into something it's not.

To answer the question in the title, What Do Knowledge Workers Want? They want individualized help to find and use information more quickly, powerfully, and effectively, help to find experts, and an appreciation for and accommodation of the knowledge processes that work for them now. Not so hard to understand. **K**



# Netherlands

Why do we get ghost cities instead of living organisms?



## Lilia Efimova

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## Notes

1. <http://www.rudi.net/bookshelf/classics/city/alexander/alexander1.shtml>

## Trees versus webs

In his paper "A city is not a tree" Christopher Alexander discusses patterns of cities that evolve in a natural way and those designed by people. First can be described as semilattice structures, while second usually represented best by tree structures. Christopher Alexander argues:

*When we think in terms of trees we are trading the humanity and richness of the living city for a conceptual simplicity which benefits only designers, planners, administrators and developers. [...]*

For the human mind, the tree is the easiest vehicle for complex thoughts. But the city is not, cannot and must not be a tree. The city is a receptacle for life. If the receptacle severs the overlap of the strands of life within it, because it is a tree, it will be like a bowl full of razor blades on edge, ready to cut up whatever is entrusted to it. In such a receptacle life will be cut to pieces. If we make cities which are trees, they will cut our life within to pieces.

These ideas from architecture resonate well with my thinking about ways people work with information.

### • Classifying information

Most of the systems I work with use tree structures to classify information, forcing me to find "unique folder" to put an idea or a document into it. However for me ideas never belong to "unique folders"; they have multiple relations with other ideas, forming a web structure (I talk about web structures as I don't have a good mental model of semilattice).

It is probably a matter of personal preferences or thinking style, but I always have problems with tree structures. For example, I have registered with a system to share photos online only to discover that I can hardly use it because it forces me to organise my photographs into albums. And I always want to access my photos in multiple ways: by location, by date, by theme, by people involved...

Another example is about mind-mapping tools.

Those that I tried force me to organise my ideas into a tree structure. Of course, visualisation is nice to get an overview of ideas (especially if you use it for others), but forced tree structure makes these maps useless for (my) thinking. I tried to use mind-mapping software to structure my ideas for writing papers, but it didn't work. It's fine on paper for drawing a web of relations and thinking about steps of explaining them, but drawing a tree on my screen doesn't make any sense: I would rather start outlining directly in Word...

### • Ideas live as webs

Tree-relations may be easier to grasp than more complex structures. They are also easier to unfold into linear structure (think how you were taught to write an essay: introduction – body – conclusion; body consists of X parts, each of them is subdivided...). Trees are easy to draw. Easy to program.

But for me ideas live as webs. Tree structure of a paper is good to help others understand creative mess of ideas in my head, but it pains every time I try to squeeze a web of ideas into a tree-structure when writing.

I wonder how many people have similar difficulties with tree structures. If there are many this can explain why many knowledge management systems resemble ghost cities more than living organisms: they often limit classifications to tree-structures without allowing webs of interconnections. **K**

Some stark choices face HR professionals across the globe

## A wake up call for HR

The HR function is evolving mostly because complexity is creeping in. HR professionals are struggling to make sense of this new age, and though they welcome it, find themselves awfully short of the skills they need to cope. The old assumptions hold true and yet, the contexts seem to have changed. The skills that they built up over the last few decades as Personnel became HR seem to have lost their potency.

The people who are their *raison d'être* – the employees – are getting more demanding. They demand more in less time. They demand better service and without the frills. More importantly, they demand better work and find that there is nothing their HR department can do to influence it.

- **The top line and the bottom line**

The people who deploy HR departments want them to contain costs, track metrics on employee productivity and morale. They also want HR departments to draw conclusions as to what they need to change/ do better so that they can control not just the bottom-line but also increase the top-line. They want better people recruited at less 'total cost of hiring', they want their best people to stay put and the bottom ones to leave with a minimum of fuss.

And increasingly, the organization's customers want to know about HR policies and how they impact quality of work, because it is becoming increasingly difficult to choose vendors.

What does HR in these increasingly complex and demanding scenarios do? What path must it tread, what roles must it play, what skills must it gather to not only satisfy all these demands but excel them?

