Given the likelihood that a KM initiative will at least temporarily upset operations, from management's perspective, there must be a compelling reason for making the corporate-wide investment in an initiative. Often, however, initially there are more questions than answers. For example, how much will implementing a KM initiative cost, both now and over the life of the project? How long will it take to realize the benefits? How much will an initiative detract from the work in progress? What are the risks to the corporation? What of the return on investment, and how can it be measured? As described in more detail in Chapter 7, this latter determination is especially challenging, given that the current rules of accounting say that intangibles are recorded as assets only when they are purchased from another company, not when they are created internally.

The next chapter explores Knowledge Management with a focus on the source of much of the intellectual capital in a knowledge organization, the employee.

Summary

Knowledge Management involves rethinking how management relates to employees. At issue is how to reward the mentors and other knowledgeable employees for the incremental value they create in the company through sharing their knowledge. In many regards, the basic principles of Knowledge Management go against human nature, in that employees, as well as managers, are naturally reluctant to give up their hard-won advantages. This reluctance to share the real core of information isn't limited to business but is also prevalent in academia, which is established around KM principles. Researchers often offer statistical summaries and generalizations instead of raw data, and the technical details of leading-edge technologies are rarely published in a timely manner unless tenure or significant funding is at stake.