become "knowledge bases," text outline editors become "thought processors," and database and data mining tools become integral components of "content management" suites.

However, even technically savvy chief information officers (CIOs), chief knowledge officers (CKOs), and other senior managers know that evaluating a potential KM solution goes far beyond understanding the technology. At least as important are the developer's commitment to staying in the KM niche, the challenges of integrating technologies of any type into the corporate culture, and the degree to which the vendor will be of assistance in moving a KM initiative forward in the corporation. Of course, determining whether the corporation can afford the solution, considering both the short-term investment and the expected long-term return on investment (ROI), can override all other decisions. These and other economic considerations are covered in Chapter 7.

This chapter explores how the various enabling technologies can be identified and evaluated as potential solutions for a corporation's KM initiatives. It focuses on the information-gathering phase of an implementation, before a decision has been made to fully commit to a particular technology or approach. To illustrate some of the methods available to assess Knowledge Management solutions, let's return to Custom Gene Factory.

Formulating a Strategy

Up to now, most of the Knowledge Management activities in the Custom Gene Factory (CGF) have been tactical and focused on specific tasks. There is a company-wide collaborative system in place, for example, that provides an electronic whiteboard and text interchange to support virtual, impromptu meetings for communities of practice. However, there is no corporate-wide strategy for indexing, archiving, and disseminating the information recorded by the system and no integration of the collaborative system with other information systems in the corporation.