

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

Before exploring the responses, I describe some of the characteristics of the participants, including the international natures of their practice and when they entered the field of knowledge management. This is followed by summary findings to the primary research question in terms of response to the survey question “What about KM excites your passion?” I then explicate the rich context of those responses. My second phase of analysis focuses on similar overall responses from across the interviews clustered around the areas (external stimuli, externally observed, self correlates, internally felt and internal stimuli) and elements of the framework as explicated in the literature review. Finally, I focus on the secondary questions with additional responses clumped and clustered around those questions.

Consistent themes—for example, learning, knowledge sharing, and the potential for greater good—run throughout the results. This is pointed out where it occurs.

The Participants

The 34 thought leaders identified and interviewed span four continents. They live and work out of Australia, Canada, England, Finland, India, Mexico, Poland, South Africa, Sweden and the United States. While 24 of these participants are based in the U.S. and 10 abroad, 27 (79%) have international practices. See Figure 3 below.

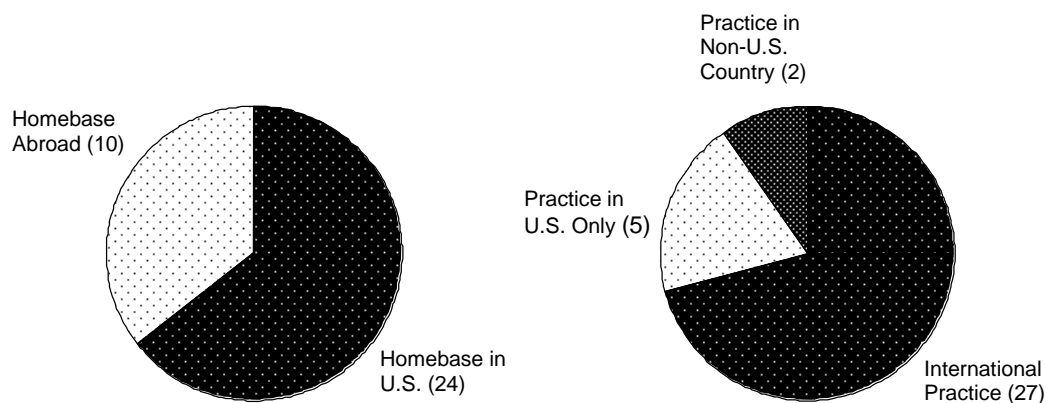


Figure 3: Homebase and practice frame of thought leaders.

These thought leaders can be grouped in terms of academic practitioners, consulting practitioners and organizational practitioners. Academic practitioners are primarily based in university settings. Consulting practitioners are attached to a specific organization (often owners as well), while primarily working with other organizations.

Organizational practitioners are primarily internal consultants. Other focus areas include one responder who calls himself a broadcaster and one responder leading an association who could easily fit into any or all of the three other categories. See Figure 4 below.

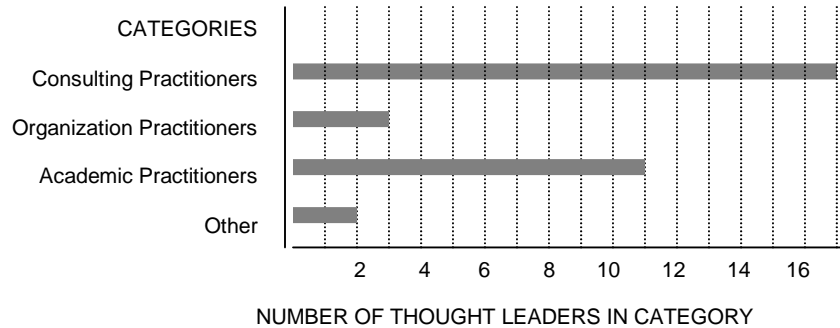


Figure 4: Thought leaders grouped by type of practice.

All but one participant refer to themselves as practitioners.

While four thought leaders were early developers of the field, half of the responders (50%) entered the field between 1994 and 1996, that is, have been involved with KM for 8-10 years (see Figure 5). This spike coincides with the rise of KM in the U.S., focused primarily on information technology, as well as a significant increase in published literature.

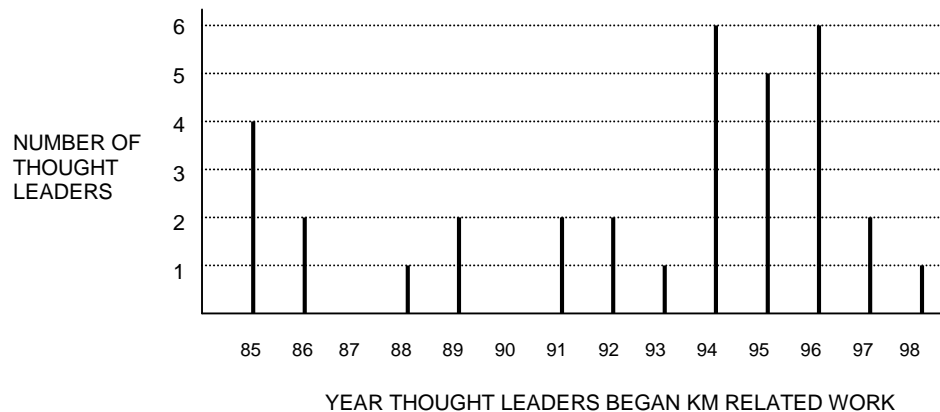


Figure 5: When thought leaders entered the field.

Of the 34 thought leaders, 25 (74%) were male and 9 (26%) were female. This strong representation of women as thought leaders in a management field is an indication of the openness and diversity of the field discussed later in the results (beginning at page 64) and again in the discussion (beginning at page 147).

The results presented below are a synthesis of over 50 taped hours of interviews resulting in 499 pages of single-spaced transcripts. In the words of one of the participants,

“Each person’s journey into knowledge management is a story. It’s a narrative . . . it’s got its own cast of characters, models, problems, tribulations, all that stuff.” While many of these stories were at least in part collected, they are not largely included as part of this study. However, you will discover the results provided as part of this research both passionate and rich with the thought of thought leaders.

The Primary Question:

The primary question is: *What aspects of knowledge management contribute to the passion expressed by KM thought leaders?*

As will be demonstrated, the aspects surfaced from the overall response span the entire spectrum of the passion framework developed in chapter 2, including external and internal inducers, externally observed and internally felt elements, and correlates to the larger aspects of self. This is a significant finding since it aligns the field of knowledge management with the seeds of passion itself. For reference, the framework is repeated at Figure 6. Since response to the specific survey question “What about KM excites your

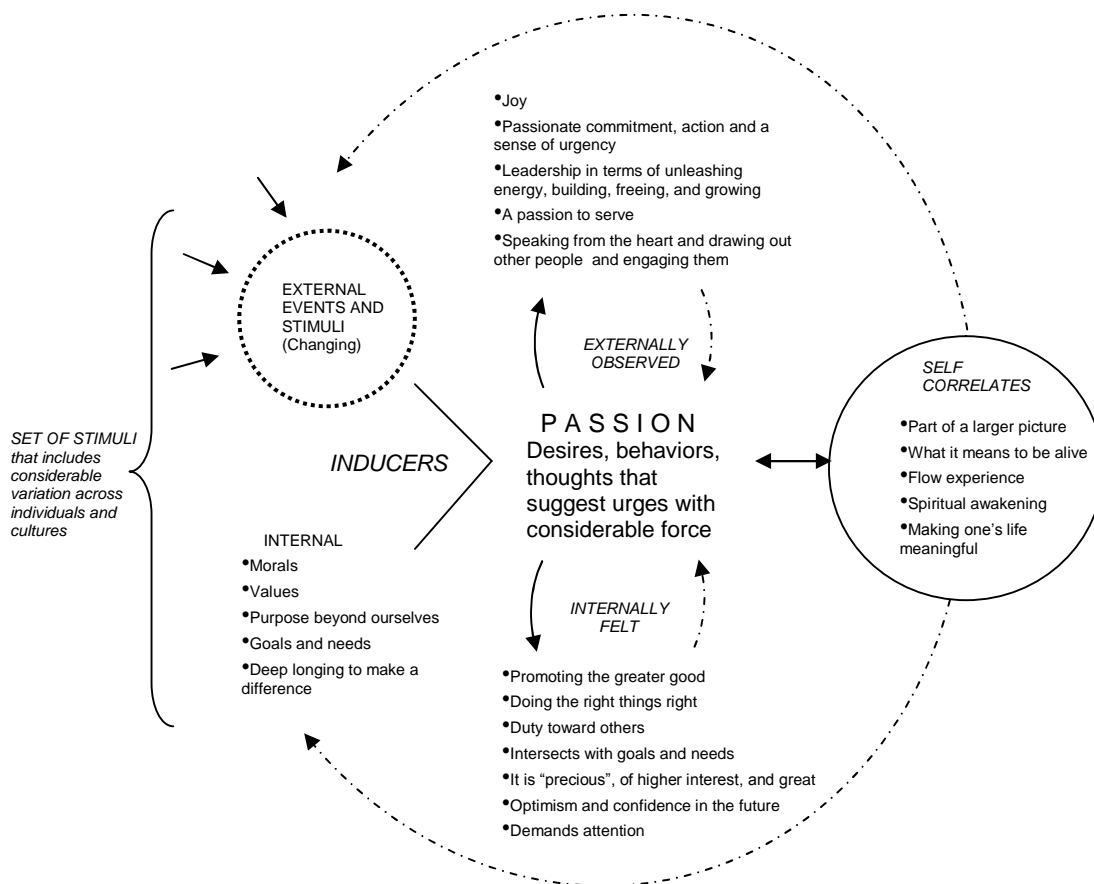


Figure 6: Framework repeated.

passion?” *calls out the field itself*, the breadth of the field (multidimensionality of experience) and the changing nature of the field as what thought leaders connect to passion, I will use the overall response to explore aspects thought leaders relate to the field that contributes to their passion.

In addition to the field itself (discussed in detail later in the results), specific external stimuli that surfaced from the survey question, “What about KM excites your passion?” include: the excitement of new thinking, challenges and opportunities, value and results, and a sense of knowing. The external stimuli in this grouping are summarized below.

The **Field** is spoken about in terms of when (every time, when we get a program going, and so forth); advancing the field; defining the field; understanding more about the field; and exploring the nature of knowledge. (The nature of knowledge is addressed at pages 64-66). The **Breadth of the Field** is in terms of the richness of multidimensionality of experience, including assimilating the technical and scientific and the crossing of traditional boundaries, and the amount of meat in the field. The **Changing Nature of the Field** is in terms of change itself, both in the nature of the field and in relationship to changing behavioral habits. (The nature of the field is addressed at pages 150-156.)

Value/Results is communicated in terms of the growing competitive advantage of knowledge in the world; improved performance of organizations and enterprises; results you can achieve; accelerated learning; the ability to use resources at hand to solve problems; and the opportunity for win-win solutions. Repeatedly mentioned was the **Transfer and Reuse of Knowledge** in terms of making it explicit; not repeating mistakes; and preventing knowledge from being lost to the next generation.

New Thinking was spoken about in terms of intellectual excitement and creation of new ideas; innovation; a shift in perspective and new view of reality; having the new and generating practice at the same time; networking and relational issues; and learning. **Knowing** is in terms of knowing the right questions to ask, and who to ask; knowing what you know; structuring what you know so it can be reused and shared; the collective capacity to move forward and deeper together around key issues that make a difference to our lives; harnessing the collective know-how, experience and intellect; and a sense that it is right.

Challenges and Opportunities are expressed in terms of the incredible opportunities and challenges; getting people to share knowledge; confronting moral and political dilemmas very openly; and moving decisions to knowledgeable people. There were also a specific set of challenges addressed including: the challenge of changing traditional power structures, the fiefdom challenge, the challenge of lost opportunity cost, the formal/informal inversion challenge, the challenge of getting stuck in the ruts, the challenge of dreaming the world together, and other challenges dealing with personal KM, organizational learning, creating value in the future, erosion, balance, learning a

new set of behaviors, being overloaded with quality methodologies, and convergence (see pages 82-90).

These external stimuli, then, contribute to thought leader passion as part of the larger set of stimuli represented by the framework.

Connecting These Responses and the Framework

The relationship of the elements of the framework and the aspects surfaced from the survey question, “What about KM excites your passion?” is clarified by mapping the elements and aspects, providing us a new way of looking at the data. While fuller responses to this survey question are provided at pages 51-63, highlights of this first group of responses were used for this mapping. It is noted that all the individual responses to this survey question viewed passion as a positive attribute, and the aspects that thought leaders connected with that passion are presented as positive. While it was expected that the words used by interviewed thought leaders would not be the exact descriptive terms of the framework, highlights of responses were clustered in light of their meaning and similarity to those descriptive terms in the framework. The result of this mapping, including the external stimuli presented above, is displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

Comparison of Interview Response to the Framework

MODEL BASED ON LITERATURE REVIEW (Elements)	INTERVIEW RESPONSE TO “What about KM excites your passion?” (Aspects)
CHANGING EXTERNAL EVENTS AND STIMULI	Every time I work with a client Every time I’m on a real project with real business issues Every time we are able to get a program going
(The field)	The field (all the time; always; everyday ...) The field of KM Advancing the field Breakthrough or important contribution to the field Defining the field Understanding the ideas behind knowledge intensive work The nature of knowledge
(Breadth of field)	Richness of multidimensionality of experience Assimilates the technical/scientific while exploring/thinking Crosses traditional boundaries Fair amount of meat
(Changing nature of field)	Changing nature of KM Changing behavioral habits
(Value/Results)	The growing competitive advantage of knowledge in world Better applications of ideas to specific business issues Improved performance of organizations An approach to solving enterprise problems Results you can achieve When you see emergence (of a solution)

	<p>Accelerated learning translating into more effective operation</p> <p>Ability to use resources at hand to solve problems</p> <p>Win-win situations</p>
(Transfer and Reuse of knowledge)	<p>Transferring knowledge without making it explicit</p> <p>Aboriginal storytelling</p> <p>Prevent knowledge from being lost to next generation</p> <p>Improving organizational memory</p> <p>Not repeating mistakes</p>
(New thinking)	<p>Intellectually exciting</p> <p>The creation of new ideas</p> <p>New way of looking at things</p> <p>New ways to do things</p> <p>Innovation</p> <p>Having the new and generating practice at same time</p> <p>Value of questions</p> <p>Something a little bit out of conventional wisdom</p>
(Knowing)	<p>Knowing who to ask questions to</p>
(Challenges and opportunities)	<p>Incredible challenge</p> <p>Incredible opportunities</p> <p>To get people to share knowledge</p> <p>Confronting moral and political dilemmas very openly</p> <p>Tensions in the field</p> <p>Challenge of moving decisions to knowledgeable people</p>
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EXTERNALLY OBSERVED	
<p>Passionate commitment, action and a sense of urgency</p>	<p>Need to integrate, synthesize, bring it all together</p> <p>Impacting performance in the moment</p>
<p>Leadership in terms of unleashing energy, building, freeing and growing</p>	<p>Changes KM brings to leadership and management</p> <p>To get people to build knowledge and get into situations where you create an environment for creativity and innovation</p> <p>Networking and knowledge sharing (the whole is greater than the sum of the parts)</p> <p>Changing the way people collaborate</p> <p>Living networks</p> <p>Watching the energy transfer</p> <p>Enabling conversations</p> <p>Wireless technology connecting people</p> <p>Network ideas</p> <p>Simple things create unexpected outcomes thinking together</p>
<p>A passion to serve</p>	<p>Working with people</p> <p>Power of theory to help people become intentional about what they know</p> <p>Building tools that engage more of the whole person</p>
<p>Speaking from the heart and drawing out other people and engaging them</p>	<p>People's ability to create extraordinary results with the right environment created by the proper knowledge-based strategy</p> <p>If you look at people from the knowledge perspective you start seeing their capabilities and aspirations</p> <p>Passion is catching</p>
<p>Joy</p>	<p>Fun</p> <p>Enables people to be happier human beings</p> <p>Joy dimension</p> <p>Makes work easier and more enjoyable</p> <p>It makes work fun, frankly.</p>
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CORRELATION TO LARGER	

PICTURE	
Part of larger picture	If these ideas take hold and work takes us to a more hopeful future for the planet Nourishment and cultivation of the future Something in it that's more
What it means to be alive	Human nature of these systems There was a sense of suddenly being a participant in some incredibly rapidly evolving, passionate ecologies, knowledge ecologies
Flow experience	Transformative nature Energizer for what I do One of those questions that can take you to another world I love it
Spiritual awakening	Suddenly see the world differently New way to look at the world, actually gives you new lenses and ways to look at the world Changes our perspectives and perceptions, our point of view Shift is underway The paradigm shift
Making one's life meaningful	It provides meaning to our own life People fulfilling something worthwhile in their lives Creates meaning
INTERNALLY FELT	
Promoting the greater good	Helping people make good decisions ... getting people to sense beyond short-term decisions Instilling appreciation for learning, knowledge sharing and application of knowledge through teams and individuals for organizational and personal growth It does a whole lot of good
Doing the right things right	Building organizations that perform well on a sustainable basis and where people actually have a sense of fulfillment that they're doing the right thing Lot of interpretation, it's so right
Duty toward others	Opportunity to help people view organizations in a different way
Intersects with goals and needs	I love the connectedness with myself, with my own thought, my own interest in life Advancing my own thinking Changes aspects of who we are Intellectually stimulating and challenging
It is "precious," of higher interest and great	Value of knowledge and what it can do for society, for individuals, for interactions between individuals
Optimism and confidence in the future	From the knowledge perspective you have a very optimistic view of the future
Demands attention	Attention as a constraint on KM and how it needs to be managed
INTERNAL INDUCERS	
Morals	People's beliefs are the group's knowledge
Values	Overall human value Work really worthy Value creation Learning things you feel are important and can contribute

	to the world
Purpose beyond ourselves	Seeing ideas light people's eyes up
Goals and needs	Creating the context for ordinary people to discover the extraordinary ways that they can co- create innovation and actionable knowledge around the things they care most about
Deep longing to make a difference	I'm not wasting my time. I'm making a contribution. Seeing the fruits of your labors I'm doing some real good here

As noted earlier and easily observed in this mapping, thought leader responses span the entire sphere of the framework. Recognizing that any model is an artificial construct to aid focus and the building of deeper understanding—and that many of the interview responses could fit in several areas of the model—it is notable that not only do the aspects expressed by the thought leaders interviewed *closely match the meaning* of the descriptive terms in the framework produced from the literature review, but many of the *words used to describe the meaning* are the same. This mapping, and comparison of the elements and aspects mapped, would appear to demonstrate the validity of the framework in terms of thought leader perceptions of aspects of KM that excite their passion.