In my view, HR needs to structure itself differently, to move from the current functional silos of recruitment, compensation and performance management, training, employee and industrial relations to a new paradigm of focusing on projects which are purposes. HR people no longer can make choices about whether they will be

'generalists' or 'specialists' in organizations. They have to be BOTH.

HR's learning curve has to take into account not just today but tomorrow while keeping an eye on what yesterday has left behind. It has to focus on processes, customers, employees and discontinuous change.

The question they constantly need to ask themselves is "what if all the knowledge and skills I hold becomes redundant tomorrow? What then?" and build a mindset in their organization where everybody asks this question about themselves.

HR has already been an early adopter of technology but now it has to show how to leverage that technology to do more than just save time and money.

- **Specialized and superspecialized**

HR careers will soon become specialized and superspecialized. HR vendors will need to offer services like "How to make an FMCG company which is focused on female products a learning organization" These super specialists will offer services that are both niche and yet best practice, what Percy Barvenik of ABB called "Think global, act local". Specialized HR people will work within organizations and yet will be part-free agents advising competitors too, as companies lock into co-opetition against competing nations.

HR departments will lose many of the administrative work, as employees will take certain procedures into their own hands and the corporate intranet rids them of standardized processes. It's going to be an age of change and lots of HR professionals will find the chasm a difficult one to cross. **K**



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Gautam is a HR professional based out of India with interests in the areas of Organization Development, Knowledge Management, Organizational Learning and Corporate Strategy. Gautam has had an overriding interest in Knowledge Management for the last 5 years and has been profoundly impacted by the "knowledge creation" model of Nonaka and by John Seely Brown's concept of "Communities of Practice".



It is time to develop a system that engenders the spirit of learning and flow.



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## Further reading

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>

[http://dir.yahoo.com/Computers\\_and\\_Internet/Data\\_Formats/XML\\_eXtensible\\_Markup\\_Language/RSS/News\\_Aggregators/](http://dir.yahoo.com/Computers_and_Internet/Data_Formats/XML_eXtensible_Markup_Language/RSS/News_Aggregators/)

<http://www.skype.com/>  
<http://new.ryze.com>  
<http://www.orkut.com/>

## Can we make the flow go?

KM, if viewed in the conventional sense, seems to have little ground to stand on today. We need to start looking at it with new eyes. This is an issue many KM professionals are grappling with, and the resultant "bad word" image it has. I personally don't like the term myself. The very fact that it is called Knowledge Management irks me – how can something like "knowledge" be "managed" – knowledge is flow and management somehow implies control – dichotomous to say the least.

My vision of KM is of a system that helps users experience, welcome, and embed flow, either within themselves or their organizations. That flow can be evolutionary or disruptive – inward or outward.

Working on a consultancy assignment for a company in India on its KM system, it took several meetings with employees before we really began to understand their needs. We first examined the current KM system the organization had. It had spent vast amounts of money on it, yet it seemed so archaic, a white elephant. Effectively it was an archiving system or library of sorts; archives that suck up all the bandwidth, making the system painfully slow to navigate. We observed too that the system allowed users to form clubs around affinities, but very few had. Low motivation perhaps, and the complete absence of features that encourage reciprocity and flow.

We then asked the question – what is the dream system you desire? What the answers revealed was a desire not for a Content Management but a system that allows employees to dialogue and converse effortlessly and seamlessly, brainstorm on ideas and projects, in a manner that is as close to face-to-face as possible.

One employee told us: "I know X is not here in my office (in Mumbai) but in another city. I want to be able to talk to her, as if she's in the same room as me. I want to be able to feel all the nuances in talking with her – it's got to be touchy-feely and not a cold email or a phone call where I know the time ticking away means my bottom line suffers".

Underlying this articulation is the desire for flow. Easy,

hassle-free, inexpensive flow. Flow that allows a dialogue as if the other person is with you in the same room.

Flow incorporating :

- Presence indicators
- Real-time communications system with a sense of presence
- A collaboration space

One of the key requirements is presence indicators. Much like in current Instant Messaging systems – telling us who's available, who's logged in and therefore present in the office, who I can ping for a query, and ensuring that a response is received. In the case of this organization, current practice was to send an email, wait for a response, followed by more emails as reminders, and finally in sheer frustration, pick up the phone and make an expensive call.

