

level of security, assessing the value of information, and a variety of enabling technologies.

Throwing away information isn't free, especially if the information must be processed extensively before disposal. For example, the level of security needed at this stage of the KM life cycle can be extremely high, depending on the nature of the information to be discarded. Since this may be the first and only time that information generated within the organization is handled by the public disposal system, the potential for corporate espionage or even accidental discovery exists. For example, simply throwing old servers and PCs in a Dumpster may allow the competition to recover the hardware and explore information on the hard drives. Someone, such as the librarian, must have the authority to assess the value of maintaining information in the corporation versus disposing of it.

Knowledge Management Infrastructure

The discussion of the Knowledge Management life cycle has assumed that an infrastructure of sorts provides the support necessary for each phase of the life cycle. This infrastructure consists of tracking, standards, and methods of insuring security and privacy of information. In most organizations, this infrastructure brings with it considerable overhead for both the company and the knowledge workers. For example, generating and maintaining information is difficult enough, but it also must be tracked, just as a book is tracked by a librarian in a public library.

Besides merely tracking information at every phase of the KM life cycle, standards for processing and handling information must be followed to guarantee security, accuracy, privacy, and appropriate access. Just as libraries don't condone readers replacing books on the shelves for fear that the books might be shelved incorrectly and therefore be temporarily "lost" to other patrons, knowledge workers must abide by rules established to maximize the usefulness of information throughout the KM life cycle.