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## IP<sup>2</sup> - Second Generation Knowledge Management

IP<sup>2</sup> = Intellectual Property created and shared through the Internet Protocol

By: Judi Bachmann and Len Ashby

**I**N the past decade, many organisations struggled with how to implement the concept of 'knowledge management' (KM). Today - whether they realise it or not - most are doing KM - some well, many poorly. The introduction of the Internet has advanced the visibility of "knowledge management", but it has also created new challenges. Web sites deceptively promise external and internal stakeholders 'quick and easy access' to information and knowledge. But few organisations deliver. In spite of the vast amount of information published on Internet and intranet sites, most organisations still do not know what "knowledge" they have, where it resides, who wants it or what it is worth to them or to their stakeholders.

Knowledge management has been part of the IT scene for more than a decade, but has incurred ignorance, cynicism, disregard, and even disdain in its present form. Unfortunately, like many IT initiatives, KM has suffered from a lack of understanding of the human elements which are essential for its success. Once this deficiency is addressed, KM will enter a new era of acceptance.

Knowledge management is more than information management and that is why the 'people' element is so critical to success. KM is about gathering and disseminating valuable information and insights to the right audience. This has actually been going on since mankind learned to speak, to draw and to write things down. Practitioners have included philosophers, priests, teachers, politicians, scribes, librarians, and, of course, management consultants. The tools have been as varied as rock faces, stone tablets, monoliths, paper, as well as, today's recording technologies. Knowledge management has, how-



ever, taken on a new meaning and level of importance in an age where information and knowledge, is one of the primary commodities of our age.

We have passed from the Industrial Age to the Information Age - where the 'knowledge' of market supply and demand for a product has become more valuable than the product itself. Today, more value is created in trading real or imaginary shiploads of oil, than in exploring for, extracting and refining the oil itself. We are also in an age when the term 'knowledge management' causes debate and confusion and most organisations would rather ignore the issues than face the hard, cold facts that they do not know what to do about it.

So, will knowledge management become the next 'magic bullet' - redefining business efficiency, improving customer service and promising increased profit? Some organisations

have begun to treat it as such. They are developing KM strategies and seeking KM experts to help with delivery. Others have created Web sites and think they have now solved internal information sharing and customer service issues. Still others are "sticking to their knitting" and denying that a KM solution is even required in their organisation.

KM is not a "magic bullet" solution but every organisation should give some thought as to how they can do it more effectively and reliably. Doing it better will mean improved operational effectiveness and may decide organisational sustainability in the longer term.

### SO WHY IP<sup>2</sup>?

In the past, organisations that understood and endorsed the benefits of KM found they were often stifled by the lack of appropriate technology. Some early adopters invested in groupware solutions or electronic document management systems in an attempt to capture and disseminate 'knowledge', but found these were limited to internal usage.

Today, we are no longer constrained by the technology, but are being propelled by it. The

Internet Protocol (IP) has given us a new global vehicle and an impetus for creating and sharing knowledge.

The human issues however, have remained largely un-resolved. To begin to redress this deficiency, we propose to refer to 'knowledge' as intellectual property (IP) - emphasising the human element which differentiates knowledge from information. The intellectual property of individuals and organisations, effectively combined with the Internet Protocol technology then creates a synergy which is the product of the two IPs, rather than merely the sum - IP<sup>2</sup>.

Businesses and governments can no longer afford to ignore the "knowledge management" of their own organisa-



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tions, nor of their competitors”.

Organisations can no longer thrive in their own local community; they are being driven by the global power of the Internet and the changes it has thrust upon them.

Recently, a friend who was considering buying a simple, local retail business asked these questions: Could my customers buy these products over the Internet? Will they know more about my products than I do? How does the availability of these and similar or inferior, products over the Internet affect my pricing strategy? Today our customers know as much or more than we do about our business because they can do their research electronically. And their expectations for service have changed. If they are going to do business with us, our customers often check our Web site first.

For good or bad, the world has changed, and so too, the requirements for KM.

Knowledge can no longer be managed by the technologies of the recent past – databases, electronic document and records management systems (EDMS/RMS), imaging, groupware and email. Today every organisation depends on the Internet Protocol and related technologies (e.g. content management tools, workflow, search engines) to support them.

New versions of old skills are also needed. Cataloguing, once the sole preserve of librarians and records managers, will become mainstream, as we begin to understand the importance of indexing and ‘meta-tags’ in providing contextual clues and relevance for search engines. Organisations must employ new skill sets – not just Web programmers, but Web designers too. Glossy brochures and procedures do not always trans-

late well to electronic media. The answer is not found in converting everything to Adobe Acrobat portable document format (PDF) and hypertext mark-up language (HTML) files.

IP<sup>2</sup> is different from the way we have done business in the past – it creates a whole new paradigm for KM. IP<sup>2</sup> is not just about publishing information; it is also about creating it using the Internet, or intranet. Successful organisations will endorse IP<sup>2</sup> – in the same way that thriving businesses must have computers.

### A NEW PARADIGM

While the concept of “knowledge management” appears simple, it has not achieved great success. Generally, the technologists have failed to understand the criteria which synthesise data into information and translates information into “knowledge” – with

collection or dissemination tool, the emphasis needs to be on ensuring that the Intellectual Property is understood, valued, and is considered a tangible asset.