Tied into this requirement for presence indicators is the need for 'real-time' 'live' communication and a sense of presence. This is where voice applications, small cam shows and virtual conferencing facilities would be useful. Skype with its conferencing facilities has really shown it is possible to do this with terrific quality. Combine this with some of the 'soft profiles' social networking services like Ryze or Orkut encourage, that make a person far more approachable cutting through hierarchies.

And finally the need for collaboration spaces – where one can play around with Wikis and Weblogs without having to rely on a whole host of asynchronous emails – or without bothering to archive them as these tools can do that automatically for you. And more food for thought can be pinged its way in through RSS in Newsreaders.

Picture this scenario: you have a project on and are racking your brains about how to approach it – you check your presence indicator – see who's available – ping them with a request for conferencing – hitch up the webcam, enable voice – and bingo – in minutes you have a virtual team. Record the conversation, take notes on the wiki, synthesize it in a team blog which has comments enabled, feed in current thinking on the topic from your newsreader, and you have real flow. K





Do you have certain assumptions which means you try to impose certain solutions? If so, perhaps it's time for a rethink

## Discovering the importance of leadership and coaching

Looking back at projects that I have been involved in, I have observed a number of unspoken assumptions that underpin all of our activities. If our KM, content management or intranet projects are to have any real impact upon the way organisations operate, I think we need to expose and challenge these unspoken assumptions.

### • What I have observed:

We believe that if we are passionate and active enough, we can drive through change, even if the organisation as a whole appears to be disinterested.

We look to senior management to create the vision for our work. If they don't understand the issues involved, we try to educate them in the hope that they will then generate a meaningful vision for us.

We hope that if we deliver enough value, or enough solutions, that the internal politics and "people issues" will just resolve themselves.

We believe that if we put in place policies, procedures and standard that these will automatically have a real and lasting effect on the way that people work.

We believe if the "big problems" can't be tackled head on, then it's meaningful to just start with some "quick wins" and then leave the broader issues to be resolved by some unspecified future project.

We believe that our professional skills will have a greater impact upon the outcomes of the project than any "supporting" activities, such as creating a vision, communicating to staff, or building bridges to other teams.

We very quickly become enthusiastic about "solutions" when we don't yet really understand the problems or needs within the organisation.

Perhaps you haven't fallen into these traps, although I know I have. What I've begun to realise is that we've been avoiding the real focus in our projects, which must be on leadership and coaching.

### • Leadership

Leadership is about recognising that the fundamental issues to tackle are the "people issues". That no amount of good work will have a lasting impact if staff and management don't take it on board.

Real leadership is more than just making a decision and attempting to enforce it. Instead, it's about identifying a need for change, building a sense of urgency, and then creating a vision for addressing it.


A good vision is grounded in business priorities and business issues. It's about "improving customer satisfaction", not about "creating a single repository of accurate information". Considerable thought must be put into creating an effective and meaningful vision, but this will underpin all following activities.

With a vision in hand, we can then start the hard slog of leadership, building support and consensus, and overcoming roadblocks that will prevent the vision from being realised.

### • Coaching and mentoring

Even when we have a good vision, we often rely more on the stick rather than the carrot. We overlook the fact that few (if any) staff actually report to us. Instead, we must set aside time to help staff to develop new ways of working that will support the strategic goals of the project. This is where our coaching and mentoring skills come in.

This involves reshaping our role from one of standards setter or gatekeeper to becoming a source of assistance that can help the business achieve its goals. It's about building up internal capabilities and skills, rather than enforcing standards.

While much could be written about coaching and mentoring, in the interests of space I will simply direct you to *The Tao of Coaching* by Max Landsberg as a good starting point for your own investigations. Beyond this small book, there are many other resources that you can call upon to develop your skills in these areas. 



### James Robertson

MANAGING DIRECTOR  
STEP TWO DESIGNS  
SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

James is the managing director of Step Two Designs, a knowledge management consultancy located in Australia. He's a passionate advocate for the role of intranets, and the importance of a holistic approach to knowledge management.

### Notes:

There are plenty of sources of training in leadership, and this is certainly where I am focusing my personal learning at present. As a starting point, I would highly recommend *Leading Change* by John P. Kotter and *The Tools of Leadership* by Max Landsberg.