As effective as simplifying the responses and using highlights of the fuller responses for the mapping process is in exploring and understanding the overall pattern of the responses, it is difficult to fully appreciate and understand the significance or intent of the aspects surfaced outside the context of the thought leader's wording and phrasing. Therefore, thought leader responses to "What about KM excites your passion?" are included below (pages 51-63).

Adding Context to These Responses

Overall, this response is about the work KM thought leaders do: their thinking, their feelings, their actions. In most of the responses, the passion around this field is evident in both their words and the way they talk about the field. As another indicator of passion, the sheer amount of response around this question was overwhelming. There are pages and pages of transcription, thought leaders talking *with passion* and *about passion*, with 375 separate thoughts expressing things that thought leaders use the words "passion" or "passionate" to address. This quantity of response is only equaled in amount to the discussion around personal values and how those values extrapolated across to the field (see appendix D). Explicated below are 107 responses to the question "What about KM excites your passion?"

Seven thought leaders expressed feeling *passionate about the field* in these words: "always," "all the time," "every day," "every time I'm on a real project doing this for real business issues," and "every time I work with a client. One thought leader said, "Every time we are able to get a program going, to get people to share knowledge, to get people

to build knowledge and get into situations where you create an environment for creativity and innovation, this is just plain wonderful.” Another responder, after expressing that she felt passion about this field every day was asked why she felt this way. Her response was, “I wish I could . . . I think partially because it’s so real and because it’s just logical, it’s just so simple. I mean gee whiz, *what’s not to love?* It’s like saying who doesn’t want motherhood and apple pie? But the fact is that I think we’re seeing some incredible results . . . when they happen they’re amazing.”

Several thought leaders talk about the connections between passion and the field. One responder says *KM as a discipline in itself excites passion.*

There is a fair amount of meat in KM that as you start peeling the onion you can go into any one of these sub disciplines . . . One of the things that is interesting to me is that the people making the most significant contributions are not the IT guys . . . KM is very, very *multidisciplinary*. So the need to integrate, to synthesize, to bring it all together is in itself very intellectually exciting.

Two responders recognized this field as all-encompassing of everything they had passion about. As one responder noted, “*KM is so encompassing* for me that it does encompass most parts of my practice.” Another thought leader said, “There was something in me that appreciated the value of knowledge and what it could do for society, for individuals, for interactions between individuals. I mean a whole host of things. I just had a deep appreciation for the power of knowledge but hadn’t seen any way to leverage that appreciation prior to KM.” One thought leader exclaimed, “It’s the wonder of it all! The wonder is that it’s an incredible challenge and it creates incredible opportunities. For many people it’s a new way to look at the world, actually gives you new lenses and ways to look at the world.” Another responder said, “I love the connectedness with myself, with my own thought and my own interest in life. So one of the things I really like about KM in my personal context is that it has the *richness of this multidimensionality of experience.*”

One responder observed, “People who get into KM are passionate about it, it matters to them.” This is not just an attribute in thought leaders, but appears to extend to those entering the field at all levels, a discovery of “*something in it that’s more.*” As one responder explains, “Other people see it too, and somehow or other when I describe it to my students they want to come back and get a degree in it! They’re excited. I don’t know. I just go through my course syllabus, some of the topics we’re going to cover, and it really gets them excited.” When asked why he thought this might be happening he responded,

It always seems to have to do with the mind. These individuals are people who are excited about the way they *think* about something. So, certainly the cerebral side of this kind of gets their saliva glands going . . . I tell them there’s no heavy

lifting, but there's a lot of heavy thinking. The prescribed effort hasn't scared any of them away yet . . . and my courses are the toughest ones they take!

He adds, "So the passion that I'm feeling at this stage is the capability to infect learners who are exploring this area with ideas that this is a tremendous area to be in."

Another thought leader also sees related passion in many of his students as well as young people entering the field. When asked why he thought these people were passionate he responded,

This is a lot of interpretation, but I think at least two things. One, the field is becoming very attractive, very sexy, because *it's so rich*, because *it provides meaning to our own life*. Second, it operates on a very pragmatic, professional level, *having the new and generating practice at the same time*. It assimilates the technical and the scientific research and exploration and thinking and at the same time it *confronts very openly with moral and political dilemmas* that have to be faced in daily practice.

Another thought leader says, "I go through these phases where I keep thinking this has got to get over, this fad has got to be dead . . . It's interesting to me that this movement or whatever we call it *just won't go away!*" In similar fashion, another responder states, "I keep thinking its dead . . . and that's the thing. If you take a look at the curve there are still a lot of people coming into KM, and all that material [early work], is still *very foundational* for all these new people moving into KM."

This concept of *tensions in the field* is presented by thought leaders in several ways. One responder saw a tension in terms of the scientific as the explanatory side, the technical side as the how to or engineering part, and the philosophical and ethical sides. He provides an example. "When working on social KM, which is knowledge-based development—knowledge cities, for example—there are a number of significant political and ethical issues that we must be well aware of such as to what extent a trend towards wiring up rural communities is really about helping development, or is it about promoting commercial interests?" Introducing another tension in the field, one responder suspects and personally believes that,

The relationship between Eastern and Western interpretations of knowledge and the congruence of these two makes one—particularly thought leaders—*passionate and excited about their work* in instilling the appreciation for learning, knowledge sharing and the application of knowledge through teams as well as individuals.

Another thought leader reflects on the tension among information, knowledge and wisdom.

I think the knowledge question . . . is one of those questions that can take you into another world, can take you very deep, and the deeper aspect of knowledge is wisdom. We haven't asked the wisdom question about business very often. But it [KM] offers the potential for us to work the tension between information, knowledge, and wisdom. What does it mean to be a knowledge-based organization?

Still another tension is global: the crossing of traditional boundaries. For example, one thought leader says:

What I'm very excited about and constantly amazed by is that when you create the simplest of initiating conditions for people or with people in a disciplined way they can predictably create the unexpected in terms of what comes out of their *thinking together*. The exciting thing about this work is creating the context for ordinary people to discover the extraordinary ways they can *co-create innovative and actionable knowledge around the things they most care about* . . . and to do that across traditional boundaries of various kinds, whatever those might be, whether they be cross-functional or cross-ethnic or different world views. To take action around any complex question that people really care about and to have contributed to both the research and practice of that occurring in people's real-life situations is very exciting.

Additional responses related to knowledge sharing appear later in the overall response results (see pages 77-79).

Four responses concern the value of pushing the field. One responder states, I think it's true, which is always a useful thing. I think, for example, information per se does not give a firm any advantage over time, nor a country. Knowledge does. I think knowledge—in the social way it's produced and understood—is *why some nations have advantages over others* and why some firms have advantages over others. I think it's true. And it's still not acknowledged in the standard models of nations and their growth and firms and their growth. So there's still a lot of work to be done to get it acknowledged, although it's getting there because of people like us, always talking and writing and getting the word out. It's still very exciting to push a different way of looking at organizations that I think is true.

Another responder gets passionate about advancing the field. "I don't think it's anywhere near what it can be. I don't think it's had the impact yet that it can. We have a number of areas that have not been explored yet." Another responder says, "Every time that I've encountered what seems to be a breakthrough or an important contribution to the field that's a period of particular passion about KM." And another says, "It's changing, *it's morphing*, it has some very interesting methods, techniques, principles in it, but the excitement of it is: if you can handle change this is where you should be."

Six responses focus on the value or the worthiness of these endeavors, both in terms of subsets of the field and *overall human value*. One thought leader is passionate about and committed to building organizations that perform well on a sustainable basis where people actually have a sense of fulfillment that they are doing the right thing. He says, “It’s very simple. Good, well-functioning organizations with a win-win environment where people have a sense of *fulfilling something worthwhile in their lives*, that’s something that really ignites my passion. That’s all I’m asking!” This field is his vehicle. Another thought leader states, “What makes me passionate are issues around creativity, value creation, people’s *ability to create extraordinary results* with the right environment created by the proper knowledge-based strategy.” Another thought leader observed that through this KM work *somehow he’s matched up a large group of people’s value systems with a process*. These people believe *it’s the right thing to do*. He sees a *direct relationship between the value system and passion*.

I guess when I say values I’m really talking about beliefs and then beliefs drive behavior. We often try to react . . . when we should really try and understand what people’s beliefs and values are, because that belief is going to drive that behavior. It’s an aspect of KM . . . *people’s beliefs are that group’s knowledge*.

Another thought leader says,

If you look at organizations and people and processes from the knowledge perspective, you have a very *optimistic view of the future* because of the potential win-win situations where we both can profit from the knowledge we have and share . . . So I guess this is the value proposition. And, of course, if you look at the people from the knowledge perspective, you start seeing their capabilities and aspirations.

Three thought leaders are passionate about the changes this field is bringing into leadership and management. One states, “*I live and breathe this everyday*, so it’s part of everything I do all the time . . . I’ve been very excited about understanding the ideas behind work that is more knowledge intensive. And I’ve been very, very excited in finding some basic changes in what organizational management should be all about.” Another recalls,

I felt passionate when I was sort of helping to define the role of knowledge, define intellectual capital in the first place. I felt that this was relatively almost brand new management material. There was an opportunity to create a real synthesis here that would allow people to view organizations in a different way . . . I said that I’m passionate about the belief that *management can be a force for good* . . . Good management has important effects on the world and helps make people grow, helps organizations grow, helps create prosperity, wealth and good things and that’s important.

A third thought leader tells,

There is this great metaphor of the previous traditional organization seen as a pyramid and having small brains and a large body, and then the new knowledge-era organization with all brains and no body, just brains connected in a network, with, of course, some leadership, but different in different projects and different aspects and different processes . . . I think this is a very important paradigm shift. It is important that you see as a manager you don't have to be the smartest one in all aspects of the organization. You are there to *lead them and inspire, not to know better* in all aspects. And you need to trust the people who are below in the structure to be better than you, and *know more than you what they are doing*. So actually moving the decisions in the organization to the knowledgeable people is a key KM challenge.

(See pages 82-90 for further examples of challenges and opportunities.)

One thought leader has passion about *helping people make good decisions*, Because if they don't make better decisions then the world can go astray. One of the things that makes me passionate negatively for the moment is how do you get people to make decisions which have an impact in ten years time? For example, decisions about the ecology . . . I don't want to think about what I've left my children to inherit. But how do you get people to sense beyond the immediate short-term decisions? That's something where KM has got to make the difference.

Another thought leader feels passionate when she is engaged with some group that is doing something that she defines as *really worthy*. She explains,

I've been working with groups who are involved in organ procurement. These groups try to encourage people to donate their organs. I've learned a lot about this process, and I'm just astounded that every 18 minutes in the U.S. somebody dies because there's not an organ available. So my work has been trying to help this group—through this knowledge sharing process—increase that time separation so that only one person a day dies because there's not a kidney available. So when KM gets tied to something like that, something that could really do the world a lot of good, that could be quite wonderful!

Another thought leader says, "How human beings react to this stuff is the most important thing. They are recognizing that we can only go so far with technology that we have to be aware of the *human nature of these systems*."

Improving performance of organizations is a theme carried throughout the response. One thought leader says,

The more reading and talking and working that I become involved in, the more I become fascinated with the challenge and potential of KM to make significant improvements both in organizational performance, private industry and government, and its application for individual professionals to help them consciously identify and manage their own knowledge to improve performance.

Another thought leader reflects,

The reason I'm passionate about KM is because I see it as an approach, a way of solving enterprise problems. It's the *ability to use resources at hand to solve problems*. It's really that simple. Maybe it's the engineer in me that is always out there looking for solutions to problems.

He pauses, then adds, "At the same time I'm feeling pleased and satisfied that some of the things I've been thinking and preaching are starting to come together. I mean, that's a moment when I feel very, very passionate because you *start seeing the fruits*." Another responder agrees. In his words,

When you get a client to work out a solution for themselves, because we do non-recipe-based consultancy, you actually have to sit back and listen and coach, which is contra to the normal consultant model. And *when you see emergence happen, that makes you passionate*.

Another responder notes, "Often it isn't the individual worker who has a problem, it's the system. And KM, if you work at setting up that ecology, can change the system, and that enables people to be happier human beings."

Kent Greenes says he is passionate just about every time he is *on a real project doing this for real business*. He shares a story,

In Algeria we were asked to go out to the Sahara Desert where a company was building its first drilling in what's called a brown field site, which is an oil field that has lay dormant for awhile, and then you restart it which means you have all these old maintenance problems. . . . It's a real sort of macho environment. . . . So there was the company man, the drilling guy, and now we're out at the rig and this is where he's boss. I listen. When he's done, I'm explaining sort of what we can do and as we're talking there's this big explosion. A lot of the people working there are nomads who sort of wander the desert like gypsies. Well, the supervisor had told this guy, this nomad, go cut one of those oil barrels in half so we can use it to put this waste in. What he didn't tell him was make sure there's no vapor or fumes in this thing before you get out the welding torch. So this nomad fires up that torch and puts it on the container and boom, it blows up right in his face. Now, he's not badly hurt . . . And I said, let's talk about what just happened. So we used that opportunity to right then and there—here's where my passion is—I

said, why don't we do an after action review right now? Instead of me telling you what this is about, let's do it . . . So it's being able to *actually impact performance in the moment*.

Three thought leaders are passionate about the value of not repeating past mistakes and not reinventing the wheel. One responder says about KM,

What it does is *make our life easier*. It's just so much better when we *know who to ask* without having to figure things out ourselves all the time. We're under so much pressure that anything that can save us time is great.

Another responds,

I do believe [with KM] that we can capture a certain shadow of an organization's or entity's existence and that shadow can give us significant insight into what went on within that organization, and while that organization is still existing can have significant impact to make sure that the organization doesn't keep committing the same mistakes over and over again.

He expresses his passion around organizational memory as a story,

I spent my first weeks in this company in Germany looking through tons of folders with materials from previous generations and I was seeing what was done by previous generations that we were not doing, and seeing that much value was lost . . . I was feeling really passionate to prevent this same thing from happening in the future, and actually seeing my work, what I was doing, would also be lost. This makes you feel that you need to do something. You need to *prevent knowledge from being lost to the next generation*.

