

Knowledge in Action.

The Use of Formal Philosophical Ontologies in Knowledge Management.

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Abstract

The transformation of dynamic and practical into storable and static knowledge has been seen as a core task of knowledge management (KM). However, the success of this KM conception was limited since it neglects the adaptation of knowledge to the context for which it is required. We need more dynamic and processive conceptions to close the gap. The core task consists in mediating between practical and propositional knowledge. Philosophical tradition provides famous examples how knowledge comes to the fore, e.g. in Plato's dialogue Meno. Here Socrates states that all knowledge is already within us and reasoning only brings it forth. KM has to accomplish a similar task. Knowledge must be stored in a form which is not bound to the situation from which it originates. But how can we structure context-sensitive knowledge so that it is storable in a context-independent way and in a form that remains applicable to other contexts? Static knowledge is to be defined in analytic expressions of relations. Dynamic knowledge is adapted to specific and changing conditions, related to environmental and social contexts. Knowledge must be rearranged in a context-sensitive way. "New" knowledge results from recombination of existing entities. Today in KM the view prevails that every domain entails its own fixed ontology. This view, however, prevents the efficient application of knowledge. Segregation of knowledge components using meta-structures is discussed as a possible solution. By this meta-structure we mean the representation of the relations between entities, not the representation of the entities themselves. Following the idea of formal philosophical ontology we find a considerable number of stable relation patterns. The approach combines a systematic component with the acquisition, structuring, and representation of knowledge. It is based on the assumption that objects and events do not conjoin at random but show repetitive patterns of connection.