# South Africa

Employee engagement is key if KM initiatives are to work



## Kurt April

SENIOR LECTURER & SAINSBURY FELLOW AT THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Kurt is a Sainsbury Fellow and Academic Director (CLPV) at the Graduate School of Business of the University of Cape Town (SA). He also is a regular Guest Professor at: Oxford University, Erasmus University, and the University of Amsterdam. With training in Engineering and Business Studies, he has worked around the globe in multiple roles, including as a Managing Partner of two consulting firms, and has published a number of books and articles on both KM and Leadership.

## How ready is your organization for Knowledge Management?

Organizations find themselves adrift in a sea of data with few navigational aids to make sense of the sea's currents and flows. KM is often cited as the panacea to guide organizations safely to harbour. What we've found is that theories abound in the KM; however, there are few pragmatic KM tools to provide managers with the needed navigational guidance.

An important metric needed by an organization is to gauge the "readiness" of its employees to engage with the introduction of any new KM initiatives. In other words, it is crucial to understand the degree to which employees have shared mindsets, particularly about

complementary social resource combination (CSRCs). In recent research in the South African Personal Financial Services Industry, we used a KM tool, based against Adizes (1999) life-cycle theory, called the KAP Organisational Readiness Questionnaire (Gorelick, Milton & April, 2004). Five categories were established to capture the common elements of social processes; these were:

### (1) Organisational alignment:

Includes the degree to which employees saw alignment of firm strategies, its alignment of HR processes with business direction, and the level of people involvement in

... page 11

## Organisational Alignment

FIRM		Role Clarity (RC)	Employee Involvement in Decision-Making (EI)	Employee Involvement in Setting Direction (EI)	HR-Business Strategy Alignment (HR-BA)	General Understanding of Firm Strategy (UFS)		TOTAL (1=High, 3=Medium, 5=Low) BEST CATEGORY IN EACH HRM
Buffalo (B)	High	1	4	3	3	3	Low	14 (RC)
Cheetah (C)	High	3	5	4	3	3	Low	18 (RC/EI/UFS)
Leopard (L)	High	4	2	3	1	2	Low	12 (HR-BA)
Giraffe (G)	High	1	2	3	5	1	Low	12 (RC/UFS)
Best in class out of the four firms		B/G	G/L	B/L/G	L	G		
Worst in class out of the four firms		L	C	C	G	B/C		

# South Africa



setting group direction..

## (2) Bureaucratic Stability.

Employees' views on: the degree of shared leadership; their freedom to take risks; amount of participation in formal and ad hoc groups that set direction; the level of both inter- and intra-departmental teaming; and the degree of support for virtual work style.

## (3) Staff Rewards and Diversity.

Employees were asked to assess the degree to which the firm used: "hard" incentives like bonuses and recognition

payouts; "soft" incentives like corporate gyms, wellness programs, child care support, spiritual enhancement; team-based rewards; and individual rewards. Also included was how employees felt that the firm represented the gender and geographic population of their surrounding communities

## (4) Learning Styles.

Employees were asked to assess the degree to which the firm used: mentoring and coaching for everyone; formal training for everyone; and informal learning. Employees were also asked to assess the level of benchmarking and overall IT technical literacy in their firms.

... page 12



## Dr Marylou Shockley

RESEARCHER AND INDEPENDENT  
CONSULTANT  
OXFORD, ENGLAND

Marylou Shockley is a researcher, and independent consultant, who recently graduated with a Doctorate of Philosophy degree from Oxford University. Her thesis explored the use of the Internet by teachers in California, Singapore and the UK. She has significant experience in the telecommunications industry, working for both ATT and Pacific Bell. She also was a Sloan Fellow at Stanford University. Her research interests include knowledge management, corporate governance, and diversity.

