Thank you for inviting me, and grateful thanks to the conference sponsors:

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The relationship between decision making and knowledge management

- First - look at Knowledge Management (KM)
- Second - focus on classic decision making models
- Third - consider other decision making models
- Fourth - offer suggestions for how effective KM can aid in decision making
  - KM systems
  - KM habits
- Finally - tie together KM, decision making and scholarly communication.

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Knowledge Management

- What is it?

- There are many definitions from a multiple of disciplines:
  - Library and Information Science
  - Information Systems
  - Computer Science
  - Engineering
  - Communication
  - Cognitive Science
  - Organization Science

And the literature on KM exists in publications from each of these Disciplines.
We need to re-think KM because:

- Some vendors and business analysts have given KM a bad name.
- The rhetoric goes something like this:
  - "We have your KM solution."
  - "Our software will solve your problems."
  - We offer "human capital management."
  - We understand "organizational DNA."

Technologies

- They do play a key role in helping organizations share knowledge and knowledge objects, but the technology focus takes attention away from the need to consider cognitive and emotional processes.
Knowledge Management

What is it?
One definition:

- Knowledge Management (KM) is an effort to increase useful knowledge within the organization. Ways to do this include encouraging
  - Communication,
  - Offering opportunities to learn,
  - And
  - Promoting the sharing of appropriate knowledge artifacts.

McInerney, (2002). Knowledge management and the dynamic nature of knowledge. JASIST

Is KM a fad?

- No, at least not a short-lived one.

Here’s something to consider: Numbers of articles published about knowledge management, 1991 – 2003, continue to show an upward trend.

KM has evolved. It’s not the same as it was in decades past.

- 1980's Knowledge workers
- 1990 - 1995 Technological determinism
- 1995 - 2000 Ontologies and communities
- 2001 - 2005 Cognitive and Communication processes

What are some classic decision making models?

- Information Seeking
  - Find
  - Identify
  - Select
  - Obtain

From the IFLA report on the functional requirements of a bibliographic record (Murtomaa, 1998).
Classic Decision Making --

- How are decisions made that involve:
  - Whom to hire?
  - Which vendors to use?
  - What kind and how many library programs to plan?
  - The amount and type of electronic databases to include in a collection.
  - What platform to use on an organization’s computers, e.g. Microsoft, Linux, etc.
  - All the decisions that go into planning for a new building or a renovation.

Classic Decision Making - The Rational Model

- Define
- Diagnose
- Design
- Decide

Features the qualities of
- Science
- Planning, programming
- The verbal
- The facts.

It seems very tidy, but in reality, decisions are seldom this orderly or this easy.
**Another model – “Seeing First”**

- Based on Gestalt psychology and the work of G. Wallas in the 1920’s.
  - Preparation
  - Incubation
  - Illumination
  - Verification

Features the qualities of
- Art
- Visioning, Imagining
- The visual
- Ideas.


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**Another model – “Doing First”**

- The way that pragmatists often make decisions.
  - Enactment
  - Selection
  - Retention

Features the qualities of
- Craft
- Venturing, learning
- The visceral
- Experience.

So, what?

- Mintzberg reports
  - he and his colleagues report that they have found it effective to use a combination of these approaches
    - by asking the participants to create collages (w/ paper, glue, magazines, etc.) to “see” the problem – this encourages a deeper investigation of the issues.
    - Discussion ensues.
    - Then the group uses improvisation to act out the issue – humor, creativity, emotional approach reaches the audience and “sticks.”

- Sometimes we must use creative approaches, tapping our need for the visual, movement, the arts.
- Isadora Duncan proclaimed – “If I could say it, I wouldn’t have to dance it.”

But, what about decisions that need to be made or just are made quickly?

- Examples:
  - A grant is available... but the proposal is due in a week.
  - It’s the end of the fiscal year, and the Director is informed that there is money left in the budget, but it must be spent in two days.
  - A job search is completed, and the chosen candidates calls to say he can not start the job for 6 months. Can he still have the job?
In his best selling book, Malcolm Gladwell argues that many decisions ARE made quickly.

- An art curator can judge a fake in seconds.
- A psychologist can accurately predict if a relationship will last by looking at a couple in conversation for three minutes.
- Sometimes a snap decision turns out badly, however. New York City police mistakenly took an innocent man, Amadou Diallo, for a drug dealer.

Decisions made quickly

aren’t as simple as they appear.

They depend on several techniques, preparation and practices:

- Thin Slicing – knowing what to look for
- Years of experience and
- Informed opinion based on study, reading, learning, reflection, & talking with others.
What does the understanding of decision making have to do with KM?

- In a fast-paced global environment the probability that many day to day decisions will need to be made quickly is high.

The way we can prepare to make informed decisions...

- To commit ourselves and our organizations to regular knowledge management practices or to knowledge sharing, as many are now calling KM.

- Let's look at some examples.
KM/KS practices

1. The Imminent grant opportunity problem.
   - Regular meetings with clients/customers outside of the mainstream can uncover knowledge of funding sources.
   - Systematic and timely strategic planning meetings where “wish lists” are developed.

Caution:
Peter Drucker warns that planning today can only be effective for 18 months.

KM/KS practices

2. A windfall that must be spent quickly problem.
   - Intranets can be used to track scheduled upgrades of technology.
   - A systematic use of metadata in stored knowledge objects can assist those who need to find objects quickly. Microsoft’s “Stuff I’ve Seen” and other software use metadata heavily.
KM/KS practices

   - Computer supported groupware or e-lists can aid in getting answers quickly.
   - If a “communities of practice” group exists, experts can be tapped easily.
   - Best practices repositories can help a new staff member get up to speed quickly.

What does this have to do with Scholarly Communication?

- Knowledge management today is very much about cognitive processes and communication practices.
- The e-world and the available technologies can support the sharing of knowledge, but communication is key.
- If we re-think knowledge management and frame it in the context of active communication in a scholarly environment, we are in a better position to make decisions - both strategic and tactical, than if....
Than if we approach knowledge development in a reactive, passive mode.

- Knowledge sharing takes work and energy.
- Consider Peter Drucker’s concept of the professional (or the manager) taking on the “burden of communication”

This is more than just answering questions that come our way. It is seeking out information and knowledge and sharing the same systematically in organizations.

One more thought...

Louis Pasteur said:

“Chance favors the prepared mind.”
One more thought…

I would like to adjust that to read:

“Effective decisions (especially those made quickly) favor the prepared mind… and the decision maker who is a learner, a listener, and someone who encourages the sharing of knowledge.”

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- Henry Mintzberg
- Malcolm Gladwell
References