How another responder expresses this is,

I hate reinventing, but I love renewing, and renewal means that you take what's been done before and you add to it to do something better. I think we should all be about that, and I think most people are, which is why I'm so passionate about KM. If we do KM right that means that people will have access to all the stuff that's been done before.

Still another thought leader has passion around his belief that whatever is can be improved, and *KM is a good place to start*.

Innovation and learning are prevalent themes in the responses. Indeed, innovation appears 127 times and learn/learning appear 577 times in the response. In addressing innovation one thought leader states,

There is no clear division between KM and innovation because the reason you want to undertake KM is for you to be able to innovate better. So, while the purpose of KM is action, the purpose when I start thinking about it really is *better* action, preferably better than has ever been thought about.

In addressing learning, one responder shares,

There's several things I really enjoy thinking about. One is creativity and the creation of new ideas. That's fun to think about, fun to talk about, fun to research, and I think it's beaten out of so many aspects of corporate life. So I think there are two things . . . one is that the hunger for rapid response that we have in today's world is driving ahead of what I consider the *natural rhythms of learning*. In other words, our technologies force us to have much faster response times than allow for the kind of reflective learning that seems to be so important to human progress . . . and attached to that is the idea that people can transfer deep knowledge, deep smarts.

Another responder shares, "What I'm most excited about is the possibility for greatly accelerated learning and direct translation from that accelerated learning into more effective operation." An aspect of learning is the ability to change our perspectives and perceptions. For example, Dorothy Leonard says,

One idea I'm pretty passionate about these days is that a part of knowledge—and certainly of wisdom—is the ability to *empathize with other points of view*. That imaginative ability is important in so many different aspects of life. Designers have to be able to understand their customers. Negotiators have to be able to see what the other person is thinking. But empathy is also critical in a lot of other aspects of business and government—and I'm not sure that people realize it.

Another thought leader values the human processes of synthesis and analysis.

The concept that "the whole is greater than the sum of the parts" is discussed by thought leaders in terms of *networking and knowledge sharing*. Networks/networking are terms that appear 183 times in the response and, as noted earlier, share/sharing appear 278 times. For example, one thought leader explains,

It has such tremendous *philosophical bases in the value of human beings* and what they know, and the value of collaboration. If there is one thing I am, it's someone that believes there is a greater good, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and *collaboration always ignites a creative, win-win* outcome. So I think that has continued to be what's driven me.

Another thought leader says, "I believe in the results that you can achieve when you implement these kinds of processes, when you rally people around the possibilities of

what we can do when you put two heads together and make all this knowledge accessible.” Another responder observes,

Recently it’s been very exciting to see the new ways people are using the principles and tools of KM, how it’s changing the way people collaborate virtually, how it’s changing the relationship between the organizational learning function and those folks that are focused on KM and collaboration.

Another thought leader shares,

It has given me an appreciation for the *power of theory* because, in fact, the concept of the community of practice itself has been *transformative*. Just because you introduce the new discourse it allows people to actually act on things they know already but they don’t quite have the language to make it real in their social systems, in their organizations. So actually if we can develop a theory, and let’s call it a discourse, a concept of discourse that allows people to become *intentional about things they already know*, then in fact we can have a lot of effect on the world.

In terms of *networking*, one thought leader states,

I get enthused, particularly now at this point in the game, almost every day when I’m talking to different organizations about network ideas and how they can be applied . . . when engaging with them in ways that also let me see new insights. So it’s a great deal of fun, great deal of passion for me to see how these ideas light people’s eyes up, and also to see how my own thinking can be advanced.

A second responder says,

The idea of networks and understanding them, not just in terms of knowledge transfer but towards better applications of the idea to specific business issues and around more holistically understanding ways that *relationships are important to people’s lives* beyond just knowledge creation and sharing . . . thinking about ways that *energy moves in groups*: ways that trust is created, how that underpins innovation, and ways that networks can lead to greater satisfaction in work.

A third responder says,

What has always been important to me personally are networks. In addition to the work I do in organizations, I’ve always felt it important that within the larger network of KM practitioners I view my job as being a boundary expander, a connector . . . part of what I do in the KM field is connect people.

Another thought leader explains, “What you do is create horizontal peer-to-peer networks so people can learn together and from each other. This is in fact substantially revolutionary.” Several get excited about the idea of *living networks*.

Two thought leaders are passionate about *enabling conversations*. One explains, “I’m focused on how we enable the right conversation to take place so that the right combination of people can have those brainstorm moments to drive innovation.” The second says,

A friend always likes to say that real knowledge exchange happens when the right people have the right conversation at the right time. And when we can create opportunities for the right conversation to happen in the right place at the right time, light bulbs go off and fireworks happen and there’s all kinds of great things, new ideas and possibilities rise that didn’t exist previously.

Knowledge sharing is discussed in many ways. One responder calls out the power of what you can do when you put two brains together. She says, “What I especially love is when I enable that to happen for other people, when I’m the broker.” Karl-Erik Sveiby is excited by anything that has to do with tacitness, the *ability to transfer knowledge without having to make it explicit*. “Just by seeing another person you learn a lot about that person . . . How can we improve this type of transfer? How can we create environments conducive to tacit knowledge transfer without having to make it through computers? And how can computers help us to generate tacit knowledge?” His current project looks at ancient aboriginal knowledge creation and the tools and methods they used to store and retrieve tacit knowledge, to make it trade from one generation to another over thousands and thousands of years, the storytelling. “This is not just any storytelling, it is aboriginal storytelling, which is quite a complex art. And this is what excites me at the moment.”

One thought leader says what he is passionate about is *working with people*, “helping them to understand that they share a set of knowledge. Often culture and language gets in the way, but it’s helping people see and share what they know with each other.” Another explains,

Well, I was passionate about how important knowledge sharing could be, so that led to a discovery of the importance of storytelling which I became quite passionate about as I saw that it was in some ways an even bigger idea. So I still have my passion in the knowledge camp, but I also have this passion related to narrative which is still connected with knowledge in some ways but has dimensions that are really quite separate from KM per se.

Madanmohan Rao talks about the intersection of technology and people, I am passionate that wireless is connecting us as never before! India, China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan are really pushing the wireless economy to and beyond its

limits, a theme I explore in my new book. They are at the emerging frontiers right down to changes in behavioral habits, changes in the way kids spell.

He goes on to build an analogy,

It's like music. As a music reviewer and former DJ, I think one of the amazing things about our world today is the blending and fusion of music. Forms of music are becoming even more fused with other kinds of music. For instance, I recently picked up a couple of albums of a musician from Malaysia who has blended Middle Eastern music with his and come up with entirely new kinds of music, stuff that never existed before!

KM is bringing knowledge—and the resultant actions—together in a way that never existed before.

Leif Edvinsson is passionate about the *nourishment and cultivation of the future*. Initially it was probably to measure it, and the second part was to cultivate it. Today it's been more the joy dimension of it, the energy comes when you have fun actually. What leads up to that is what I'm very much trying to learn more about, the neuroscience dimension of it. If you get a good story, a good narrative, you activate at least three parts of your brain, and that's where the energy is emerging and you could, for example, look into a hippocampus and see how that is your intelligence center, and that leads to either adrenaline or serotonin, and if it's serotonin it's the chemical of joy of life.

Three thought leaders talk about KM in terms of a shift *that is underway*. One responder states, "It's opening up a whole new world and *way of looking at things*." Another says,

KM is much larger than an organization or an individual, but nevertheless just as vital to the individual and organization because understanding, having insights about how the world works, or how a problem works and so forth, is absolutely essential as our environment becomes more complex, more rapidly changing and more uncertain. And *knowledge is the fundamental answer*.

Another responder shares,

I think it's a really good pebble to drop in the pond. I think that the things that I'm speaking to, if these ideas really take hold and work . . . that it really takes us to a *more hopeful future for the planet*. And I do care deeply about the planet. I'm very, very earth-connected . . . I believe these questions that we're asking in business around knowledge and complexity and how *is* value really created and honoring intangible assets and honoring the wisdom and knowledge within people

that we work with, these are the kinds of values that can carry us to a more hopeful future.

Numeric Pattern of These Responses in Terms of the Framework

In this first group of responses, in looking at the number of responses in each area of the framework, a simple pattern that emerges is an increase in the number of aspects mapped as we move from internal inducers to external events and stimuli. This pattern is displayed in Table 4. The number of external events is twice the number of aspects that can be externally observed, nearly four times those that can be internally felt, and four and a half times those considered internal inducers. This certainly makes sense in terms of the increased likelihood of surfacing information about external events and stimuli versus the likelihood of surfacing internal inducers and internally felt aspects from a direct question. This pattern indicates the need to take a closer look at the extended data to see if there is anything else it can tell us to facilitate our understanding of the internal inducers and internally felt aspects that play a role in the passion thought leaders feel toward the field of knowledge management.

Table 4
Number of Aspects Mapped to Areas of Framework

AREA OF FRAMEWORK	ELEMENTS IN THAT AREA	NUMBER OF ASPECTS
CHANGING EXTERNAL EVENTS AND STIMULI	The field; Breadth of field; Changing nature of field; Value/Results; Transfer and Reuse of knowledge; New thinking; knowing; Challenges and opportunities	45
EXTERNALLY OBSERVED	Passionate commitment, action and a sense of urgency; Leadership in terms of unleashing energy, building, freeing and growing; A passion to serve; Speaking from the heart and drawing out other people and engaging them; Joy	23
SELF CORRELATES	Part of larger picture; What it means to be alive; Flow experience; Spiritual awakening; Making one's life meaningful	17
INTERNALLY FELT	Promoting the greater good; doing the right things right; Duty toward others; Intersects with goals and needs; It is "precious," of higher interest and great; Optimism and confidence in the future	12
INTERNAL INDUCERS	Morals; Values; Purpose beyond ourselves; Goals and needs; Deep longing to make a difference	10

Exploring the Aspects through Overall Response

Given the observations above—and recognizing that the field itself is an aspect—those aspects that consistently reoccur throughout the response to the set of interview questions (see Appendix B) will now be compared to the framework to show they are aspects that potentially contribute to passion in a larger way, that is, are repeatedly brought up by multiple thought leaders across the overall response and map to the framework, and to see if we can discover other patterns across the data. This additional clustering, an expansion of the first group of responses specifically addressed above, provides focus on those aspects that are core to what is precious, of higher interest, and great. It is recognized that some of the responses have the potential to fit into more than

one area of the framework, and where this is the case it will be noted. I begin with an expansion of the external events and stimuli presented above which include: the field, the breadth of the field, the changing nature of the field, value/results, transfer and reuse of knowledge, new thinking, knowing, and challenges and opportunities.

External Stimuli

The Field; Breadth of Field; Changing Nature of Field

Recall from the framework the responses related to those aspects that excite passion: The field (all the time; always; everyday; the field of KM; advancing the field; breakthrough or important contribution to the field; defining the field; understanding the ideas behind knowledge intensive work; the nature of knowledge; changing nature of KM; changing behavioral habits; richness of multidimensionality of experience; assimilates the technical/scientific while exploring/thinking; crosses traditional boundaries; and fair amount of meat. To further explicate what thought leaders mean when responding they have passion about the field itself, thought leader responses around the nature of knowledge, defining and naming the field, and the life cycle of the field are explored below. Since knowledge is at the core of the field, it is appropriate to begin by exploring thought leader perceptions of what is knowledge.

The nature of knowledge. All respondents averred that there are multiple definitions and interpretations of the term knowledge, ranging from the Platonian concept of knowledge as justified true belief to simply understanding gained from experience. For example, one definition structured knowledge as truth, validated rules derived analytically by first principles or validated through experimentation. When asked the definition of knowledge, 32 participants provided responses. Twenty-five of these are included in Table 5, five are discussed under the category of “knowing” (see pages 81-82), and two responses, separately addressed below, are more descriptive in nature. Of the total responses, the definitions provided by 27 responders (84%) tie knowledge directly to action or use. The most common definition is summarized by: *Knowledge is the capacity to take effective action.* To take effective action one needs to have awareness of the context; understanding; know the theory, laws, and rules related to the situation; be able to exercise insight, intuition and good judgment; and anticipate expected results. From another perspective, Clyde Holsapple finds the definition forwarded by Alan Newell in 1982 useful, looking at knowledge as “that which is conveyed in usable representations.” By representations he means patterns that may exist: symbolic, digital, mental, audiovisual, or behavior patterns. The other key part of Newell’s definition is

Table 5
Definitions of Knowledge Provided by Thought Leaders

Knowledge is ...		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Information that gets put to use/action. •Information placed in context that has within that specific context and time value of trust and verification and can be picked up and used immediately for action or decision. •Information in action (with information as raw material and learning how it grows) •The capacity for action towards the future. •Information with meaning (it's personal). •A combination of the right information, the right skills and experience at the right time and in the right context. •The higher value-added forms of content with the most human contribution, the most ready for immediate use. •The capacity to act in context •Experience connected with some kind of action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The capacity to act effectively. •What enables the capacity to act. •Experience and insight that leads directly to someone being able to take action. •Action. •That which provides either the human understanding, or embedded understanding, to be able to evaluate, categorize information about something and then be able to deduce if you will or even infer what might be done about it. •The subset of information that is actionable and at least partially based on experience. •The property of human communities that have faced a series of similar problems over time and have developed a practice of how to deal with these situations. •Know-how, know-what, know-where, know-when, know-why about stuff in organizations. Actionable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Warranted belief (knowledge in action). •The ability to take effective action. •Information in context that is sufficient for an actionable understanding. •The capability to act in context. •That which is conveyed in usable representations (validity, utility and patterns). •The capacity (potential and actual) to take effective action. •The power that drives the activity, so that from the data and information you can make a decision, you can get a task done. •Intelligence plus certitude (a probabilistic function), which says that you do whatever you need to do in order to increase the probability of certitude as you move toward knowledge ... this is a paper exercise unless we use it to make decisions that lead to action.

usability. A representation that is usable suggests there is a processor that uses it, which then depends on the time, situation and context in which that processor is operating. So some knowledge that may be very valuable in one situation is entirely irrelevant or not so important in another situation.

The first definition of those more descriptive in nature is that knowledge is considered as the intellectual property of the individual (what we have learned through books, experience, and conversations with others). The second leans toward Karl Popper's identification of knowledge objects as the basis for understanding knowledge. For example, Michael Sutton says,

I'm actually using a framework or taxonomy to describe knowledge, knowledge existing everywhere from the most molecular level in terms of DNA and the coding that goes into that (and that's naturally created) versus the personal, psychological, philosophical beliefs held by an individual that cannot easily be shared (and their dispositions that they may not even be conscious of) to the abstractions that are codified for sharing purposes.

After a pause, he thoughtfully adds, “Yet, in apparent contradiction, I believe very strongly in the social construction of knowledge within our different realities . . . There seem to be knowledge objects within and without.” Another thought leader reflects, “What is missing from knowledge is any issues of ethics and what it should be used for, where it’s coming from, what the purpose is, and the overall context within which knowledge should be embedded.” Some of these issues were captured in later thought on ethics and values (see pages 113-115 and Appendix D).

What is this field? Definitions of the field provided by responders are almost as diverse as the responders themselves in terms of focus. These definitions were loosely grouped in an attempt to understand their intent. First, eight of these definitions speak to creating/managing an *environment* or context: creating the environment—an ecology if you will—so that good things will happen; managing the environment in which knowledge can be created, evolved, exchanged and applied into products and services that benefit a constituency; developing a program or an effort through which you can create an environment within which the organization can make the optimum or maximum use of knowledge in the performance of its day-to-day activities; creating a context where ideas are likely to flourish and transfer well in organizations; creating a sufficiently shared context that information is meaningful and the output of it is knowledge; creating a context to bring the reflective capability to the fore; and the care and feeding of activities that make people and organizations better capable of building and utilizing this thing that we call knowledge. One of these definitions comes from the viewpoint of leadership: leading to increase the capability to act in context by transferring this capability, and, of course, having the information level, competence and ability to process this information.