## Bureaucratic Stability

FIRM		Transparency and Engagement of Clients	Shared Leadership (SL)	Intra-departmental Team Work (IDTW)	Inter-departmental Team Work	Employee Participation in Decision-Making (EPDM)	Risk-Taking & Experimentation (RT)	Levels of Virtual Work		TOTAL (1=High, 3=Medium, 5=Low) BEST CATEGORY IN EACH FIRM
Buffalo (B)	High	2	3	2	1	4	3	2	Low	17 (IDTW)
Cheetah (C)	High	2	4	4	1	4	5	3	Low	23 (IDTW)
Leopard (L)	High	4	1	4	1	2	2	4	Low	18 (SL/IDTW)
Giraffe (G)	High	4	4	3	1	1	1	4	Low	18 (IDTW/EPDM/RT)
Best in class out of the four firms		B/C	L	B	All	G	G	B		
Worst in class out of the four firms		L/G	C/G	C/L	-	B/C	C	L/G		



# South Africa

Evidence suggests KM projects don't work first time round

## How ready is your organization for Knowledge Management? continued

### (5) Trust, Information, and Commitment.

Employees were asked to assess: the degree to which they felt senior management was committed to people development; the levels of trust within their teams, and with senior leaders. They were also asked to assess the degree to which information was shared in the firm.

The questionnaire was administered to 178 non-management employees in each of the four firms included in the research. Animal names were given to each of the four firms. The firms, among them, held 91% share of the retail personal financial services market share. These firms can be described as follows:

**(1) Buffalo:** A global, recently demutualised firm headquartered in London. The firm has 150 year history, the largest market share, and a highly integrated distribution channel network to cover all economic segments of the SA retail market

**(2) Cheetah:** A recently demutualised firm with its headquarters in SA. The firm has a 100 year history of providing services to primarily the "White" SA middle-market. Since Apartheid ended 10 years ago, Cheetah has engaged in significant transformation initiatives to shift the firm toward of a culture of "inclusion".

**(3) Giraffe:** A niche player, a wholly owned subsidiary of a major bank in SA. It targets the high-end market, using only brokers with no in-house agents to sell its products.

**(4) Leopard:** A forty year old firm started by an entrepreneur, and known for its innovative products to serve the high-end market. Unlike Giraffe, Leopard has a bank partner and also uses both agents and brokers to distribute its products.

We learned that all firms had "reasonably" good alignment in all five categories, and, therefore, have good readiness assessments for adopting KM initiatives. Cheetah and

Giraffe faced harder challenges for implementing new knowledge management initiatives, while Buffalo and Leopard were assessed being more ready to embrace the implementation challenges of KM change. In the case of Cheetah, the depth of change is more endemic, requiring much more thoughtful prioritisation of KM-based changes in light of its cultural transformation required to meet new market realities in SA. For Leopard, as a small, "spunky" subsidiary that prides itself in having little or no HR staff expertise, the issues are one of seeing the value of knowledge management and including KM in its strategic architecture. We have also found that these readiness

assessments are at best "indicators" of potential implementation issues a firm might face. For example, Buffalo had a relatively good readiness assessment, as well as a strong strategic intent of harnessing the value of KM-based processes. However, other evidence showed that it has taken at least three attempts for the firm to constructively embed KM initiatives.

Some of the aggregated results are shown in the figures. K

### Learning Style

FIRM		Benchmarking (B)	Informal Learning (IL)	Overall Technical Literacy (TL)	Formal Training Provided for Everyone (FT)	Coaching Provided for Everyone (C)	Mentoring Provided for Everyone (M)		TOTAL (1=High, 3=Medium, 5=Low) BEST CATEGORY IN EACH FIRM
Buffalo (B)	High	2	2	1	1	2	1	Low	9 (TL/FT/M)
Cheetah (C)	High	4	2	2	2	4	1	Low	15 (M)
Leopard (L)	High	1	1	2	1	1	1	Low	7 (B/IL/FT/C/M)
Giraffe (G)	High	5	1	2	4	3	4	Low	19 (IL)
Best in class out of the four firms		L	G/L	B	L/B	L	B/C/L		
Worst in class out of the four firms		G	B/C	C/L/G	G	C	G		



## Why the active voice speaks more truth

### Personally Speaking

I was talking to Jo Singel recently and she told me that she had been sending my knowledge-letter to several people in her organization and that she had some feedback for me. It seems that several had commented that my newsletter was strange in that I used the word "I" a lot.

I found this mildly amusing as I quite deliberately use the word "I". I strive hard to avoid the passive voice. Both my website and my newsletter are personal endeavours and so it only makes sense to write in the first person but it took me a while to learn that.

