

course, a modicum of luck is always necessary for success, where luck is defined as the intersection of preparedness, opportunity, strong economy, significant business growth potential, and a clearly defined market.

Future

The future of Knowledge Management is tied to improvements in information technology and the accumulation of hard evidence that Knowledge Management positively and significantly improves the bottom line in specific industries. Knowledge Management can operate independently of technology. However, the increased pervasiveness of information technology at home and in the office indirectly minimizes the cultural change hurdles associated with every KM initiative.

For example, a few years ago, personal digital assistants (PDAs) were limited to the technophiles and deep-pocketed business professionals. Today, most employees (and high school students) are comfortable with entering their contact information and calendars on PDAs in the interest of saving time. Similarly, e-mail has become an indispensable enabler in the office environment, providing asynchronous communications and thereby freeing knowledge workers from the endless loop of voice mail messages. As information technology permeates the fabric of the corporation, Knowledge Management will one day cease to be considered a separate entity or activity; like e-mail, it will become an expected part of the workload.

Of course, until that time, corporations keenly invested in securing an advantage over the competition will embrace differentiating technologies at the leading edge of Knowledge Management. For example, some forward-looking companies are investigating the potential of the Great Global Grid (GGG) to support real-time information visualization and expert systems as components of hand-held decision support systems. The GGG promises to bring supercomputer power to knowledge workers through their PDAs.