

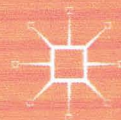


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THE ESSENTIALS OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

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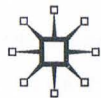
The Essentials of Knowledge Management

Edited by

John S. Edwards

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Aston Business School, Aston University, UK*

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The Role of Social Networks in Knowledge Creation

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It is a basic principle of literature that social networks allow their members to access new knowledge. The exchange and combination of knowledge that these networks provide is widely recognized as an antecedent of knowledge creation. By reviewing the main contributions of literature that link social networks to knowledge creation and innovation, we intend to explore how different types of networks, as well as the different dimensions of their social capital, influence innovative performance. An exhaustive coverage of prior literature has been carried out in order to locate all the relevant previous work. The analysis shows up the complex relationship between social networks' diverse facets and their members' capacity to create knowledge. The strategies defined for knowledge searching can condition which is the most appropriate type of network. In turn, the type of network can determine the most suitable structural and relational embeddedness. Hence, the decision to participate in social networks requires taking into consideration the different environments of these networks and also the singular aspects they present.

Introduction

The social network perspective arises as a result of recognizing that many individuals, teams and organizations are part of a number of networks that give access to knowledge, markets, technology, reputation or influence (Young *et al*, 2001; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005). The ability of certain actors to obtain benefits from belonging to social networks is the basis of the concept of social capital (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005). Specifically, the opportunity to access knowledge represents an essential benefit because it increases the capacity to innovate by combining our own knowledge with that acquired (Galunic & Rodan, 1998; Almeida & Phene, 2004; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005).

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This book reviews the field of Knowledge Management, taking a holistic approach that includes both "soft" and "hard" aspects. It provides a broad perspective on the field, rather than one based on a single viewpoint from Computer Science or Organizational Learning, offering a comprehensive and integrated conception of Knowledge Management. The chapters represent the best Knowledge Management articles published in the 21st century in *Knowledge Management Research & Practice* and the *European Journal of Information Systems*, with contributors including Ikujiro Nonaka, Frada Burstein, and David Schwartz. Most of the chapters contribute significantly to practice as well as theory.

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John S. Edwards is Professor of Knowledge Management at Aston Business School, Birmingham, UK. His interest is in how people actually use theories, models, and systems in practice. He has published around 70 peer-reviewed research articles and was founding editor of the journal *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*.

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