Going back to when I started my knowledge-letter, it was feedback from a colleague who said, "Hey David, I love your newsletter but it is so much more interesting and authentic when you are 'yourself' and speak in 'your own voice' about something you feel passionate about." that helped convince me to write in the first person.

It was also at that time that I came across the book "The ClueTrain Manifesto" and the thoughts of David Weinberger on voice:

"We have been trained throughout our business careers to suppress our individual voice and to sound like a 'professional', that is, to sound like everyone else. This professional voice is distinctive. And weird. Taken out of context, it is as mannered as the ritualistic dialogue of the 17th-century French court."

- The passive voice of the scientist

But for me it goes deeper. I was educated as a scientist. I was told to write in the passive voice. That's what scientists do. I never really questioned it. Well at least not until I came across an article in New Scientist by Rupert Sheldrake, the biologist and author. Here is how he starts his article:

"The test tube was carefully smelt. I was astonished to read this sentence on my 11-year-old son's science notebook. At primary school his science reports had been lively and vivid. But when he moved to secondary school they become stilted and passive. This was no accident. His teachers told

him to write this way."

Writing in the passive voice is meant to make science seem more objective, impersonal and professional. Maybe it does but at great cost. It is less truthful. And this style has spilt over into our business world.

- Freedom to be more creative

To my mind one of the best examples of the distortion caused by the passive voice are the biographies of conference speakers. You know the bio was not written by an independent person but by the speaker himself or herself. So when it starts "Dr John Smith is an internationally acclaimed educator, speaker and trainer ... he is a world renowned thought leader, author and practitioner, second to none." You know you are reading "rubbish". Here is someone with a huge ego telling you just how great he or she is.

Writing like this, is not truthful. It is misleading. It is alienating. If you write your bio in the first person then it becomes harder to write such rubbish. You are making it personal.

The active voice is more truthful. It gives us ownership of our work. It makes it harder to distort things. It involves us with the subject more. It liberates us to be ourselves. Webloggers and storytellers have already discovered this. By writing personally they free themselves to be more creative.

So I am happy to use the word "I" and I am encouraging the contributors to the Global Knowledge Review to write personally. I hope you are inspired to as well. **K**

*Editor's Note: By the way you may notice that the notes on the writers are in the third person but hopefully not passive. From now on we will be asking contributors to personalise their story. I started with my own.*



### David Gurteen

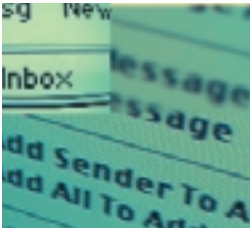
KNOWLEDGE NETWORKER

GURTEEN KNOWLEDGE

FLEET, ENGLAND

I have over 30 years' experience in high technology industries. I am a 'knowledge networker' - helping people to connect with each other and to new ideas. At the same time I publish an educational website and a monthly knowledge letter. My other major strand of work is running educational events and I am frequently asked to speak at events and act as a facilitator.

## Greeting people virtually new books how's your handshake?



### NEWS

Problems with e-mail

New books

Getting the hang of handshakes

### Email slows business

Email has revolutionised the way we communicate, but independent research commissioned by palmOne shows that poor use of email – a bad 'attitude' – is actually slowing down business in Europe and damaging relationships in the workplace along the way. 61 per cent of survey respondents say that business decisions are delayed due to lack of email response.

The number of person-to-person emails sent on an average day is expected to exceed 36 billion worldwide by 2005 (IDC) and new mobile devices are a key driver behind this growth.

By 2008 40 per cent of people with a business mobile phone, some 21 million Europeans, are predicted to be using mobile email, compared to 1 per cent last year (source: Analysys Consulting).

The research highlights the most common problems with email presented by 750 workers interviewed in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK revealing the 7 deadly sins of email today:

1. Ignoring
2. Denying
3. Presuming
4. Waffling
5. Blitzing
6. Sloppiness
7. Tactlessness.



### Forthcoming books

Titles that may be worth a look are two from Idea Group Inc ([www.idea-group.com](http://www.idea-group.com))

*Innovations of Knowledge Management* by Bonnie Montano, Georgetown University, US. The book is priced at \$58.46 (soft back US price). ISBN 1-59140-229-8. Publication Date July 2004.