Seven of the definitions provided by responders are more descriptive in nature, including processes that are a part of knowledge strategies: the principles and tools and approaches that allow people to build knowledge assets and leverage them as part of how they do their work; the processes which include systems to collect, organize, validate, verificate and distribute, and archive information within context, within time, within certainty *for humans to use*; those systems and processes by which entities create, cultivate, and transfer that subset of information that is knowledge, usable and actionable; a collection of processes, policies and activities that help organizations better know what they know and use what they know; the processes whereby an enterprise uses its collective sources of intelligence to accomplish its objectives; the creating and transfer of knowledge; and how we can identify, develop and use the relevant knowledge in our organizations more effectively. Another thought leader defines KM as,

The efforts within an organization to manage knowledge resources; to organize, coordinate and implement and execute the activities that manipulate those resources; the influences on the actual conduct of KM, that is, what is it that influences the knowledge resources that we have within an organization, what is it

that influences how the patterns of knowledge processing unfold within an organization.

Four definitions focus more on effectiveness, improvement and value added: creating, renewing, sharing, and so forth, knowledge for better performance; organizational performance and effectiveness; a concerted attempt to improve how you create or distribute or use knowledge in organizations; and, systematic approaches to enable information and knowledge to grow, to flow and to create value both for the individual and the organization. Similarly, three definitions provided are worded in terms of value and growth of intangible assets: the art of creating value by leveraging intangible assets; taking systematic approaches to the growth of intangible assets; and, the growth or renewal of our intangible assets.

In addition, five definitions of the field focus on the concept of knowing (see pages 81-82).

The idea of the field *as strategy* is echoed by several thought leaders. One responder sees this movement as an overarching, strategic, enterprise-wide initiative—a multiple, simultaneous and very complex thing—which includes strategic, enterprise-wide multiple simultaneous initiatives. Another sees this field as the articulation of the value structure of an organization or community. Still another responder distinguishes three separate waves of KM, with the third wave focused on strategy. Wave one was about technology . . . KM started historically in IT departments. The second wave is communities of practice, where people realized that knowledge is not something you can simply put into a computer because it is a property of communities, so you have to engage these human communities in the management of knowledge. The third wave is to recognize knowledge as a strategic asset, and to realize that KM is in fact strategy, and that communities are a way to engage the organization in strategic conversations about knowledge. For example, Etienne Wenger says,

It is often thought that strategy belongs to the CEOs, the leadership team. In fact, when you're talking about knowledge, and if knowledge is the key to the capability of an organization, then managing this knowledge is managing the strategy of the organization, the knowledge-based, knowledge-driven strategy of the organization. So we have to be able to create that loop.

One thought leader stated that the field of KM allows you to perhaps build the materials to participate in good conceptual blending, that is, the human capability of taking a concept with some relevance into a new concept or mental model that has the potential to provide a better approach, a better solution, an improvement. In this concept *deep knowledge* is not something that exists, it *is a capability* that people have to perform conceptual blendings that fit the new context, the new challenges.

Therefore, you will *never have deep understanding of things yet to come*, you will get that deep understanding when the situation emerges, but a priori you would not have it . . . see, I think we're on a raft going down a white river and the actions respond when you get around the next corner and see the big rock in the middle. So, in essence, the field provides an approach to developing the deep knowledge capability needed to respond to and embrace an unknown future.

What do we call it? Again, given the variety of definitions of *what* this movement is, it is not surprising that the varied language surrounding exactly *what to call this focus on knowledge* is diverse and, consistent with thought leader passion around this field, often emotionally charged. In the course of the interviews, this area of focus was called: knowledge awareness, knowledge connecting, knowledge ecology, knowledge emergence, knowledge environment, knowledge evolution, knowledge innovation, knowledge management, knowledge navigation, knowledge networking, knowledge sharing, knowledge strategy, and knowledge transfer. It was also called collective intelligence, collective wisdom, competence learning, learning architecture, and organizational learning. Along the way it was also referred to as an approach, area, and era; as a culture of learning, discipline, field, focus, mentality, movement, revolution, space, and strategy; and as breakthrough thinking, nurturing, organizational effectiveness and threads. Karl Wiig offered that “Successful ‘KM’ is a *mentality* of how to deal with knowledge-related issues and activities, investments and the like for the purpose of promoting everything from learning to sharing but also for promoting innovation.”

While knowledge management is the term most prevalent in the literature—and was used 1,709 times by the interviewed thought leaders and, indeed, appears in much of the early literature produced by other thought leaders interviewed—21 of the 34 responders (62%) expressed displeasure with the term, and 10 of these (29% of overall responders) say they do not use the term at all. One responder added, “My clients don’t talk about KM either.” Four other responders use the term because of its popularity, but state that it is not a term they would have chosen for the field. As an example, Hubert Saint-Onge says that, “I use it because it is a conventional term. It is not a term that I am particularly attached to.” In addition, one responder avoids using the term and one responder would not provide a name for the field, for a total of 27 responders (79%) who do not agree at some level with using the term “knowledge management.” Among the 11 responders who *do* use the term regularly, 4 of these shared that *in the past* they had some disagreement with it, but have now achieved a comfort level with the use of the term.

Why expressed disagreement with the term? There are a number of issues. One thought leader states,

I have a problem with ‘KM’. I think it has become programmatic. I think that it has struggled and suffered because HR [human resources] on the one hand and IS [information systems] on the other hand tried to grab it and turn it into a program like Six Sigma or something like that.

Another says, “The word management has baggage. People are often offended by the idea of someone else managing their knowledge.” Another says,

You know, after doing it so long the label just kills it. You know ... you really can't manage knowledge. You can kind of help steer it, guide it, move it, but managing knowledge ... how do you manage experience? And I think it turns a lot of people off because they think that's their brain and they are supposed to manage it.

As one responder noted, “It's an old paradigm way of looking at something that has the potential to be truly transformative, so that means it diminishes its importance by framing it in that way.” Another responder adds, “All the people I respect don't like the term!”

One thought leader who supported the continued use of the term knowledge management noted that while most people say KM is an oxymoron, that if knowledge is really the critical strategic asset that people say it is, then you *have to manage it*. The question becomes *who* manages knowledge ... and the people who are in the best position to manage knowledge are the practitioners who use that knowledge in their work. Another thought leader who continues to use the term observes, “I think there's a lot of soul-searching happening in the whole field of knowledge management in terms of whether the term KM is even good to describe what you are doing. And many people continue to do hard core KM stuff and say, oh I don't do KM anymore, or I would rather use another term to describe what I'm doing. Or people say I find this too much hype in the pot, so they want to distance themselves from this concept. But I still think it is a very good concept ... I still think a lot of work has to be done.”

Several responders saw the term as a *useful bridging concept*, a way of bridging from an industrial framework and language and structure into a new way of thinking (and acting). As one responder explained, tying the term knowledge (which is people and the stuff inside people, stuff that certainly cannot be managed) to management begs people to reframe the way they think about what they thought management was in the past. As a summary thought, Verna Allee shared,

Now there will never be a definitive answer to it and it's not important. The important thing is ... the real management question is ... what do we pay attention to in order to be successful? Clearly in this economy knowledge is something you have to pay attention to as a leader, as a manager, in order to be successful in your business. That's what people need to go with. It's not about the answer, it is getting their awareness onto the right question.

A common framework. Several thought leaders see the field as still seeking a set of principles, guidelines, theories, laws and so forth by which one can operate. For example, Steve Weineke states,

A common framework would allow the community of knowledge practitioners to appreciate the *complexity of KM*. If constructed using ontological techniques, we would all be able to see and understand the depth and breadth of disciplines, the relationships between each discipline, and any interdependencies. The framework becomes the taxonomy or the ontology to enable sharing the knowledge of knowledge.

In contrast, two other thought leaders questioned whether any agreement could be found.

Several thought leaders see this diversity of thought as a benefit in terms of the ability to use any of a dozen acceptable definitions dependent upon the specific focus of work and the comfort level of clients. For example, Ramon Barquin states that, “The ability for KM to be accepted by organizations is called out in terms of its *nebulous and loose nature*, specifically, its lack of focus and the difficulty in answering hard management questions such as: What will it do? What’s the payoff? What’s the ROI?” Yet another thought leader noted that the diversity of views on what KM or even knowledge is and how it can be used in an organization is probably healthy at this stage . . . it’s a bit too early to standardize on one particular curriculum in the field. As he points out, “There’s still room for a lot of creativity that emerges from tensions that exist between different viewpoints.”

The rise and fall of the KM life cycle. When asked where knowledge management is in its life cycle, responders offered very distinct and different responses. However, the common thread running throughout is that this focus will continue and, in the words of three thought leaders, always be here. For example, Melissie Rumizen reflects,

This has been since 1995 . . . I’ve seen it formally recognized and what constantly amazes me is that there seems to be a continual stream of people just now discovering this . . . in some cases individual companies, in some cases countries. For example, there are arid countries in Europe that have figured this out, South Korea and Japan have got this figured out and are starting to work on it. So as I look around the world I see it in different countries and within those countries I see it within organizations. If it was starting to die out, I’d wonder where all these people were coming from. And they continue to come.

Looking at all the responders and as shown in Figure 7, 33% place KM at a very early point of evolution, 17% place it somewhere in the middle in terms of the Gartner and Forrester models, 20% see it as maturing and being integrated into the fabric of organizations, 20% are seeing a rebirth, a rediscovery around the world, and 10% think it will always be here, it is just not going to go away, it is at the early stages of a life cycle that is not going to be a life cycle.

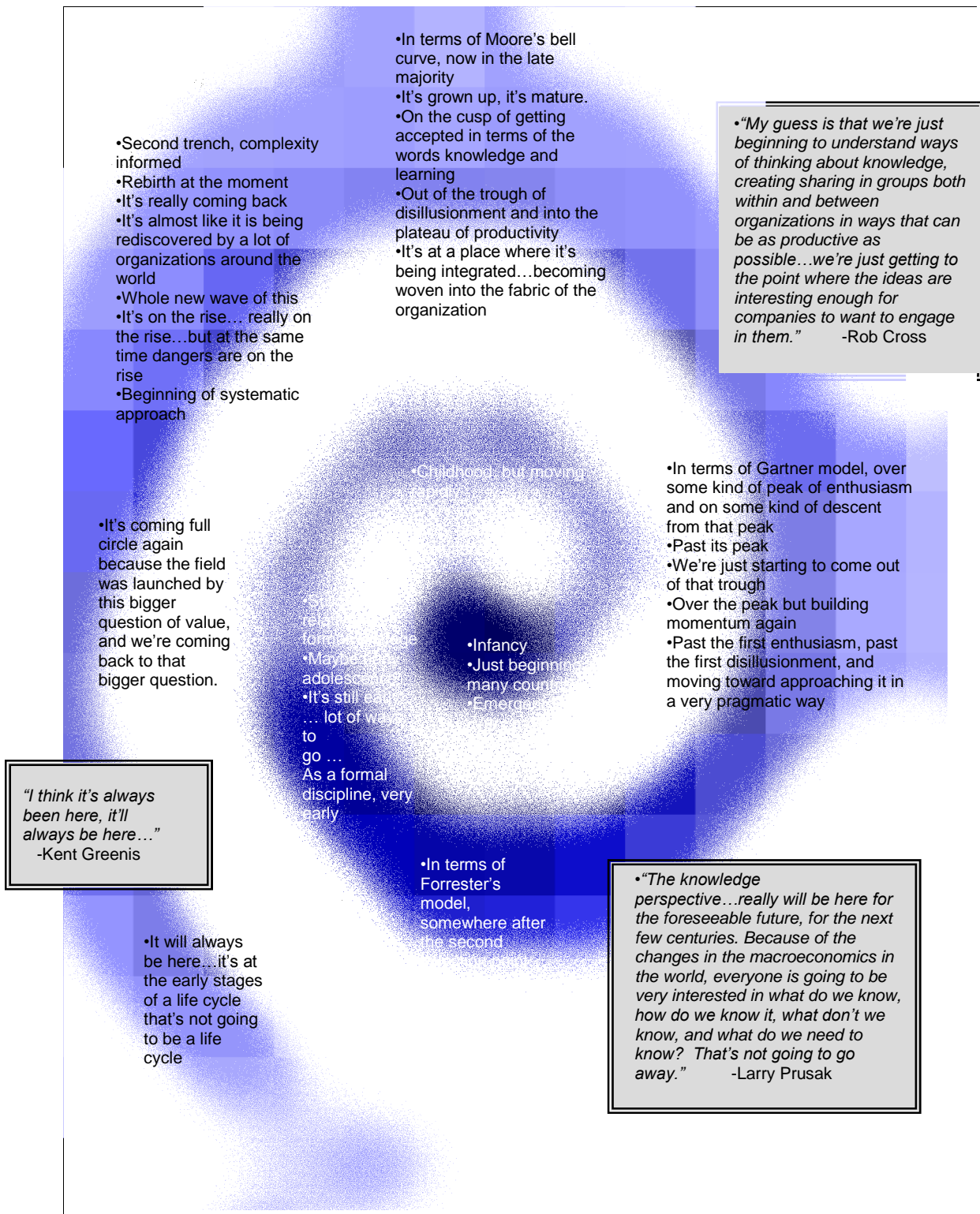


Figure 7: Life cycle of knowledge management.

One thought leader describes this life cycle in terms of the types of people who are passionate about KM. As David Snowden says,

People who get into KM are passionate about it . . . it matters to them. You get a lot of people in KM. We went through the first cycle and we got the arrogant guys and the power brokers and the people who seize on each big management trend and ride it, then abandon it and move on to the next one, and you can see lots of those around. But as they went through they attracted to them those who really cared about the subject and those people carried on after they moved on, and gradually we had the period where people know that technology doesn't deliver. So what you have now is the second trench of KM, complexity informed and systems thinking informed, which is much more people orientated and championed by people who are not ambitious to lead the firm. I think that's key.

One thought leader who said this knowledge focus was at the *beginning of actually approaching this whole proposition systematically*, thought that it would probably *morph with the years into a slightly different thing*, but would always encompass learning and building and development of capabilities *in line with the strategic intent* of the organization. Another thought leader noted that this movement is starting to have children that are overtaking it, that a lot of the different components of KM *have taken on a life of their own*. This, he shares, is both good and bad, because the minute you lose the *holistic concept* you are in trouble. As a part of knowledge management, you have got to deal with the issues of capturing tacit knowledge, deal with communities of practice, put in place the technology to enable those communities, develop locators, and deal with enterprise architectures and customer relationship management, and so forth.

Value/Results

While not having any inherent value, knowledge, itself, makes some sort of a value statement. As one thought leader notes,

Knowledge itself does not have value in the sense of morality or ethics. So if one has knowledge through KM, one can misuse it just as well as use it. Knowledge may well have value in a practical sense in the real world depending on the specific knowledge, the context, the problem, and so forth; that is, value in terms of organizational performance, value *to* the organization, not moral and ethical values *of* the organization. In fact, you could have a highly unethical organization that in theory would be highly competent at managing knowledge and have high performance as measured by their numerical measures.

Value itself is always in the eye of the beholder, shares one thought leader. If I give you two tickets to a Marlins game, and you're not a Marlins fan, no matter how much I value them or what the price was on the tickets, it may not

have a lot of value to you. The implication is that when we talk about sharing knowledge and so on, it's fundamentally about the relationships of the person sharing it and the person receiving it, and both of them getting value out of that.

In contrast, knowledge itself is valued in many countries. For example, Madanmohan Rao explains,

In the Indian culture, knowledge is very highly regarded, and manifestations of knowledge like books are very highly respected. If you see anybody accidentally kicking a book or stepping on a piece of paper in India, you will find them bending down to touch it so as to beg for forgiveness. That is knowledge, and you should not defile a piece of knowledge. We even have a Hindu goddess for knowledge! So, in the Indian culture, knowledge is very highly respected.

Another thought leader has a vision, still fuzzy, of this whole area around knowledge economics and knowledge value.

And the valuation of that, not just as intellectual capital but something else, and I don't know what that something else is. So an area that I see as an incredible future opportunity is finding some way to develop the appropriate econometric measurement tools to show what the assets are in an organization which would position it well for competition and to be a leader in its sector.

Value of KM to individuals. Value to the individual is addressed throughout the responses in terms of learning, new ideas, networking, knowledge sharing, and so forth, and in terms of “work really worthy.” In overall response, the terms learn/learning appear 577 times; the term idea(s) appears 700 times; the terms network(s)/networking appear 168 times; and the terms share/sharing appear 278 times in overall response. Figure 8 pulls together a myriad of thought leader response in a “thought bite” clustering response around the value of KM to individuals. For example, KM has been referred to by one responder as having a human and humane agenda. Every thought presented in the thought bite was pulled directly from the interview data. This thought bite provides another way of processing the results. (Further response around the focus on people begins at page 151 grouped under a passion to serve.)

