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## Knowledge Management Briefing

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This briefing was designed to provide an introduction to KM principles for the ASLIB Engineering and Technology Group.

1. Accounts
  - Director of Finance – 1950's
2. Personnel
  - Director of HR – 1970's
3. Transport, Manufacturing, Customer Service
  - Director of Ops, Chief Operating Officer – 1980's
4. IT, Library, Records Management
  - Director of Information, CIO/CKO – 1990's/2000's

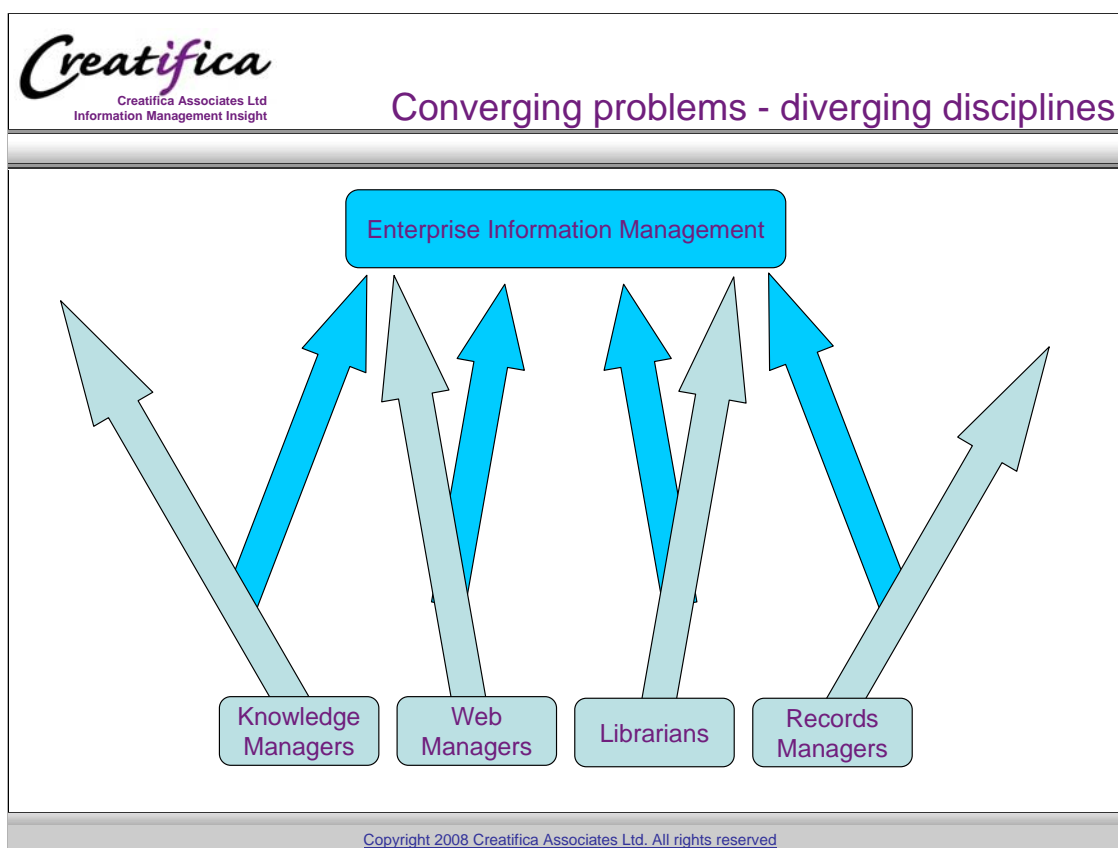
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Some important patterns have emerged in the strategic development of organisations during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

In each case the change has been characterised by the maturing of a “back room” administrative function into a board level professional discipline.

The recognition that Information management needs to become a strategic discipline has not yet reached the Board of many organisations. Information management suffers from the disadvantage that it is the amalgamation of a range of sometime collaborating but often competing disciplines.

As a result, in most organisations senior management is not yet skilled in directing the new business function of enterprise information management.



These four communities have historically used very different and conflicting terminology to classify business activity. The standards in these areas are now beginning to converge but many organisations have projects that are still on a divergent path.