The publisher says: "Innovations of Knowledge Management highlights the broad range of topics that fall under the term knowledge management, thus emphasizing the large role knowledge management plays in organizations. As a compilation of some of the most recent work in the field, the included chapters truly present innovations in how organizations can and should manage their knowledge."

*E-collaborations and virtual organizations* by Michelle W.L. Fong Victoria University, Australia. The book is priced

at \$58.46 (soft back US price). ISBN 1-591401-231-X.

The publisher says: "E-collaboration promotes interaction between people over the Internet, and is vital in virtual organization arrangements where people co-exist or work together, independent of time and location. E-collaborations and Virtual Organizations covers a broad range of topics, from underlying technological structures to fundamental mechanisms that are relevant to e-Collaboration and virtual organizations. The chapters in this book present some of the current work in the field and represent a resource upon which knowledge, lessons, and views can be drawn for consideration and applications in the virtual world."



### Personal development

New UK research reveals that employers regard most handshakes as 'wet fishes'. And it's predominantly women who could do with a firmer hand. Jenny Cainer from specialist marketing recruitment agency Marketing Professionals UK said: "We experience hundreds of handshakes a week with potential candidates and most of the time it is like shaking hands with a damp lettuce leaf. It sets a bad impression right away with potential employers.

"Dynamic, thrusting personalities don't have weak, floppy handshakes and if you want a top job you need a top handshake."

200 handshakes – male and female were monitored. 21% of male handshakes were wet fish – 56% were just right – 23% were vice-like.

46% of female handshakes were wet fish – 48% were just right – 6% were vice-like.

"Perhaps females are more reluctant to show dominance at the interview stage and feel the need to employ feminine guile. However, employers aren't impressed with it and would much rather prefer a firmer but not vice like hand," added Cainer.



## How do you get people quickly communicating with each other?

### Getting to know you-ice breakers

E-learning has become an umbrella term for any training that involves computers. For me the most challenging category is asynchronous (different time, different place) facilitated or instructor led e-learning which provides learning opportunities and HUMAN support through web-based technology. [Note the emphasis on HUMAN support].

I am always looking for ice-breakers to start courses or training programs that will accelerate students communicating with each other rather than having one way interchanges between individual student's and me. I always set up an INTRODUCTIONS/PROFILES discussion thread and ask students to provide a profile with their name and general information. Then I ask provocative questions e.g., something specific about the person that others would not know (e.g., I taught bowling to blind people as a teenager) and what is their favorite vacation (either where they have been or would like to go). I ask them to attach a picture—serious, funny, showing a hobby or symbolic. The pictures usually generate comments and responses.

In a recent Management Skills course during the 5th week of 12 I created a slide show of all the introductory pictures with captions. I also set up a discussion thread "PICTURE SLIDE SHOW COMMENTS". Much to my surprise this led to a lively conceptual interchange between students with some very insightful comments. A few examples:

One student commented on her sense that pictures provide more than "surface information"

"I found this slide show of interest, in particular the variations of pictures presented that at the same time appear to represent some common themes. Many of the items were symbolic presenting personal likes/hobbies, while others were personal pictures. To me it seemed that no matter what type of picture an individual chose, it always let you know a little bit more than just the surface information. Family pictures showed a sense of pride and commitment to family (biological or work family), individual pictures were set in such a way that personal items were

center stage – a ring on someone's finger, family photos in the background. Symbolic representations such as car or motorcycle logos or musical pieces – present a clear picture of what an individual may find relaxation and happiness through."

There were differences of opinion on the value of symbolic pictures versus realistic images demonstrating a key element in the course—accepting individual differences.

"I think the images are all very interesting and enjoyable to look at. What struck me about it, is that it never occurred to me to post anything other than a picture of myself. Next time I'm asked to post a picture of some sort, I'll post something more interesting like many of you did".

"I think I would like to have known what everyone looked like. It would have brought us a little closer, instead of disembodied typists!"

"Personally, I think the "symbolic" pictures offer more insight into the person than a "traditional" picture would. It encourages you to think/ask why that person selected a particular picture or image to represent themselves as.."

"I agree with everyone. I enjoyed the symbolic pictures and I also enjoyed finding out what RQ looks like- after all these years online, it's nice to put faces on people. I think both is a good idea."