Value of KM to organizations. The question “How is KM changing organizations?” was asked in the active form, referring to the change currently underway in organizations. Thirty of the 34 participants (88%) agreed that KM was indeed changing organizations. One thought leader says she thinks it has had a major impact on organizations even if they do not like the term KM! She goes on, “It would be very difficult to find a major corporation now who didn't think capturing and sharing what they knew would make a difference.” Another responder noted, “I think it's bringing organizations a lot of *humility*, to realize that they are so incredibly dependent on the intelligence of people and

“The Wonder of It All”

- Thinking is evolving
- Ah has!
- Learning
- Grows on itself
- Helps me make better decisions
- Builds individual capabilities
- Ability to create incredible results
- Intrigue of hidden knowledge

Knowledge

- Way of looking at the world
 - New view of reality
 - Grinding new lenses
- Changes the way people think about the world
 - Whole new set of dispositions on the world
 - Taps into new understanding and awareness



- Living networks
- Value of connectedness
- Enabling conversations
- People continuously grow and learn from each other
- Ideas start to clash in interesting ways
- Power of knowledge sharing
- Empathize with different points of view
- Energy moves in groups
- Innovation



- Put pebbles in the pond
- Co-create innovative and actionable knowledge about things we care about
- Nourishment and cultivation of the future
- Challenging the establishment
- Toward a more hopeful future for the planet

- Connectedness with myself
- Defines me
- Empowers our own identity
- Changes aspects of who we are
- Helps people be all they can be
- Philosophical bases in values of human beings
- Enthusiasm around possibilities

“Human and humane agenda”

Figure 8: Thought bite on the value of KM to individuals.

have so little control and influence and understanding about how it really works.” A third responder laughs, “Well, [it’s not changing organizations] as much or as fast as I’d like, but I think the word [KM] has entered the organizational vocabulary. It’s become part of the discourse of organizations.” Other responses are explicated below.

Six thought leaders think it is *changing the structure of organizations*. One responder said,

I think it’s taking organizations more away from the Tayloristic model to delegating decisions and providing the knowledge and understanding required to

be able to live up to the delegations. Along with the delegations there's a new understanding of the fact that people have to be provided with the knowledge to take on responsibilities . . . It's absolutely *changing the way we work*. And from a systemic perspective it changes the way we organize our organizations.

A second responder stated,

I think it's changing organizations in that it removes hierarchical oppression. It removes alienating management in a sense . . . because people will just gravitate toward other networks. What it does is bring a much more natural exchange of value and contribution that will have a tendency to have people contribute to the best of their abilities as opposed to being circumscribed by very narrow boxes as we had them in the last 4 or 5 decades of the industrial revolution.

A third responder notes,

Well, it's not finished. I don't know what the potential is because that's a journey we are discovering, but I think the journey has helped us understand that when we talk about the knowledge organization we talk about complex social processes, and the *complex social fabric in which knowledge exists*. In some sense we are recognizing that an *organization is not organizable* in principle, so we have to move from an industrial model of the bureaucratic organization to a knowledge-era model of an organization in which community, belonging, and identity are an essential part. It's inherent.

A fourth responder states, "In those organizations where I see KM work, it has an incredible flattening effect that I would never have thought I'd see." And a fifth responder says,

I think one of the great changes is our belief that social systems are goal-oriented and work with a pre-given structure or goal. I'm talking about two structures: one is the organizational structure and one is the structure of visions and goals. So there is a preset idea of what we are and where we are aiming, and I believe that knowledge-intensive work—KM and the ideas that we are discussing—are changing this. Organizations are going to be *much more dynamic and much more emergent* than has been the case. The whole approach of what effective action is and how you can create effective results is changing tremendously, and the biggest change is to *organizational science*.

A sixth responder says,

I think it gets back to Senge's definitions of what a learning organization is, constantly being able to *increase the capacity to create their future*, this idea of

thinking about a company as being a living entity and its capacity to learn and to expand.

A related theme is the focus on the changing nature of value. One thought leader says,

Well, it is changing how companies see value or organizations *create value*, and how this value is then extracted and divided in the companies between different stakeholders. It's not just the very powerful top management, but all the *stakeholders who are now taking part both in the value creation* and then in the divisions of the value which is created.

Another responder says, "I think it does help that we have come to recognize the value of what's in people's heads and hands in terms of knowledge and skills." Another says, "I think organizations are trying to reward people on the knowledge they bring, the knowledge they create and the knowledge they transfer." And another says, "They are going to be able to get out of the industrial age and start using intangible assets rather than just tangible assets." Still another says,

I would say that it is in some sense moving towards the *democratization of organizations*, the legitimizing and recognition of the knowledge that we have at the front line. And it seems to me that means we value those workers more and they value themselves more because their voices are being heard and legitimized.

Specifically focused on knowledge handling, one responder says,

This is a very big topic. Our work indicates that yes, it is indeed making changes, is bringing to the attention of people in organizations the importance of *knowledge handling problems* whereas years ago these may not have been recognized. I am convinced that by giving this conscious attention to KM that the creativity of persons . . . begins to flourish and organizations come up with better ways in terms of technologies and practices for really exploiting their knowledge resources and their knowledge processors. I'm convinced that this results in enhanced productivity for organizations, greater agility, improved innovation and greater reputation. I'm also convinced that much remains to be done.

Finally, one thought leader states,

It's making a significant difference because *people are quickly learning that there are benefits*, albeit sometimes intangible to organizations who do that . . . so it's improved those organizations which have accepted KM and started using it . . . and I don't know the number and I don't think anybody knows . . . In the U.S. if I recall there are about 11 million companies. How many of those 11 million have

even heard of KM? I don't know. It could be 50,000, it could be 500,000. I suspect it's not nearly as many as need to be.

Transfer and Reuse of Knowledge

In the framework, this element was connected to passion in thought leader responses in terms of the transfer and reuse of knowledge, the challenge of getting people to share knowledge, networking and knowledge sharing, changing the way people collaborate, living networks, watching the energy transfer, and enabling conversations.

Knowledge sharing is both a necessary characteristic of a thought leader in terms of contributing ideas, *and a primary concept of knowledge management* as explicated in the literature review (pages 16-17; 19-20). In like manner, participation in this study was a demonstrated act of sharing, that is, in terms of access for participation, agreeing to participate, giving permission for their names to be used in this study as participants, and agreeing to having quotes tied directly to their names.

Knowledge sharing and the power of knowledge sharing is specifically discussed throughout the response. In the overall survey response, the words share/sharing appear 278 times, and were used in some manner by every thought leader interviewed. For example, while telling a story regarding the handling of nuclear waste, one responder stated, "I was passionate about helping them see how important it was for them to share their knowledge."

Knowledge sharing is also couched in a variety of descriptive terms. For example, one responder talks in terms of market influence and flow, KM organizations that

are actually evolving at the same pace as the market because they have a *complete flow of information, an uninterrupted flow of information*, where *people take into account their experience* in the market and can turn to the organization and shape the organization to meet those challenges.

Another speaks in terms of collaboration.

There's an increasing emphasis (not just because of KM) on *being global and being collaborative*, and the different structures that collaboration can take. We're beginning to realize that there are many ways that you can collaborate, many structures . . . *Things are possible that were not possible*.

Knowledge sharing also permeates the discussion around creativity and innovation, and is the principle upon which communities of practice have emerged. Communities are also related to passion in the literature review.

The passion around knowledge sharing is not just in the power of the sharing itself, but in the *challenge* of sharing. For example, Karl-Erik Sveiby has passion about anything having to do with the ability to transfer knowledge without having to make it explicit. Currently, aboriginal storytelling is exciting him. (See also the discussion of hidden knowledge at pages 105.)

Some of the responders connect purposefully to others, some engage in open exchanges that lead to new ideas, and some are affected, almost subconsciously, by interactions over time. An example of connecting purposefully is the response, “I like what I write to be connected to my own and other’s research . . . so you take other’s ideas and blend them with yours, or push them forward, or use them as a support for the way I’m thinking.” An example of an open exchange is the response,

I had a conversation in the 80’s actually sitting in an office tower in San Francisco. We called it mindcrafting, crafting our minds for doing something along the road, it’s like crafting on a piece of wood but crafting on minds.

An example of being affected over time is the response, “By nature I’m not wildly interested in technology, and yet certainly those who’ve written about technology and knowledge management have played a big influence on me, and I have read them and they’ve changed my views.”

Two responders referenced “unnamed thought leaders” as both creating new ideas for the field and helping them create new ideas. For example, one responder says,

I see thought leadership in many, many places. I see *people who really do knowledge work* in an organization. They aren’t viewed as thought leaders, but they are really doing it, they were really artful . . . and I thought to myself, you know people think I’m a thought leader. I couldn’t do that. So who’s the thought leader? I was really inspired.

Similarly, two responders brought up the idea of *tiers of thought leaders*, noting that there are (a) giants in related fields who have contributed to knowledge strategies but hold their focus in their primary field, (b) the widely-recognized thought leaders of the field, and (c) individuals who are less visible, working behind the public scenes, serving as leaders in associations and/or organizational implementation. One responder referred to this third set as “micro thought leaders.” Several thought leaders expanded this concept further to include those “who are enormously gifted and talented, and whose ideas are actually permeating everyone else’s work but who are not recognized.” For example, Verna Allee explains,

These people are the ones who have helped all of us in moving forward, sometimes not by what they wrote or their speaking, but maybe the questions they

ask. To me, these are the people who are the real thought leaders, the ones tackling the really hard questions.

While agreeing that he was influenced by other thought leaders, one responder explained *KM is a complex system*.

I don't know what words or articles that I read or which presentations I saw were decisive, or how each of those has influenced me. It's like a constant mixture of what I hear, learn, see, observe, what I do or think . . . So this is, I guess, constant turbulence that you have in your head, and all those thought leaders bring you input which either explains something or challenges what you already know, and puts the whole system into turbulence again.

Another responder shared a similar effect: "I look at a variety of references . . . and synthesize and integrate them, and then it becomes *hard to pinpoint one source from another*." Another responder tells a story about spending some time with a major thought leader in international politics who was very humble, a good listener, and a very quiet speaker, and suddenly the responder found himself spending a large amount of time in his conversations with others talking about this thought leader's ideas and how they merged with his ideas. He had not only begun to enculturate those ideas into his own intellectual space, but had started to appropriate some of the thought leader's demure!

Several thought leaders specifically called out the importance of not repeating mistakes. For example, one responder said, "I think it's forcing organizations, or enabling organizations, to think about not making the same mistakes twice so they can spend their energy not on what they've already learned collectively but on what the next best thing is." As will be noted in the discussion, this was identified as a primary external stimuli.

New Thinking, New Ideas

As a point of interest, the term idea(s) appears 700 times in the response. This would be expected since the creation, sharing and reuse of ideas is core to the field. One responder says,

There's a lot of fresh new ideas that are still applied to our work. So I believe that there are many things within economic sciences that are totally false. For example, the idea of rational decision-making, and a lot of those basic beliefs that we've based our ideas on, like the idea that competition is the best means to get efficiency. That's not the way nature works. *Nature works through collaboration being the best means toward efficiency*, and I think that many things are going to be seen through new eyes in the very, very near future.

The challenges and opportunities explicated at pages 82-90 are potential areas to spur on the development of fresh ideas.

Thought leaders not only contribute new ideas to the field—and share those ideas—but continuously spur each other forward in a cycle of new idea generation. For example, one thought leader stated, “I don’t think I had any thinking until I met them [other thought leaders] . . . In many respects, talking to them has sort of created a framework of ideas for me.” Esko Kilpi shares the potential offered by his exposure to the new ideas of other thought leaders.

If I see that there’s something that I haven’t been able to see before, and I see a new approach, I see in a way *a new view of reality*. Then, of course, what I’ve tried to do is combine that with my earlier experience, which means that I get new approaches to who I am and what I do.

Ramon Barquin reflects on the integrative role played by other thought leader ideas. The contribution that has been made to me by some of these folks is that it has *brought it all together*. This thing comes together and is very powerful because two plus two equals seven . . . it takes awhile to get there and not everyone gets it, but when you have it all coming together it is very, very powerful!

In random order, short responses to how responders have been influenced by other thought leaders were: “Learned a lot from all;” “all of them have influenced my thinking in different ways;” “I’ve learned absolutely brilliant ideas from all of them;” “laid a foundation;” “I’ve learned a lot from all those people;” “forms the baseline from which I augment and grow;” “been very influential to how I think;” “so many ways;” “pretty much everything I know has come from them;” “a lot;” “each of them has given me new streams of thought to ponder on;” “very much;” “provided pearls of wisdom;” “influenced a lot;” and “talking with them and being challenged has been a great influence on my thinking.” One responder shared, “I was welcomed into the community and I felt so incredibly validated.” Similarly, another responder noted, “They’ve been extraordinarily nice to me.”

A core theme connected to new thinking is *learning*. As noted earlier, the terms learn/learning appear 577 times in thought leader response. One responder says, “It [KM] has made me pursue understanding in areas that I previously had no interest in or understanding of, like cognitive science.” Another says, “I wouldn’t do anything without learning before doing.” Still another talks about moving from a student to a guide,

There’s been an evolution from the eternal student to . . . still being the eternal student, but what’s come forward is the teacher aspect, the educator aspect, a guide perhaps might be the more appropriate word, a guide to help people into a different way of seeing and understanding.

And from another responder movement towards a new form of learning, “It has continued to make me into an individual who must learn new ways of interacting with people, because my natural tendencies are to be very monastic.”

While this new thinking certainly includes learning and the creation of new ideas, as clearly seen in the above responses, it is also talked about in terms of shifts, thinking about the world in different ways. This shift was also inferred in several responses to the survey question “What about KM excites your passion” presented on page 62, and is a major theme in the responses focused on energy changes explicated at pages 118-125. In the responses not in these groupings, several other thought leaders talked about a *shift in perspective*. One stated, “The most important way in which it has changed me is in the ability to look at problems from a different perspective.” Another said,

At the most extreme, it’s shifted the way I look and think about pretty much everything in relational terms and, I laugh about this all the time, I am the boy with the hammer everywhere I go. I can see a *network or a set of relational issues and situations* that most people don’t see.

Another began, “I believe I understand more, but that’s not particularly helpful . . . I can’t say it’s changed me except . . . well, I begin to see things differently.” Still another said, “It gets back to this idea of multiple perspectives and beliefs.” And another shared, “I’m a totally different person, totally different person. I don’t think that learning or knowledge is the thing . . . I think that KM is really helping people to *not only think differently but to make their analysis from a different perspective*, which means that you are a *different person*. So it is developing you as a person, and changing you as a person.”

Knowing

Five responders focused their preferred definitions of knowledge around the concept of knowing. Several of these definitions of knowing still reflect the focus on action. For example, John Seely Brown says,

Knowing has much more to do with *knowledge in action*, and we *know* infinitely more than we *have knowledge*. That is kind of a key differentiator I think. For example, why stories are so important . . . because they will bring knowledge into play. It also has to do with why when I approach something and interact with it, it’s almost like something is going to pull the relevant stuff out of my head and I can now do something. But I can do things I don’t even know that I can do.

As a second example, Juanita Brown tends to think about knowing collectively, “which means knowing together . . . and so to me knowledge has to do with the discovery of an inner knowing that is an embodied thing that enables the *capacity to act*.”

One responder sees knowledge as:

The very simple, know-how, know-what, know-where, know-when, know-why about stuff in the organization, and if it in any way infuses the individual with some knowing experience other than the mundane side of the informative aspect of data, then it has knowledge qualities.

Another responder sees knowing as a social phenomenon. “The experience of knowing is very much ours, but our ability to know is related to our engagement with community . . . then knowing is the experience of participating as an individual in this process of knowledge defined at the social level.” Yet another responder reflects that knowledge is probably more related to the knowing dimensions in terms of “you have a sense that it’s probably right. Knowledge is more an iconized package of the knowing, so it’s easier to share.”

Similarly, five definitions of knowledge management focus on the concept of knowing: it’s about what you know that you know; structuring what you know so it can be reused and shared; the capacity collectively to move forward and deeper in our knowing together around key issues that make a difference to our lives; and harnessing the collective know-how, experience and intellect of a group of people or organization. As one responder explicates,

The things that you know that would be helpful to other people, or things that you don’t even know that you know that would be helpful to other people, that sort of comprise that which we are trying to share and collaborate around with the outcome of improving the way the organization runs.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges. The passion connected to challenges appears throughout the response. The challenges connected to KM are communicated in many ways. I begin with a series of KM challenges championed by specific thought leaders. These are: the challenge of changing traditional power structures, the fiefdom challenge, the challenge of lost opportunity cost, the challenge of getting stuck in the ruts, the formal/informal inversion challenge, and the challenge of dreaming the world together.