Knowledge Managers have focused principally on the structuring of know-how using a variety of semantic techniques

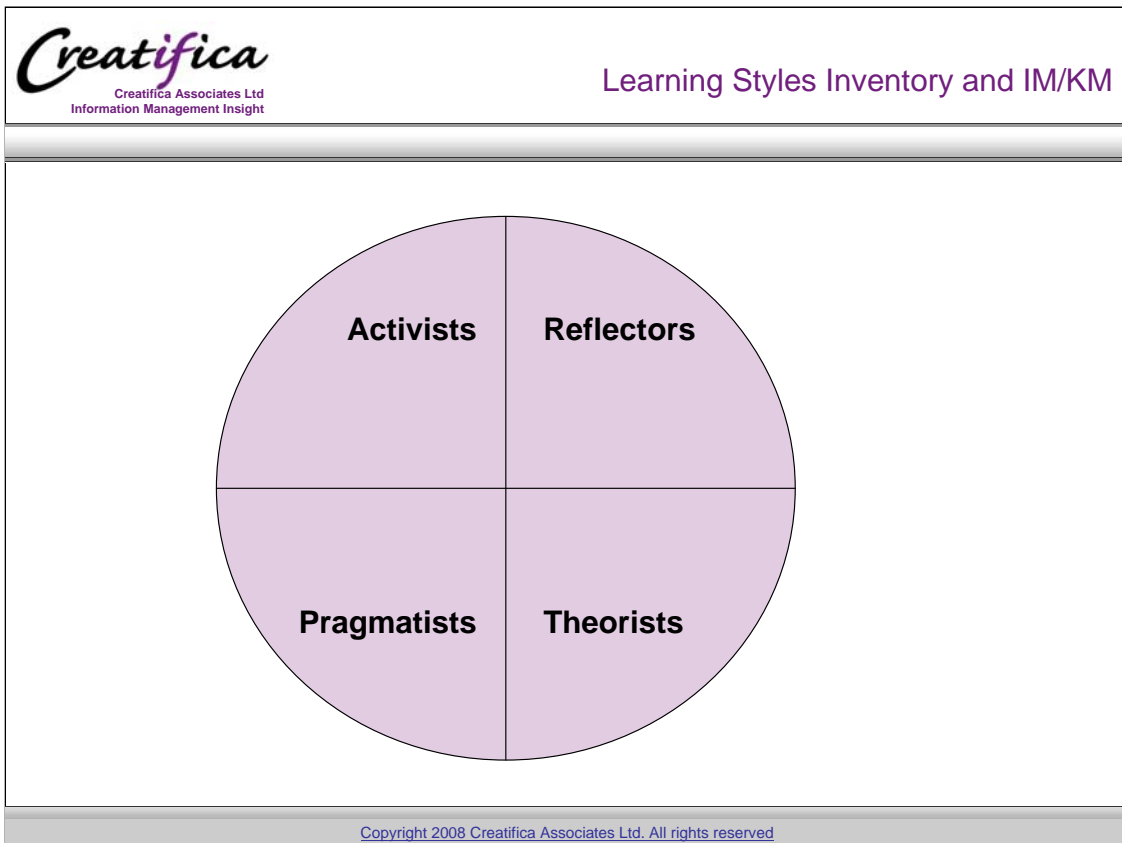
Web Managers have focused on the content management systems and other supporting technology required to support web sites.

Librarians have focused on the unstructured information held in information systems or in physical collections using library style classification terminology

Records Managers have focused on the records series produced by business processes and have classified information in file plans supported by additional key words.

As information systems become more sophisticated, there are no longer clear dividing lines between these requirements and an integrated architecture is required to support them with a language that brings the fields together.

The UK Government has made things more complex by putting in a series of recommendations in each of these areas that until recently were conflicting or inconsistent in some respect.



The learning styles inventory from Honey and Mumford (<http://www.peterhoney.com>) is a simple but powerful framework for looking at the interaction between individuals and learning/information/knowledge.

**Reflectors:**

- learn best when: they can observe, review and think about what is happening
- learn least when: they are rushed, have to act as leaders,
- Pedagogical activities: observing activities, paired discussions, coached activities, questionnaires, interviews, ...