Many IT practitioners will claim that we are already there. They will point to the vast repository of information on the World Wide Web or their corporate intranet, and extol the virtues of search engines, like Google, which can perform complex searches of multiple databases, and rank the relevance of their findings. They will blame the lack of the correct results on the failure of the knowledge creators and/or end-users to effectively use the existing tools to categorise their input to, or searches of, the databases. And of course, they could be correct. But like so many in the technology deployment field before them, they remain unaware of, or uncommitted to, the

need for engaging the human intellect in the “knowledge” creation, gathering dissemination and accessing processes.

## We have passed from the Industrial Age to the Information Age - where the ‘knowledge’ of market supply and demand for a product has become more valuable than the product itself.

true value. Our computing systems are now storing more unstructured information than structured data. So while organisations can be sifting through mountains of data, a simple interpretation of the information or analysis of the trends can be the ‘needle in the haystack’ that the business decision makers or clients were looking for – human perceptions.

Knowledge management is really all about creating filters, bridges and insights. While technology can provide some useful tools, the process is still one requiring experience, context and intuition – capabilities which commercial technology has yet to achieve. Decisions still require the human element – hence ‘knowledge management’ – not ‘information management’. So while the Internet Protocol is the

Thus we have a need for new skills and potentially new positions (knowledge officers) to gain real benefit from IP<sup>2</sup> – not something most organisations seem willing to accept or endorse yet.

“To conceive of knowledge as a collection of information seems to rob the concept of all of its life.

Knowledge resides in the user and not in the collection. It is how the user reacts to a collection of information that matters,” said Charles West Churchman in his book, *The Design of Inquiring Systems, Basic Concepts of Systems and Organizations*.

Renaming knowledge as intellectual property reflects the very human processes which imbue value to the vast volumes of data and information which every enterprise generates.

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With this new nomenclature we anticipate that there will follow a greater recognition of the human experience and human thought processes which need to be encapsulated in the “knowledge management” processes – to create, capture, retrieve, analyse, synthesise, distribute, disseminate, and most importantly, use the intellectual property.

Unlike data, which occurs spontaneously whenever something happens – such as a cash withdrawal transaction at an ATM – information requires context. In the commercial world we like to think that who, what, where and when provide that context. The bank card number, with matching PIN, the amount withdrawn, the location of the ATM and a timestamp comprise all that is necessary to debit the right bank account, collect a service fee and withstand any challenge from the user when the monthly statement arrives.

But how do you then turn information like this into knowledge. Some would suggest that with a month's, a year's or more transactional history, and access to all the other information about our banking relationship with the institution, that the bank has knowledge about us. Yet the teller at the bank in the '70s and '80s may have known much more about whom we were, what we wanted from a bank and how the bank could keep more of our hard earned cash. They understood, for example, our vacation or hobby interests, the patterns and drivers of our behaviour which might dictate our cash flow. Today's customer relationship management (CRM) systems are attempting to capture knowledge which the tellers may have gained through just one or two transactions, and the “small talk” engaged in during those transactions.

## IP<sup>2</sup> – A REVOLUTION IN DISTRIBUTION

Despite all the hype, activity and growth, the Internet Protocol has not added substantially to knowledge management in the world. It may just have

exacerbated information overload! As anyone who has done an Internet search knows, one of the major challenges is keeping information current and relevant. Recognising that intellectual property is much more than information, the challenge is manifoldly more difficult; it is of course a human issue. The owners and sources of the intellectual property must be inclined to maintain their own IP<sup>2</sup> as a natural course of their work processes. While workflow and publishing tools are readily available to facilitate this, many organisations still manage the organisation's IP<sup>2</sup> through their IT department. Furthermore, the IP<sup>2</sup> owners are neither encouraged nor rewarded for dabbling with the new Internet Protocol tools. Organisational change of an order of magnitude is required.

Another major challenge is to source and integrate tools for the end-users to easily classify intellectual property so that it becomes meaningful in electronic searches. Not only do we need tools for meta-tagging, codification and rule generation, but we need training to help people understand the context for the searches. Classification schemes need to be simple for those applying them. However the organisation as a whole must make an initial investment in producing thesauruses, dictionaries, indexes and classification profiles that can be applied consistently throughout the organisation.

They must also invest in developing knowledge inventories and knowledge maps to ensure they know who has the Intellectual Property and who needs access to it, and just exactly what it is that they typically need.

Most organisations are still publishing volumes when the users are seeking paragraphs. The 80-20 rule applies (The “Vital Few and Trivial Many Rule”) as much to IP<sup>2</sup> as it does to any other information being disseminated. A quick analysis of hits to any Web site will likely demonstrate that 80 per cent of users are accessing only 20 per cent of the information. The question becomes; how much human effort

should be invested in maintaining the rest? Are there other more efficient delivery channels for that information? And how do we use better Internet Protocol tools such as more effective search engines to make it easier and faster for users to find the intellectual property that stakeholders are seeking? Partnering the tools with the knowledge experts is the answer, getting the two IPs working together is the challenge!

IP<sup>2</sup> - intellectual property created and shared through the Internet Protocol – can help to answer today's “knowledge management” demands. But it will require a whole new mindset, new approaches and a new understanding of what “knowledge” is. **IDM**

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