The challenge of changing traditional power structures. Leif Edvinsson uses the metaphor of three watches to present this challenge. It goes like this:

When you see three watches—the market clock, your own watch, and the organizational clock—are they in sync? Usually not. Which one of those is the slowest going watch? That is usually the organization clock. That clock is a means to get to the market given your ideas and aspirations as an individual.

Consequently, the organization is always running behind, and the more behind it's running, the more problematic. That's why we are in this kind of institutional failure.

And the challenge?

The organization should not be a blockage, it should be a springboard. That is why I am in this question search . . . how do we develop the right kind of springboard to release the human potential rather than lock it up in old labor contracts, in old kinds of organizational hierarchies?

The fiefdom challenge. Tomasz Rudolf tells a story.

I'm seeing every day an example of organizations that have many small kingdoms where people fight each other, destroy each other's ideas, and build their positions by destruction of others and destruction of the potential of the company. It's partly because they really do not see the win-win, and because their performance management systems work against KM and knowledge sharing, and leadership does not strongly support this, showing people the value of it and promoting good examples and success stories. And we can see the impact that this has on the company and its image and its employees and the energy level of the company, and it impacts the bottom line very clearly. So it's a very pressing problem for many companies.

That is the challenge. How can KM address this challenge? Tomasz Rudolf's response:

I've seen KM, from this very airy foggy concept, move companies to some very concrete actions that need to be taken by moving decisions to the knowledge worker, stretching their goals, helping them with knowledge and mentoring. So I guess there is a lot of potential for organizations to improve themselves, gain operational excellence and improve innovation performance by simply sharing knowledge better and collaborating, not just internally but also with partners as well as companies.

The challenge of getting stuck in the ruts. KM is so full of pragmatics, you get occupied with the details. As Karl Wiig explains,

It's a different thing. There is so much work to be done on the detail level as well, and connecting the detail to the underlying mechanisms, again, that there's an unending process . . . you know the story about the diamond and the little bird who came to sharpen its beak on the diamond mountain? It's probably a European fairytale. In the end the little bird has worn down the diamond mountain, but it takes such an inordinately long time. So we are really in part of that process . . . There are multiple dimensions, technology, business, all kinds of

things, so when you start looking at the 1001 practical ways of doing KM it becomes a morass, and the fact is that we have to start perfecting each one of these 10,000 perhaps, building communities of practice and networks.

So how do you pull yourself back out of that? Karl Wiig shares, “I get too tired ... somebody comes along and asks me to give a keynote on societal KM ... it pulls you right back up.”

The challenge of lost opportunity cost. As Leif Edvinsson says, If we don't *increase our insights*, we are becoming more ignorant or dumber with a growing cost for all of us, either in the war against terrorism or other defense issues or traffic accidents or financial turmoil. That's where you see the connection to institutional failure. If we have built institutions to leverage the human talent and they are becoming obsolete, then we have to focus much more on how these organizational capital institutions of tomorrow should look. The challenge is, when you're looking for the new institutions you usually go backwards because it's familiar, and people are searching for the new in safe harbor areas. If it's familiar we think it's less risky, we know that it worked before so it will probably work tomorrow. But it won't.

The formal/informal inversion challenge. Organizations today are fundamentally in the industrial model where you have formal and informal structures. Etienne Wenger explains,

In some sense in industry the informal has to be in the service of the formal because your primary source of value creation is in your design. In the kind of organizations that communities of practice help us understand, there is an inversion of that relationship. You still have the formal, and you still have the informal, the identities, the passion, the engagement, the conversations, but those become your primary source of value creation. *So the formal has to be in the service of the informal.* I think that's a profound shift. It's not that the formal disappears. I don't go all the way to saying that it is purely self-organizing in that sense; there is still a place for the formal because *as human beings we always act with an image of the systems in which we participate* even when these systems are complex and not imaginable . . . we still have an image. And because we have that image, I think there is still a place for design of organizations, but the design now has to be *in service to the engagement of human beings* with their identity in the world instead of the other way around.

The challenge of dreaming the world together. Verna Allee shares, When I was doing some research on how we learn together as a group, I looked at serious studies about how people change from understanding things one way to collectively understanding them differently, and basically there is no body of literature. We do not know how we really *dream the world together!* And that's

exactly what we do. We just dream it up. Everything that we touch, everything that we create, is an idea . . . and it's an idea or a dream, if you will, that we had together. We don't really understand that process of dreaming together, or thinking together, or evolving our ideas together.

You can hear the pause in her voice as readily as you can hear the question mark at the end of every following thought:

It's the question of how everything comes in and out of being and how are we as humans, through our thought magic, through our thought talent, how are we co-creators to manifest different things into the world? How do we really create the society that we're all a part of, and what is the process for how that emerges through our thoughts, and our shared beliefs, and our shared understanding? Beliefs are ideas that we think are true, yet differences in those beliefs often put us in conflict and cross purposes because we are *literally in different worlds*. If we can't drill down to that level of assumptions and beliefs and be able to work collaboratively, collectively at that *very fundamental place of creation*, then how can we possibly create a more hopeful future? How can we dream a different kind of future together if we don't even know how to do that?

How indeed?

Some thoughts about KM challenges from other thought leaders interviewed include: the challenges of personal KM, organizational learning, creating value in the future, erosion, balance learning a new set of behaviors, being overloaded with quality methodologies and convergence. These are briefly explicated below.

The challenge of personal KM. Understanding KM for individuals and how to plug into an organization with a KM perspective for employees, for students coming into the workforce—to be able to ask themselves continually, “What am I learning from this job?” Three thought leaders interviewed said they were currently writing books on PKM (personal knowledge management).

The challenge of organizational learning. Organizations have to continually learn as well as the people in organizations—and basically, organizations hate learning! Their historical structure is not open to learning.

The challenge of creating value in the future. As the work itself becomes more knowledge intensive, it means that there is no hope of being successful without systematic approaches to ensure that your most important elements of value creation are there and are improving and transforming.

The challenge of erosion. This offers a tremendous threat—that you are connecting people with the *wrong type of organizational capital* and thereby eroding the

human potential. For example, a very good soccer player with the wrong team. You erode that person's potential. If you put a good researcher into the wrong lab environment you erode that potential. *The same goes for when you lock people up in the wrong nation.*

The challenge of balance. Those interested in knowledge—knowledge practitioners, people who develop knowledge, scientists, professors, philosophers—have a double edge. They are doing it for themselves, they certainly want the *recognition of their peers*, while they want to *contribute to the public good*. There is a real sense of this. Even if you are a big egotist, you are still writing things that others read, unlike other activities where that is not the case. So there is a balance, and the challenge of keeping that balance.

The challenge of learning a new set of behaviors. We are operating from different principles; there also has to be different kinds of behavior that go with that. People need to learn how to be *accountable to each other* for the work they are doing. Communities of practice and interest and the way people are learning to support those communities (learning communities) are actually beginning to build the skills that we need to live in any self-organizing world of business.

The challenge of being overloaded with quality methodologies. We have not redefined the work. We are still trying to do everything that was done before and do it perfectly and better than anyone else, but still with the same best practices! *New and different is not a function of best practices.* Knowledge is unique, it is not a matter of what anybody else has ever done before. *It is up to you!* And that goes for individuals, groups and communities, enterprises, and it goes for nations and our world as a world.

The challenge of convergence. Organizations are going to struggle with the loss of power-type positions that they have enjoyed in the last economy as we move more and more to a networked world of business. There is convergence between the forms of social network and the business network and how all this works as society moves toward this.

Opportunities. One question specifically asked participants what future opportunities lay in KM for organizations, and another asked what future opportunities there were for individuals. Both opportunities and challenges emerged in response to these questions. As an example of those responses, one thought leader says,

I think it has the ability to make organizations more vibrant, more efficient, more innovative and at a societal level for us to—if we were able to collectively realize these ideas across organizations as well as within—push society ahead in terms of innovation and the way people are living.

A representation of the responses regarding opportunities are included below. The first group of responses focuses on organizational opportunities, the second on individual opportunities.

Opportunities offered to organizations. “The sky is the limit!” exclaims one thought leader. Another says, “This whole movement—let’s call it whatever the name is you want to use—offers the opportunity for organizations to become wise together, or wiser together.” Some key concepts introduced by other responders regarding the future opportunity offered to organizations by KM are competitive advantage, progress, sustainability, innovation, learning, performance, access and reinvention.

Regarding *competitive advantage*, one responder states, “I think that’s the end game. There’s no sustainable competitive advantage to an organization except what it knows and how it uses what it knows. That’s it.” Another says KM offers the opportunity for well-architected and managed progress, better than we have ever done before. Another says it’s the whole sustainability thing so organizations do not lose their memory, to learn from our mistakes. “All organizations make huge mistakes and most of them don’t learn from them very well . . . to create better knowledge-based products and services.” This theme appeared in other areas of the research results.

One responder states that KM offers the opportunity to participate collectively in creating innovative thinking around things individuals really care about that are shared by others, whatever those might be. Another notes that KM also offers the opportunity for increased learning. “Fundamentally both individuals and organizations can learn more. That’s what communities offer.” This is also a theme appearing in other areas of the research results. From network terms, one thought leader says that this field presents a great opportunity to help people think about our relational load and where it exists in the company and whether it is effective or not. “You always find overload points in networks that are constraining the whole group in ways that are often invisible, or you find people that are very marginalized in networks in ways that can hurt as well.” Another thought leader reminds that KM offers the opportunity for organizations to be more effective because they are able to access more of what is known in the organization, broader than their personal knowledge and yet legitimate. Another responder talks about the opportunity offered for our organizations to reinvent themselves.

I think organizations right now have a waste of energy, an enormous waste of energy—rational, emotional and social. If we look at all the human elements that are in our organizations and we deliberately cultivate them, I think that we could really, really enormously leverage that potential for the organization.

Opportunities offered to individuals. The following response specifically focuses on the large opportunity offered by KM to individuals. As one thought leader states, “There is still a lot to explore. This is a young field. There is still a lot to learn.” Another responder says, “Joy, ‘*ah has!*’ and health and wealth!” Still another sees the future as the sum of aspirations and learning, “In learning we’re talking about knowledge. Knowledge, of course, can also change the aspirations, so all this has a profound message for the future of individuals.”

Karl Wiig speaks to the quality of life,

In terms of the individual, it will hopefully, as we learn better, be possible to improve the quality of life. But the quality of life of an individual does not mean more cars, more television sets . . . What I'm saying is that the quality of life is very much in the eyes of the beholder. What it *does* mean is that by allowing people to essentially build knowledge to prepare for achieving objectives, KM might be very, very valuable. And of course education becomes very, very important when it comes to preparing a society to participate in the global environment.

Tomasz Rudolf agrees, "By better understanding the philosophy of KM and the knowledge economy, people can change their mental models of careers, organizations, their role in society, and value creation." He goes on to talk about some of the things still left to do.

There is still a lot of free thinking to be done of what is going on. Even if we take the society or national level, there is a lot of KM connected work to be done, and many problems which simply occur because we cannot understand each other. This is a challenge that is also connected to transferring tacit knowledge, transferring feelings and perception, not just information. So, on a personal level people can really benefit from better understanding it, and probably the world would be a better place if people would really understand it, and if our educational systems would be designed to help us really understand this.

Supporting Wiig's statement that this can help improve an individual's quality of life, one thought leader says KM can *empower our own identity*. Identity is the ability to sense and respond to our own value dimension, anything from our own body, mind, emotions and anything that we regard as significant in the sense of response. One responder states, "You get a profoundly different view of yourself when you start thinking in terms of knowledge as an input, knowledge as a process and knowledge as an output. It's a *way of looking at the world*." In that same vein, another responder says, "This field helps you develop an appreciation for what's around you . . . the implications are pretty huge."

There were several opinions regarding *career opportunity*. One thought leader stated, "Certainly what I've seen from the people that are passionate about it, it's actually created a nice new career for them that wasn't there a few decades ago." As Larry Prusak reflects,

I think it's the cat's meow. It has huge opportunities . . . you can't make much money making things in America any more. Those days are gone . . . What are people going to do in this country? I used this sentence in a speech . . . If

something can be done in China or done by an algorithm it will be done in China or done by an algorithm . . . Among those things that still need to be done are things related to knowledge and learning: teaching, coaching, helping people, providing environments for knowledge.

Dave Snowden sees *complexity-based KM* as the next big thing.

And I think KM is migrating into complexity because it deals with the same issues, at which point it's the new Taylorism. So it's going to be a period for generalists. I think people who have become deep specialists are going to have a real problem for the next 10 years. The people who are generalists, who are eclectic, who read in different subjects, are going to suddenly find themselves inside the mountain. So it's a huge opportunity for people.

Geoff Malafsky feels that because knowledge has been recognized as a *really key value* in organizations, there's going to be a continuing diversification and separation of subfields around KM.

So they'll be a cottage industry that grows up around collecting the key knowledge of retirees and key employees and stockpiling that . . . that will require one type of person to do the collection and one type of procedure to do the processing. Then there's going to be another cycle which deals more with the origins of the KM field which is distilling and encapsulating critical knowledge for run-time use. That's like frequently asked questions and knowledge bases, so there's an investment in the back office that has to go into collecting and distilling all that and putting it out there for people. Then there's going to be a third arm, which takes it and continues to move toward the continuing basic science and technology development of information and knowledge fusion and all the components therein. I think that's a long-term problem.

From another viewpoint, Tom Davenport says when students ask about writing a dissertation on KM he hasn't been too positive about taking up a career in KM because he's just not really sure it's going to be around long enough. He explains,

As a perspective, maybe, but will there be knowledge managers in 2010? I don't know. I'm not sure enough to advise people to take that approach. So I say, learn a lot about knowledge and the attributes about knowledge. *Knowledge obviously isn't going anywhere*. It's going to be quite pervasive in our society whatever form it takes, whether it's KM or collaboration or embedded in other IT things. If you know something about it I think you'll probably be more successful.

One thought leader sees the opportunity to use the concept on yourself as an individual and think in terms of your own knowledge base and, in a broader sense, use

KM as a perspective in enabling you to ask questions. This is the idea of personal knowledge management introduced earlier.

Clyde Holsapple thinks an interesting area of research in the near future will actually look at personal KM, that is,

what practices and technologies can an individual use to enhance their own what we might call knowledge handling quotient, that is, to enhance their own productivity, their own agility, their own innovation, their own reputation. I believe there are many opportunities there that have not been explored very much yet.

Several other thought leaders agree with him. For example, Hubert Saint-Onge says,

Fundamentally what we're talking about is the ability for people to interact more naturally, more easily, to compliment their own skills, to learn faster, and to find their ability to contribute, growing meaningfully throughout their career, constantly renewing themselves and finding relevance so that they don't either get fixated or kind of peddle in place. So what we're talking about is a place where *people constantly grow and learn from one another* and I think that's kind of, almost, an ideal utopia to achieve.

External Events and Stimuli Summary

A combined summary of the external events and stimuli detailed in the earlier response to the survey question “What about KM excites your passion?” and the responses in this area of the framework from the overall responses is presented as a “thought bite” in Figure 9. These, then, are the external events and stimuli or external aspects associated with KM that contribute to thought leader passion.

Summary of Overall Responses in Other Areas of the Framework

Focusing on framework areas other than external stimuli, the larger body of thought leader responses—which follow many of the same themes focused in the direct response to “What about KM excites your passion?”—can be mapped to the framework elements. The close relationship of this response to the framework is demonstrated in figure 10, where representative quotes from the interviewed thought leaders have been inserted in the format of the framework. (See figure 6 at page 46 for comparison.)

This close mapping of representative aspects from the overall response to the passion framework supports the thought leader response that the field of KM itself excites their passion. To fully represent the specific aspects surfaced in context, the representative quotes used in Figure 9 are expanded and explicated below. These

responses are clustered using the areas (externally observed, self correlates, internally felt and internal inducers) and elements of the framework.