**Theorists:**

- learn best when: they can study theories, models, concepts, stories etc. behind, they can ask questions and engage in analysis and synthesis.
- learn least when: the activity is ill structured, no principles are taught, ...
- Pedagogical activities: Provide models, background information, ...

**Pragmatists**

- learn best when: they can apply new information to a real world problem, etc.
- learn least when: "everything is theory", the isn't an immediate benefit, etc.
- Pedagogical activities: Case studies, discussion, problem solving

**Activists:**

- learn best when: they can immediately do something, when they are exposed to new experiences and problems, work with others in task teams
- learn least when: they have to listen to long explanations, absorb a lot of data, follow precise instructions, read, write and think a lot on their own, ...
- Pedagogical activities: brainstorms, problem solving, group discussions, role plays, competitions, etc.

## Medieval craft halls

- **Masters** – fount of all knowledge, continuous improvement and guardians of the discipline
- **Journeyman** – source of radical innovation and environmental intelligence
- **Apprentices** – experimental resources, & knowledge transfer agents

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The Medieval Craft halls were able to develop some of the most complex knowledge bases in history through a highly evolved social structure and learning process.

Universities and colleges preserved these kinds of constructs with Professors, Readers, Lecturers and Students all focusing on knowledge in a single well defined discipline.

Some professions still take the same approach to training their members – which are they?

Books were obviously a key transfer agent and the size of the world's knowledge base was such that a physician in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century could read the entire medical literature in 55 years (his working lifetime). Today, it would take 3,500 years to read and assimilate the same body of knowledge.

- **Connecting *people to people***
  - to create, share and exploit knowledge more effectively.
- **Connecting *people to the information***
  - they need to develop and apply their knowledge in new ways.
- **Connecting *people to information tools***
  - in order for them to make the most effective and efficient use of knowledge and information

**In order to deliver value to the organisation**

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This is a useful practical description of how to achieve better knowledge management – and enables the Knowledge Manager to **do** something.

The essence is connectivity – helping individuals in the firm to work more effectively together and to exploit the intellectual capital of the firm more effectively.

This definition/description helps to put some “shape” around a knowledge management strategy. Effective strategies must cover all of these three dimensions and the approaches need to be in balance.

- Tacit – Embrained in the heads of people, Encultured in the social structures of the organisation
  - Experience, expertise, behaviours, intuition.
- Implicit - Embedded in products, processes, organisations, Embodied in tasks
  - Historical understanding embedded in processes, products, services, structures, methods, techniques
- Explicit - Structured & documented
  - Encoded in facts, models, interpretations, conclusions, codified best practice