"I believe this deals with diversity. It shows each person's own self expression. It is a reflection of what influences their lives from family, hobbies, and entertainment."

If you try this technique or have used other introductory ice breakers that worked or didn't I'd like to know about them. K



### Carol Gorelick

PRINCIPAL  
SOLUTIONS FOR INFORMATION AND  
MANAGEMENT SERVICES INC.  
NEW YORK CITY, UNITED STATES

Carol Gorelick is the co-founder of SOLUTIONS for Information and Management Services - a firm dedicated to supporting clients to bring together the best in people, processes and technology to help teams and groups improve their performance. She has more than 25 years experience in corporations, as a consultant and as a professor.



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For more information please contact **Tom Macdonald**  
[tom.macdonald@tfpl.com](mailto:tom.macdonald@tfpl.com)

### **Knowledge Management Assistant**

**£30k**

A leading provider of specialised offshore legal services requires a knowledge management assistant to join its Cayman Island office. You will work closely with practice team leaders in the delivery, management and maintenance of the firm's standard documents, precedents, know-how, and library collections. You will index standard documents, precedent materials and help maintain the library. You must be information qualified and have worked in a professional services environment. Ref: GK17445

**West Indies**

**Legal**

### **Interim Knowledge Manager**

**£300-£500 per day**

An interim manager is required for a 3-6 month fixed term contract to document, select and implement a scalable knowledge management software platform. You will be required to manage the entire phased project lifecycle which includes business process analysis, selection of internal KM systems and managing its configuration and implementation. You will have over 8 years' experience within a KM environment and a strong working knowledge of designing an information architecture. Exposure within a defence or automotive environment is preferable. Ref: GK17681

**Cambridgeshire**

**Energy**

### **Knowledge Specialist**

**£Neg**

A knowledge specialist is required for a government agency with an intellectual property focus. Responsibilities include capturing and mapping initial information requirements to access external information sources; producing a document scheme for documents and correspondence to comply with FOI; developing a taxonomy for integration to corporate taxonomy and responsibility for the development and administration of the intranet site. You will have two years' experience of working with knowledge and content management solutions and previous experience of developing taxonomies. Ref: GK17513

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**Government**

### **KM Business Analyst**

**£35-£45k**

A magic circle law firm requires a KM business analyst to work with its KM and fee-earning community to determine business needs and requirements for projects. You will prepare documentation in order to seek approval and resource allocation for specific project initiatives. You will translate complex business requirements into non-technical deliverables by organising multi-departmental teams and meeting setting and managing expectations, and initiating projects. Experience as a business analyst, preferably within professional services is essential. Ref: GK17550

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**Legal**

### **Knowledge Manager**

**Up to £60k**

A central government organisation with 200 personnel requires a knowledge manager for a one year contract to develop a knowledge and information strategy as part of an enterprise wide change management programme. This post would suit someone with a strong understanding of knowledge and information management and the technology required to underpin key processes and information flows. You will be technically competent, have an understanding of meta data and the ability to influence people and achieve buy-in for the project. Ref: GK17625

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# Endpiece



Do you recognise any of these characteristics?

## Bosses lack people management and leadership skills

Findings from some research – conducted on behalf of training company VideoArts – suggested that many training and HR managers believe that bosses would greatly benefit from a spell back on the shop floor.

But would that actually help those in charge of an organisation see the world the way that others see it?

Perhaps an even more important question is why do we feel that the who ultimately tell us what to do are so isolated and removed from our everyday experience?

The man who organised the survey reckons that he may know the answer. Martin Addison, Director of Video Arts, said: "The past decade has seen enormous changes in how most organisations function. Relationships at work have

changed. There is far more contact between people from different levels and from different functions in the organisation. These factors put an increasingly high premium on our ability to communicate with one another and underline the importance that bosses develop credible leadership skills in the eyes of employees."

In part what he is saying is that there has been a democratisation of the workplace, bought about partly because of the communication technology revolution. You can email any leader in the world, whether you get a reply is, of course, another matter. Probably in some parts of the world there is generally less respect towards our leaders – an assumption they are wrong not right.



A survey among 175 British training and HR managers suggests that the top three skills that bosses and CEOs lack are people management, leadership and communication.



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