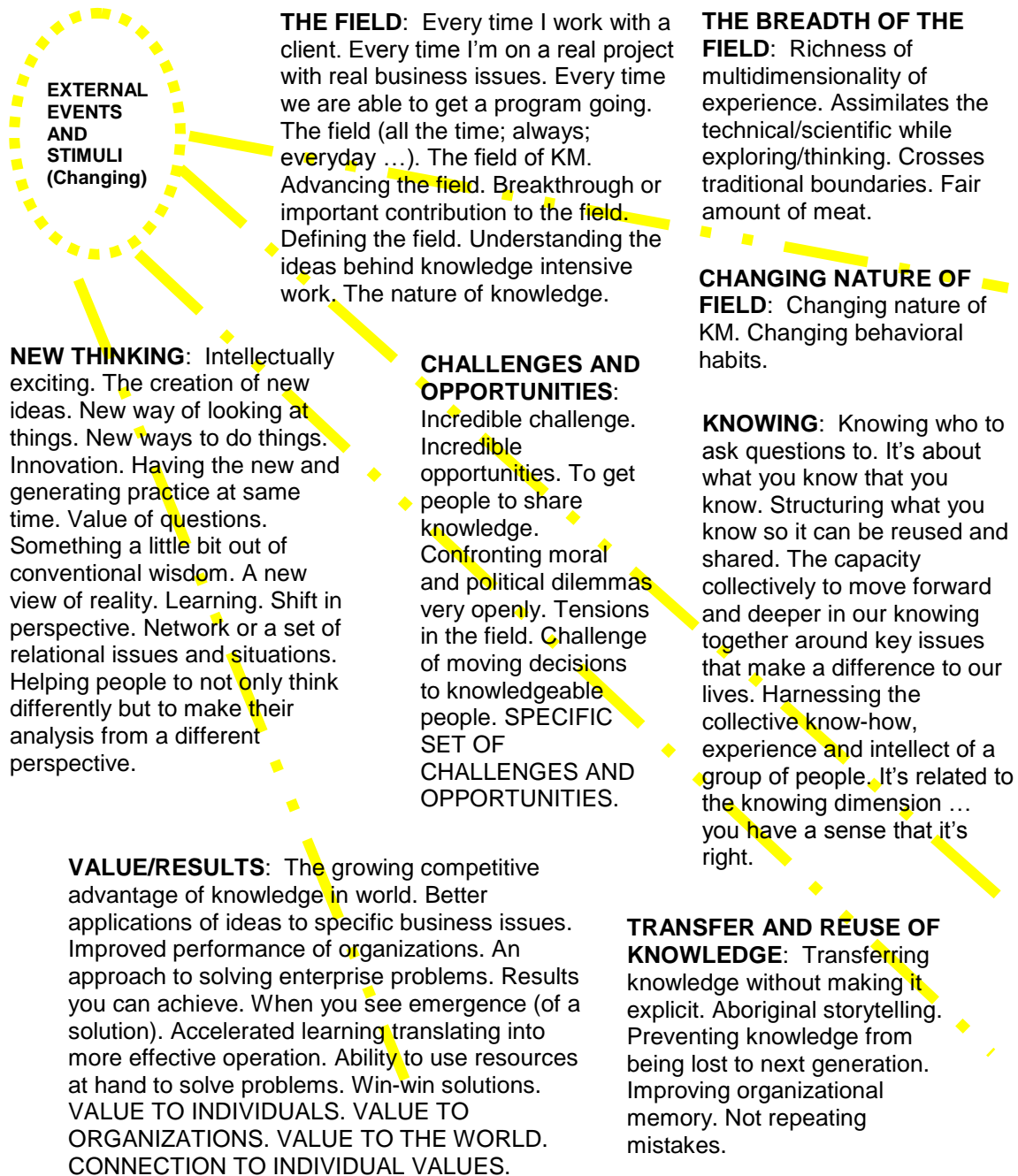


Figure 9. Thought bite on external events and stimuli.

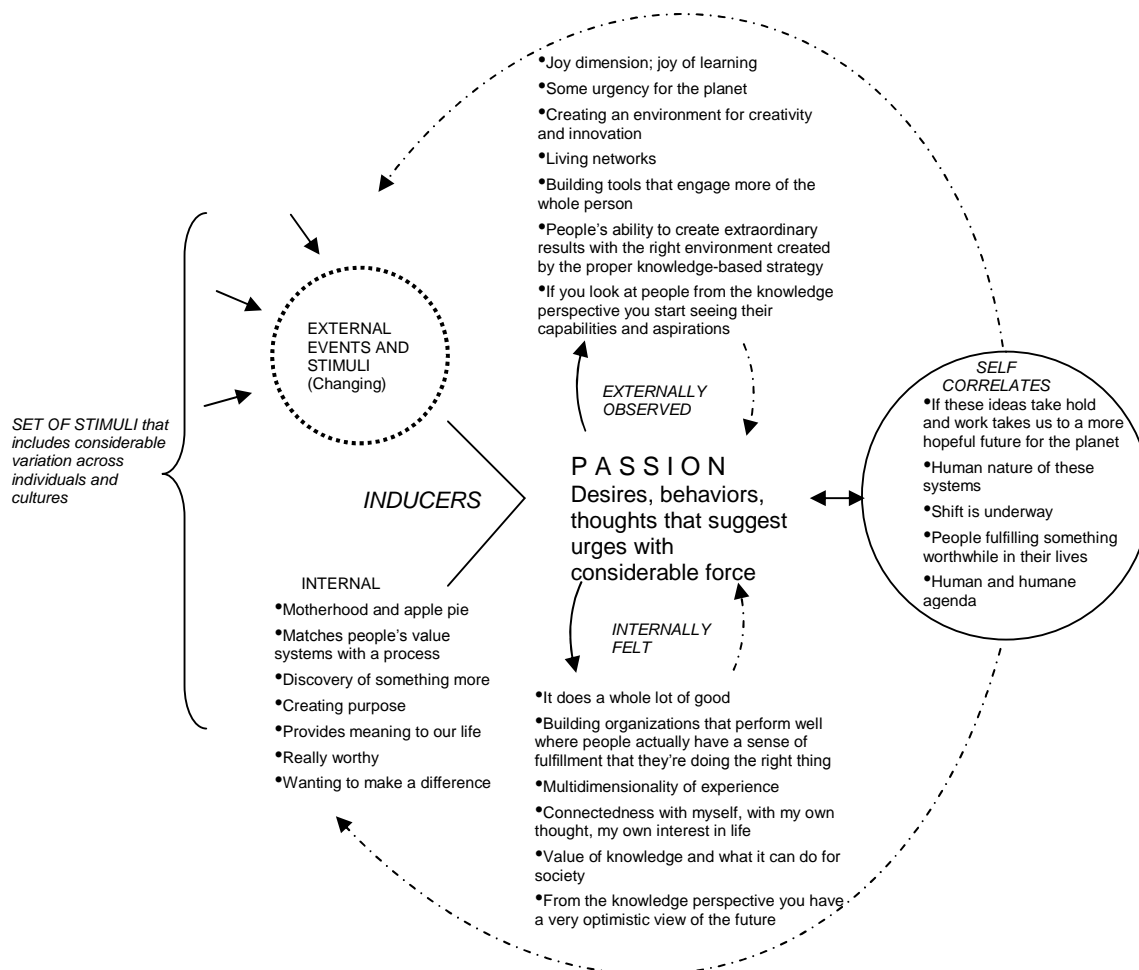


Figure 10. Summary: Representative aspects that contribute to passion.

Externally Observed Elements

Passionate Commitment, Action and a Sense of Urgency

One responder says all thought leaders have “a passion of one sort or another. I think that fuels continuous thought and a desire for clarity. I’m probably assuming that’s the way it is for them, I mean that’s the way it is for me.” Reflecting on thought leader passion, another responder shares, “You can tell it in any of them . . . in the tone of their voice, and their excitement, and you know it’s contagious.” Another responder says,

Passion creates energy above and beyond the normal human amount. So somebody with passion is not going to spend 8-5, somebody with passion . . . it’s your entire life. There’s that energy requirement to start people doing things somewhat differently than they’ve been used to doing them.

This passion is described as a *missionary zeal* by one thought leader. In her words,

I think there is a real undercurrent of missionary zeal that runs through the community, in particularly the thought leaders in the community, and I think it's somewhat a missionary zeal because I carry it too. I think we really truly believe that these questions are *important questions for our society and for the planet*.

Another thought leader thinks of it in terms of a mission, even close to a religion, an emotional feeling that you have a mission to achieve and that you need to open people's eyes. He explains that this can be an aspect that distracts, or even makes some people skeptical, because they see some passionate people as not being able to show real business results, not being focused on the numbers, not concentrating on profits, and so on. This thought leader sums up,

So I guess these people have some feeling of being on a mission, and opening eyes and passing the good message forward. This is also the reason why so many people in this field are so involved in educational projects or supporting this at the societal level.

When asked if he saw some of those same characteristics in himself, he responded,

I guess so, yes. We're still organizing those meetings, rewriting articles, trying to promote this topic and not just from the business perspective but to show people the potential that is there. If you believe it you try to show it to others. These are the words you use when you talk about religions ... *the believing and passing the good word* and so on.

The concept of thought leaders as revolutionaries appeared several times in the interviews. One responder said,

One of the peculiar things about this field is that people who get into it develop passion for it . . . I think if you develop passion you are at heart a revolutionary. You're just a little too late for the French and American revolutions, so you join this one.

When asked what was revolutionary about knowledge strategies, the response was that you're *challenging the establishment*.

Let's go back to Drucker. We've moved into the knowledge era. Some of us are in it unwittingly, and for those that are in it unwittingly trying to *wake up to the new reality* is extraordinarily difficult. They don't want to hear it. They don't

want to know about it. They got their MBA in 1948 and that's the way the world still is!

Another responder described himself in terms of a martyr.

I'm one of those people who is prepared to try a new idea, to take the risk, and I'm prepared to lose my job over it if it comes to it . . . You often have to have a martyr before people will listen to something . . . What happens is the system starts to change as a result of the behavior . . . so the two interact with each other.

One thought leader sees an irony in this movement,

People can be in conversations with each other, thinking and connecting their ideas, which is incredibly hopeful . . . At the same time I think we are facing—because of the technological capacities—the *most dangerous times of our history* in terms of surveillance, in terms of weapons of mass destruction, in terms of the capacity to act on hatred in very large-scale ways that is extremely disturbing. And so I actually think *we're in the best of times and the worst of times* at the same time.

One thought leader can't see KM being the major transformative force of the world unless there is a huge crisis on the planet, or multiple crises, that force people to work together more.

There's just so much power on this planet . . . that is . . . darkening the planet. The forces that are at war around us—and I use war in a very, very universal sense—many times seem incredibly overwhelming. So I have a hard time from a positive sense seeing that KM could change that. At the same time, in those small experiences or instances where I've seen it work, it has worked quickly and magically . . . but people have to be open to it. I just haven't seen that openness at a large level.

Another thought leader provided a small example of the potential for world change.

As the SARs information began to come up, countries began to pool their knowledge going from lab to lab, and no one was saying to do this, the knowledge just began to be shared because of the severity of the epidemic. They were able to contain SARS because of this knowledge exchange that went on among all of these researchers and labs and people studying the topic . . . it's a wonderful example. But that's a single problem in the world, and solving that one problem when there are all these enormous things . . . I'd hate to say that's a sign that we're using knowledge more effectively.

Through an “ah ha” experience, one thought leader reaffirms a sense of urgency. “I had a bit of a renewal . . . And that began to really be fun for me again because it was people connecting and people seeing what was alive for them in that connection.” What changed for her last year as she began to look at the fundamental shift necessary to respond to a complex environment was,

I came to an appreciation that there is *no way to make it safe*. We can try to address complexity as intelligently as possibly, we can offer as much guidance as we can from our understanding, we can support people through the learning, but there is no way to make it safe . . . at some level it was just immensely freeing for me. I began speaking differently and, incidentally, getting a better response because I was more alive and more passionate, and I just call it as I see it.

She pauses, then sums up, “We do *have to move to a totally different way in thinking about how things work*. And there’s some urgency about that for the planet.”

Leadership in Terms of Unleashing Energy, Building, Freeing and Growing

John Seely Brown thinks of himself not as a thought leader but more as practicing *the art of grinding conceptual lenses*. “Actual lenses,” he explains,

and that has two sides. One side is how do I do it for myself and then, once I do this, how do you communicate a new point of view? . . . It’s not a question of *giving them* new lenses, it’s a question of letting them experience something so that they *start to chew away and grind their own new lenses* or point of view.

While this concept is part of the new thinking, it is also a tool for unleashing energy, building, freeing and growing.

Thought leadership itself is focused on unleashing energy, building, freeing and growing. One thought leader pointed out that thought leaders in this field are an *eclectic group* of people noting that, “the similarity is that there are so many parts of this that there’s something for everyone.” For example, one responder thought that KM per se could be separated out, that it touches everybody, everywhere. “So there’s an eclectic group of people. . . . The similarity is that there are so many parts of KM that there’s something for everyone.” One thought leader shared,

Our area in KM is an area where women have actually played leading roles. I have recorded a number of instances of women actually having the role of Chief Knowledge Officer and it’s fairly impressive and I’m very excited about it.

When discussing associates, another thought leader stated that, “Women get the ideas faster than me.” Another, discussing this same concept, said,

I'm not an expert on this, and I don't propose to be, but it's my understanding that there are some natural masculine traits and natural feminine traits. If you did a mapping of the traits against the management system of yesterday, which is the business planning, quality, Six Sigma, the industrial model, you will see that women don't think that way. Women are just naturally interdependent souls, they are just naturally multitasking.

One female responder noted that it was important for her to legitimize her voice. "That's incredibly important to me, that whole issue, and I feel like in a way I was a part of that struggle to help women's voices come into legitimacy."

One responder described thought leaders as individuals "addressing the unknown and able to develop the taxonomy and *language for the unknown* as well as applying it to develop something that had an impact on society." Another thought leader added that

You're never a thought leader by yourself. You're only a thought leader because there's a lot of ... luck. It's like for me I was there at the right time with the right thing. People say well, but your theories are common sense. In fact they are. A lot of what I say is just pure common sense. It was said in the right way at the right time ... It's not this grand thing all by yourself somewhere. It's just putting that little piece of the puzzle in that let's you see the larger picture.

As another thought leader reflects, "It's the originality of what they are trying to articulate. Even though much of it might be considered common sense, it's the way they frame the apparent common sense."

Living networks. In the comparison of our framework to those things thought leaders connected to the passion they feel about KM, there was a grouping under this category around networking. Specifically, networking and knowledge sharing (the whole is more than the sum of the parts); changing the way people collaborate; living networks; watching the energy transfer; enabling conversations; wireless technology connecting people; network ideas; and simple things create unexpected outcomes thinking together. These themes continue throughout the response.

One responder thought this whole idea of *tapping the network* has enormous potential for organizations. In her words,

People don't buy a consulting firm, they buy the people sitting across the table from them . . . I will tell you every time I meet with a client, they aren't buying the company, they're buying me, and 99% of the time they insist that I work on their project, and 99% of the time I insist I'm going to work on their project. So what's the value of all this networking stuff to organizations? It's what's going to make our organizations work.

One thought leader felt that the quality of a knowledge system was *valued on its connectedness*. “I think the generic dimension is consistency or authenticity, because if *knowledge functionally or basically is connectedness*, then it’s important how things are related or not related to each other.” He uses as an example our *biological wiring for knowledge*, our neuro-system, which is basically a structure for building connectedness.

At the upper most level, social network analysis portrays the same basic phenomenon, the extent to which significant elements react to each other and develop provocative interaction, where provocative does not just mean generating an economic or pragmatic value, but means generic in any form of value that is recognized as such by relevant agents. So the fundamental dimension in terms of knowledge taking place is consistency/coherence/authenticity of the transactions between the elements in a system.

A Passion to Serve

Thought leader passion to serve is demonstrated through the repeated “letting go” or “putting out there” aspects of their ideas. For example, this passion to serve is clearly visible in a short exchange between the interviewer and Karl-Erik Sveiby.

Question: A few minutes ago you talked about the fact that for a lot of these ideas you were the original source for them, but a lot of people don’t know that you were. Are you okay with that?

Sveiby: Oh, sure. Enough people that matter know who the originator is.

Question: You’re letting those ideas go basically?

Sveiby: Yeah. Well . . . and then what would the alternative be? Standing up and shouting look at me, I’m the one!? No. [Laughter] Because I know that the origin of these ideas really isn’t only my own brain. We are always influenced by more factors than we are consciously aware.