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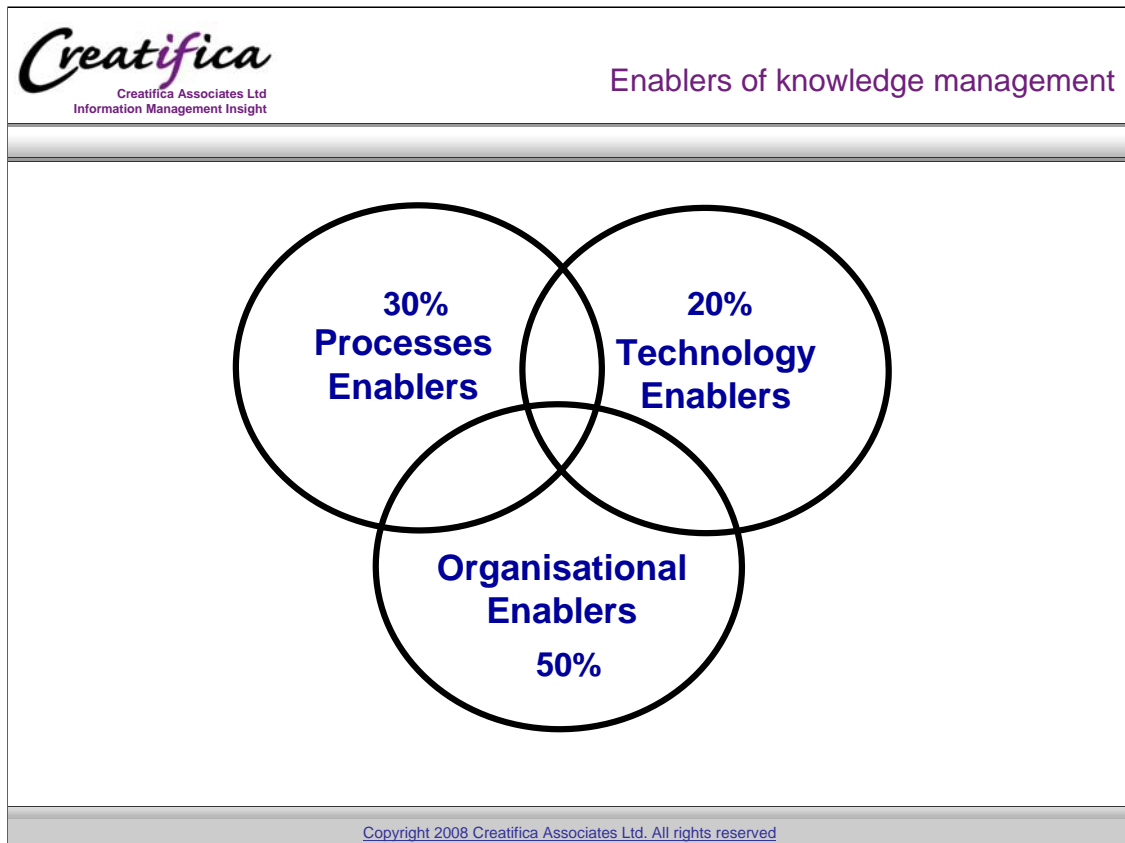
Not only are there different types of knowledge underpinning a company's success, there are different forms of this knowledge.

**Tacit knowledge** – Is always in the heads of individuals and can never be written down in its entirety.

**Implicit knowledge** – Is often woven into the fabric of an organisation, part of the processes and organisational structure or even the established products. This is often unrecognised by the firm and can be neglected in the KM programme.

**Explicit knowledge** – Has traditionally been the focus of KM work – emphasising particularly documents or fragments of documents in webs or Wikis. This can only ever be a small proportion of the knowledge on which a company depends.

It is important to understand the nature of each as they require different approaches to nurture and develop them.



We will make progress with KM by focusing on developing effective enablers – of three kinds:

**Organisational enablers**

- which develop and sustain an environment where individual and organisational learning and intelligence flourishes

**Process enablers**

- which develop and maintain processes for the more effective creation, dissemination and exploitation of knowledge

**Technology enablers**

- Which provide tools and techniques to capture, create, structure, communicate and effectively exploit knowledge

These enablers are dealt with in more detail on the following slides.

- The most important of the enablers
  - strategic intent & financial resources demonstrating an organisational commitment to KM
  - rewards and recognition systems which promote effective KM
  - behavioural & cultural norms which encourage KM
  - organisational designs which avoid silos
  - specialised knowledge support roles
  - workplace designs tuned to knowledge activity

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Organisational enablers create the climate in which KM and IM related activity can flourish. They are the most important of the enablers and without them the programme will undoubtedly fail.

They require a senior commitment to the programme or at least a tacit recognition that the programme has been sanctioned officially.

Reward and recognition systems are a key part of this, creating a culture and climate which demonstrably supports the KM activity.

Organisationally, it is important that team working is encouraged and supported and working between teams crossing the organisational boundaries is essential.

The creation of specialised roles focused on the information and knowledge programme is an important enabler, especially in the early days where staff need guidance on how to embed knowledge activity in their work.

- **Building KM into business processes and enhancing existing KM sensitive processes**
  - skills and competency analysis processes
  - learning and training processes
  - project debriefing process
  - invention and creativity processes
  - research & development processes
  - structured thinking processes
  - communications processes
  - constructive feedback processes

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KM activity cannot be grafted onto everyday business activity. It needs to be woven into the everyday fabric of the business, designed into the business processes themselves. If it isn't, then staff will not have the time or inclination to do additional KM related steps in their work.

