Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Discuss that culture is at least as important as infrastructure in supporting KM.
2. Discuss that the use of a network is equal to the square of the number of nodes.
3. Distinguish how experience, reflection, and sharing are the main ways that knowledge is increased.
4. Evaluate how knowledge workers gain knowledge through direct experience and by reflecting on and sharing those experiences with others.
5. Examine behaviors that value people and their needs.
6. Recommend how to value attention and trust in your network.
7. Evaluate the four stages that every developing team must go through: forming, norming, storming, and performing.
8. Describe the roles of timing and escalation in 3D communication.
9. Discuss why dialog is typically the most exciting method of communication and why it is not always the most suitable method for a given situation.
10. Discuss the importance of common goals in forming teams.
11. Assess effective listening techniques.

Unit Summary

To capture knowledge you need two things: the enabling infrastructure must be in place, and you also need the right culture. Building the infrastructure is easy compared with building the right culture, and out organizations have not typically had cultures where these intangible qualities of information and knowledge have been nurtured and revered. (C. Mather)

This unit introduces Metcalfe's Law of Network Utility. This law states that the use of a network is equal to the square of the number of nodes. This has important implications for collaboration and KM because it illustrates the difference between the new economy and the old economy, as well as the problems inherent in the management strategies of the past. This section also compares the critical components in a KM system with the major components that information systems networks depend on and examines what one field can learn from the other. This unit also describes how social networks are established and what can be done to keep these relationships functioning effectively. The four keys to developing interdependent relationship are discussed: Security, Commonality, Trust, and Flexibility of Thought. There is also a discussion over attention exchange and the basics of team development.
The second part of the unit focuses on techniques to improve communications and teamwork. A vision is laid out for three-dimensional (3D) communication, which is based on effectively choosing when and how to use dialogue, discussion, and direction.

Each of these three types of communications serves different purposes and offers different potential benefits. How you use each of these three types of communication reflects your broader KM philosophy. The concepts are made clearer by illustrating the way mountain climbing teams plan and communicate. The last part of the unit introduces a few of the concepts of Action Science, as developed by Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schon. A model of individual thinking is promoted that facilities collaborative team learning and organizational effectiveness, while pointing out the key flaws in the existing thought models that are not prevalent in American corporations. The unit concludes with a case study of the failure of a major project initiative because of poor KM and communication.