Journal of Universal Computer Science, vol. 7, no. 7 (2001), 548-549
submitted: 1/6/01, accepted: 5/6/01, appeared: 28/7/01 © Springer Pub. Co.

J.UCS Special Issue

I-KNOW '01

International Conference on Knowledge Management

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Knowledge management has become an organizational imperative for all types of corporate and governmental organizations. A key objective is to apply knowledge which resides within an organization to achieve the organization's goals most efficiently and cost-effectively. To implement knowledge management in organizations, different aspects from different disciplines have to be taken into account. Organizational aspects are required to define which knowledge should be captured and the way it is captured. A new knowledge-friendly culture has to be developed to support knowledge sharing and creation and to overcome the employees' fear that sharing of knowledge means loosing power. Finally, information technologies play a key role as enabling technology for knowledge management.

Successful knowledge management requires one critical ingredient: collective positive action to shape it, so that it properly contributes to the larger goal of achieving an added-value for organizations. Taking advantage of the potentially huge benefits of knowledge management will require significant changes in attitudes and practises among organizations and individuals. Fully exploiting the enormous potential benefits of successful knowledge management methodologies and tools requires a far more coordinated effort and a much wider overview than can possibly be achieved by individuals or single organizations acting alone. What is required is a platform which brings together an interdisciplinary group of organizations. Ideally, a group which does not only consist of organizations with a scientific background in information technologies, organization management and human resource management but also of companies which operate in knowledge-intensive market segments.

The Competence Center for knowledge-based Applications and Systems (Know-Center, www.know-center.at) is such a platform which strives to improve the cooperation between science and industry. The objective of the Know-Center is to stimulate pre-competitive research and development and to develop leading edge technologies in various fields of knowledge management together with and for its partner companies and scientific partners. The Know-Center is funded within the Austrian competence center program K plus (www.kplus.at) under the auspices of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology. Up to 60% of the budget is financed out of public funds. The participating companies contribute at least 40% of the budget. The Know-Center started operation on January 1, 2001.

The opening event of the Know-Center was organized as an international conference on knowledge management (I-KNOW '01) under the auspices of the Austrian Federal Minister of Transport, Innovation and Technology, Dr. M. Forstinger, the Governor of Styria, W. Klasnic, and the Major of the City of Graz, A. Stingl. I-KNOW '01 was also the kick-off of a series of an international conference on knowledge management which will take place every year in Graz, Austria. At the I-KNOW '01, invited high-level speakers from research, industry and politics address knowledge management from various perspectives: Leading scientists present latest research results, key players from industry report on best practices with knowledge management, and policy makers address the need of knowledge management of an emerging information society.

Revised versions of the major contributions appear as issues 6 and 7 of volume 7 (2001) of J.UCS. The high number of about 200 conference attendees indicates that there are more questions than answers in knowledge management. Many thanks to all who came to Graz to celebrate with us the opening of the Know-Center. We would like to thank the City of Graz for the sponsoring of our social event at the evening of the first conference day. Without the support of the Graz University of Technology it would not have been possible to hold the conference in such technically well-equipped premises. The Wirtschaftskammer Steiermark (Economic Chamber of Styria) provided us with further technical equipment – thanks for this support. And finally many thanks to the staff at the Know-Center for their perfect organization of the I-KNOW '01 and the editorial team of J.UCS for their tireless efforts to get both the conference proceedings in printed form and the issues of J.UCS ready in time.

Klaus Tochtermann and Hermann Maurer Graz, July 2001