Parts of existing business activity can be restructured and improved by applying a KM related lens. Some of these are spread across different disciplines in the firm and the Enterprise Information Manager will need to tread carefully in getting involved. The benefit will come when all of these existing processes are effectively aligned.

- **Scaling KM for today's economy**

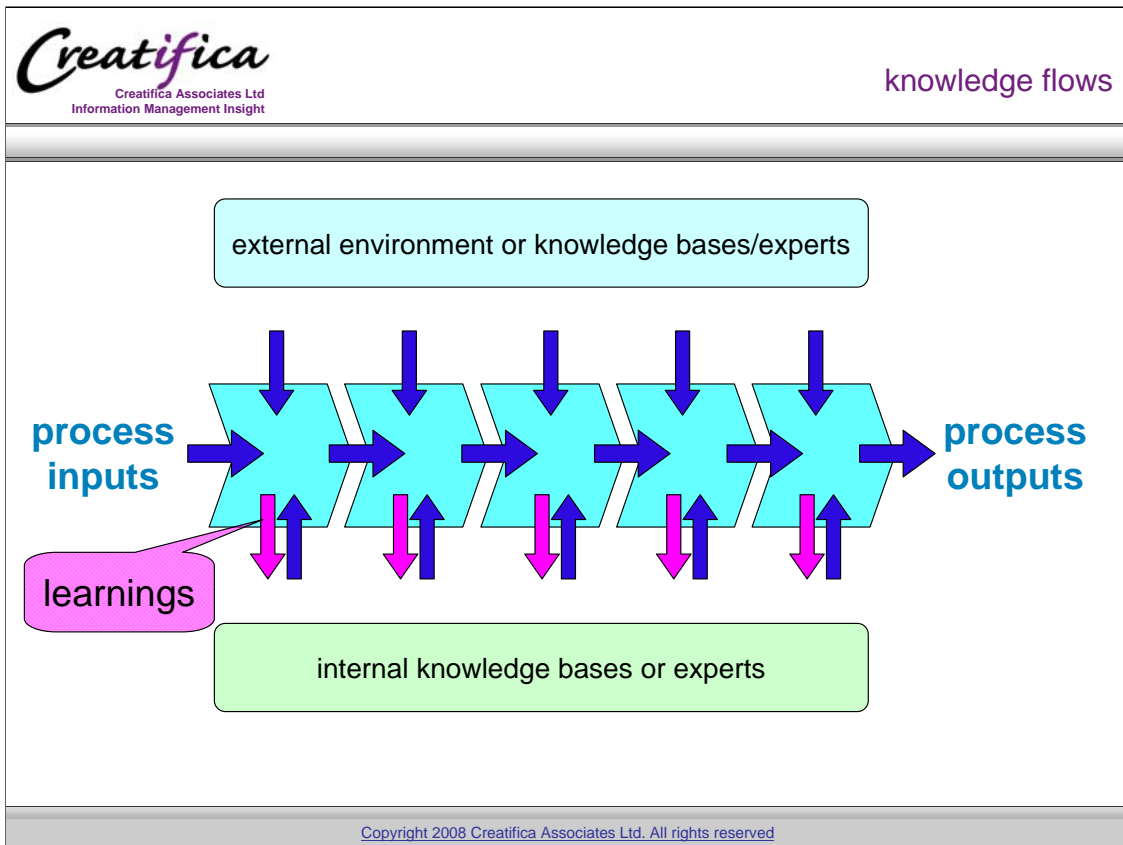
- e-mail systems
- discussion forums (fora)
- video conferencing
- knowledge databases
- intranets
- mind mapping software
- search and visualisation tools

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There is a tendency for firms to dive straight into KM related technology with search engines, knowledge bases and collaborative tools. These are very important but investments in them can be wasted if there is no focus on the other enablers.

There are many opportunities to use existing desktop tools to support KM more effectively – especially Microsoft Office, and internet explorer. However, there are opportunities to use new tools – Mindmanager for example.

Technology at best enhances knowledge processes, it cannot substitute for some of the other enablers.



The job of the Knowledge Manager is to assure the health of the arrows