Question: So they belong to everyone and you’re forwarding them?

Sveiby: Yes, that’s what I feel, so they are not for me, for my ownership . . . they are for humanity.

Focus on people. There is also expansion of responses in the framework in areas of what it means to be human, a focus on people. The term “people” appears 1,878 times, and when adding other ways to talk about people (person, individual, knowledge worker and human), there are a total of 2,693 uses in overall thought leader response. In comparison, the terms technology/technologies appear 238 times, and specific technologies are referenced a few dozen times (an approximately 10/1 ratio). It appears

that the U.S. has moved through the technology focus of KM that occurred in the mid 90s discussed in the literature review to a focus on people. It is also significant that the number of times people are referred to in the overall response (2,693) is a larger number than the 2,541 times the word “knowledge” was used in the overall response. This certainly reinforces the understanding thought leaders express that knowledge is created within people.

One thought leader says that the knowledge movement is refocusing the world on a *human and humane* agenda (see page 74 for a “thought bite” created from response around this theme.) In the framework, human relates to “What it means to be alive” and humane could relate to “Duty toward others” and “Purpose beyond ourselves” as well as “A passion to serve” and “Making one’s life meaningful.” Following this same pattern, another thought leader says KM allows us to value human judgment; and another that KM has given him a better focus and understanding of human beings. Other responders said: KM changes aspects of who we are; empowers our own identity; and helps people be all they can be.

When talking about how this work in KM has changed him, one thought leader saw KM as a way to realize one’s basic nature, *what it is to be alive*. Another responder sees a huge analogy to KM with taking humanity to the next phase of whatever humanity is going to be. Another says we as a human species are reinventing ourselves. And another says he forwards his ideas in this field for humanity. These responses move into the next area of focus, that of joy.

Joy

The specific term “joy” appears in the response 48 times. For example, Leif Edvinsson sees himself more as a *thought inspirer* than a thought leader. When asked what that means, he responds, “It means to see the joy of someone else getting an ‘ah ha!’ If I could treat your brain with some wordings or some reflections on your questions, I can hear in your voice that this gives you an ‘ah ha!’” The joy here is also tied to leadership in terms of unleashing energy, building, freeing and growing others.

Self Correlates

Part of the Larger Picture

Responders were specifically asked how they thought KM was changing the world. Thought leader responses to this question range from “I don’t think it is” to “It could be enormous as a matter of fact!” Twenty-one of the responders (62%) weigh in solidly at the “*yes it is changing the world*” end of the continuum. Variations of response are viewed from three perspectives: “yes,” “beginning to,” and “no but.” From a “yes” perspective: “It could be enormous as a matter of fact; and, I think maybe it accelerated trends that were already underway.” From “a beginning to” perspective: “I think KM is

very young;” “It’s still a very, very small part of the world;” “It’s still changing the world too little;” “In a way KM’s having an effect on the world, and it’s probably going to be a long time before it becomes self-evident to everyone;” and “I don’t think it has happened yet, but I think that it may well begin to as a fundamental transformation of the terms of social organization and the level of consciousness with which humans manage our life together.” From a “no, but” perspective: “I can’t see KM as a major transformative force of the world unless . . .;” “I don’t know that it is yet, but potential . . .;” “I’m not sure that the world is massively different from the way it was before KM emerged on the scene . . . the changes are subtle rather than massively visible;” “I don’t think it is changing the world;” “KM is not changing the world—the world is changing KM;” “No--markets are changing the world;” and “KM isn’t . . . complexity could . . . *complexity is the last hope.*”

Even among the “yes” and “beginning” responses, just *how* KM is changing the world is a matter of opinion. In addition, many of the “no” responders went on to describe the *potential* of KM to change the world. Thoughts included in this response are explicated below. One thought leader says,

It’s made the world so small, just incredibly small, because now we *connect with people* . . . we’ve had conversations we couldn’t have had before . . . this is a KM movement. People may not be labeling it that, but that is what it is. And it is changing the world.

Another thought leader says,

It’s adding to knowing a little bit more about what there is to be known, thereby *reducing ignorance*, because the ignorance is as we know leading to an increasing of unit costs, with an increasing debt of not grasping the potential now.

One thought leader believes that

it’s *bringing questions onto the planet* that we need to ask. It is another form of, another way of thinking about the mental model question . . . Just the simple acknowledgement that another human being has a different thought world than we do and maybe there’s something we need to understand about each other’s thought world in order to work together better, that’s pretty powerful. We don’t do it very well yet, but it is a powerful question. And I believe that *certain questions do have the power to change the world.*

Another thought leader believes that “KM is only at the very, very beginning of what it can actually accomplish in terms of this wider *systems perspective of providing a level of consciousness for mankind.*” This is expressed by another thought leader as, “I see a huge analogy to KM with taking humanity to the next phase of whatever humanity is going to be.” Yet another responder says,

It is our *vehicle for co-evolution as a species*. So if we think about it at its most largest level, and you look at what's happening with the Internet as synapses of the collective mind, and you think of whatever that largest consciousness is within which even the planet sits, and you think of field theory in terms of the implicate order, or even of the different lenses on this type of larger intelligence, the generative super field, or any of these ways of looking at it, any approaches that enable us to access that generativity at its deepest level, whether we want to call it god or source or you know super field or generative intelligence or implicative order or whatever, that's the life affirming urge. We're accessing that when we're *seeking these ways of knowing together*.

One responder sees KM as a *platform for energizing other people* apart from ourselves. "Something I learned from my friend . . . he's able to create the most incredible energy in others and he never gets worn down by it because he says the more energy you create in others the more it brings back to you." She sees that KM is building relationships that share that energy across organizations, across countries, across the world. Another responder says, "KM is making us more like nodes in multiple networks where we're *much more in control of our own destiny*."

From a world viewpoint, one responder ponders, "The next question is now going to be, if you're the Chief Knowledge Officer of the world, how do you run your knowledge initiative?" This global environment is described by another responder.

Using a little science fiction, we are not alone. And that just constantly amazes me. I have collaborations with people I don't know. . . . You *multiply brain power*, you create new opportunities, so much innovation comes from intersections, to take disparate people and put them together (there's Dorothy Leonard's creative abrasion again). One of the ways this is happening is that people across different cultures, across different languages, are participating . . . Different outlooks, different philosophies, *all these differences that bring about that creative abrasion* . . . And different experience.

One thought leader explains,

There are countries that are leveraging their mental abilities and knowledge. Spain has been doing this for decades, a country with relatively few natural resources that's been an economic powerhouse. You can see the difference, particularly in Asia. Singapore, also a country of few natural resources, is leveraging its knowledge. South Korea has done some marvelous things the last five years. They are really bursting out onto the world scene. So part of what you see is countries from an economically poor area using innovation, using knowledge. South Korea has an incredible percentage of people who are connected to the Internet.

Another responder says,

I get very excited about what's happening around the world in KM. I get very excited about seeing what companies in Mexico and Chile and Singapore and Australia and others are doing, and the relationships that we have now . . . *the globe now seems like a very small and much friendlier place.*

Yet another responder observes,

It is making some nations much more competitive than others . . . it is making nations such as Singapore much more aware of the fact that their only export commodity is people's understanding and the knowledge in people's brains. Lots of nations are understanding *societal KM* in ways that others have not become cognizant of . . . India shows some very interesting signs in my mind on how to pursue KM, China seems to be very interested, the Netherlands, and many of these nations don't recognize that they're doing KM.

Douglas Weidner agrees. He punctuates his agreement with a story.

There are a lot of countries, particularly in Asia, that are addressing this thing called the knowledge economy. Consider this question: You invented a smart pill, what do I do with it? There are underdeveloped countries in the world, agrarian societies that say they'll gladly grow the raw materials to be the filler in the smart pill. There are more advanced countries like Malaysia that are building factories which can happily produce the smart pill at very low labor costs. There are other fully developed countries in the world that have good IT infrastructures who say they can do the marketing and inventory control, and world-wide distribution. So I've set up three different countries: the agrarian society; those evolving, emerging countries heavily into manufacturing; and the most sophisticated, the Americas and Europes of the world, for marketing, and so forth. What would you do with the smart pill? The answer is *swallow it*. If you swallow the smart pill, you'll be even smarter than you were when you made it . . . and all this other stuff is nothing compared to being the originator of the smart pill, especially if you are able to design an even better smart pill next time, you will accelerate away from all the competition at a faster and faster clip. Some day, in the not-too-distant future, cheap labor costs will not be the world's outsourcing discriminator . . . *knowledge will be.*

Yet another thought leader echoes the *potential for growing countries.*

I work a lot in the Far East, and for those areas, this is not only a question of China but it's a question of India and various other places in the world . . . they have an opportunity to leapfrog. They have an opportunity to catch up to what countries like Finland and Sweden and the US are doing, because it's not a

question of capital-intensive investments, but knowledge-intensive investments. For example, in the area of Bangalore in India, there are so many Ph.D.s coming out today that they have a real opportunity to leapfrog.

Madanmohan Rao agrees. In his words,

We've had, in the last 4 or 5 years, at least two Indian companies win the MAKE [Most Admired Knowledge Enterprise] award . . . so they've caught the KM bug, and everyone else is getting onto the same movement. Next year a lot of pharmaceutical industries in India are going to open up to the global market, and are aggressively eyeing KM as a part of R&D. India is also emerging as one of the R&D hubs of the world, and knowledge is a huge part of this movement.

Another responder reflects,

I think that there are many, many things happening all over the world, some of which we think of as being part of this knowledge thing, some of which have to do with what I would call content organizing of various kinds . . . even the whole KM movement is only one of the many, many things that are doorways into *our becoming wiser together* . . . so I feel like our own small part, whether we want to call it the knowledge movement or process activism, or whatever the language is, these are making a contribution.

As this thought leader sums up, "There's a *paradoxical moment* we may be living in."

Offering another perspective, one responder says, I would think of it from a different perspective here, and that perspective being associated with how better education, better understanding, better thinking capabilities, if you will, are making people more or better able to deal with their own fates.

It all starts with one, reflects another responder. "The thing I'd like to go back to is Mahatma Gandhi. *Be the change you want to see in the world.*" One responder offers this analogy.

If you think of knowledge broadly as all of the understanding that we as human beings have gained through experience, observation or study as the dictionary says, thinking of that broad, broad definition, what we are doing either in the production of individual knowledge or in the development of this discipline that helps us to find and apply knowledge, I think of it as little drops of rain that start to flow down the hill that come together in little streams that eventually become big rivers flowing into the ocean. From that point of view, I think that we, whether as thought leaders or participants, are making that contribution. In some cases it is little drops of rain, and in other cases it may be monsoons.

Addressing *collective world change* from another viewpoint, one thought leader states,

Here I will say that KM is not changing the world, *the world is changing KM*. Customers are becoming more knowledgeable and therefore more demanding. Competitors are becoming cleverer. The techniques that we have used to make better products and services, better deliverables ranging from Six Sigma to whatever, and the products themselves, are becoming so sophisticated that all of this requires more and better knowledge to deliver competitively. Therefore, I would say that the driving force is from society to KM, not from KM to society.

What It Means to be Alive

KM is very much about understanding the human. As Karl Wiig explains, If you say that KM, whatever it is, deals with how people learn, how organizations learn, how people behave, it means how they react to situations, how they deal with situations, how they make decisions, how they monitor themselves, all of these types of things. We also immediately start talking about what motivates people, what are the intuitive acts that people engage in, thinking acts or physical acts, I don't care. Then we're talking to some extent about the *deepest things in what makes a walking, thinking human being*. And unless we actually understand that part of it, we haven't understood KM very well.

After a pause he adds, "So I don't think we understand KM at all these days—yet."

One thought leader says, "I think KM has sharpened the importance of appreciating the different strands that come to the theme, and more important, to live on these strands." Another sums up, "*KM is a way to realize one's basic nature.*"

Flow Experience

The response surfaced through the initial use of our framework was: "Transformative nature;" "energizer for what I do;" "one of those questions that I can take to another world;" and "I love it." Similar aspects that tie to the flow experience are embedded throughout the response. The connection of these aspects to the conditions of flow explicated in the literature review is addressed in response to the secondary question: "Does the data reveal anything about the relationships of knowledge management thought leaders to these aspects about which they have expressed passion?" (See pages 137-139.)

Spiritual Awakening

The concept of spirituality appears across the response. The specific terms “spirit,” “spirituality,” and “religion” appear 84 times. Other thought leaders referred to spiritual concepts in terms of “light,” or “living in the light.” For the most part, however, spirituality emerges in their writing through the way new ideas are discussed. For example, one thought leader shared, “I do believe that the human being is of *full dimensionality*.” He added that a mentor of his spoke a lot about spirituality and the need for the human being to be fully recognized in all of those dimensions. Another thought leader explains,

From the spiritual point of view, I think there’s a strong drive to grow, to expand. I forget who said it, but to *release the imprisoned splendor* as it’s called, not only from within each person as an individual—which I think is something we individually work at—but also collectively in terms of the human race. And one might say *knowledge is the life blood of doing that*.

Another thought leader says that when you get into definitional issues around what knowledge really is, all we can see tangible proof of as humans is the knowledge limited to the physical head or the physical body. He then ponders,

What is this knowledge that comes to us from seemingly nowhere? The nowhere is of course somewhere. Then it’s a matter of what we define as the borders of our knowledge. I believe we should search outside the traditional lines, the traditional tangible realm, to get closer to the real source of knowledge. Unless we do this, or are prepared to do this, we are incredibly poor compared to if we actually embrace it and work with it.

Where does spirituality intersect KM? As Madanmohan Rao states, This is one reason why many people get attracted to KM. I personally believe that one of the few things that outlasts us human beings after our deaths is the *knowledge that we leave behind*. Some people think KM is about converting knowledge into action and then using this to define products and patents and copyrights. Other people think knowledge networking is great because you can share this knowledge with other people and make the world a better place—you accept people and get them to share their knowledge just as you share yours with them. *But embedded in the knowledge movement is some kind of a spiritual wonder of what this world is about*. That’s the connection, in the creation and application of KM.

Another thought leader thinks KM is bringing *more spirit into organizations*. I think that as people have more experiences where their *humanity is honored*, and where let’s call it the larger intelligences that infuses all of life can be accessed in

our human exchanges and made available, that's a good thing in terms of our capacity for sustaining life on this planet.

One thought leader talks about spiritual knowledge in terms of discovering *hidden knowledge*, deep tacit knowledge, knowledge that seems to have a significant impact on the way we live and act regardless of which religious sect you are speaking of. This hidden knowledge is often passed on from master to student with a set of techniques and it's often codified. For example, if you look at the Zen side it is in terms of koans; it is codified in the Confucian approach as parables; and in the Judeo-Christian context as far as the Torah, the Old Testament and stories. Even the Alchemical concept of turning lead to gold had nothing to do with lead or gold. Those were both symbols of a transformative process within the individual to bring certain qualities of the mind and heart under control to enable that individual to grow spiritually and develop. They were symbol systems, knowledge systems. One thought leader states,

Within this hidden knowledge is an incredible capability to *convey very abstract feelings, concepts, ideas, affection* through a reasonably rigorous set of exercises. This is fourth world knowledge, what Jung would call the supraconsciousness, which is a world of spiritual entities and spiritual abstractions that are available to people if they can exercise their mind appropriately and keep their physical form in a certain level of balance. KM, then, at the level of *changing the core of individuals who have decided to develop more*, [offers] a lot to study and research in the more esoteric realm as well.

Another thought leader agreed that symbols and metaphors contain a huge amount of meaning for those that are in the know, and that they are incredibly powerful for those who are initiated in their meaning and in their use. For example, symbols used for spiritual and energy healing which are amazingly powerful if you are attuned to their energies. This is part of that hidden knowledge explicated above. Another responder used the Internet as an example of an outward or somewhat material manifestation of what needs to be happening worldwide in more of a non-material, inner way. He says, "And perhaps knowledge is that key. *That's what flows and connects it all.*" So the spiritual realm, which used to be relegated in the past to structured religions, or structured groups, today is more pervasive as *connectivity among all things*.

Certainly spiritual in nature, Verna Allee conjures up a powerful image as she speaks about the urgency for the planet.

One of the most symbolic and powerful images to come forward in the last century was the image of the earth from space. It was incredibly powerful. Young people have grown up with that image. You and I can remember when it was new. You and I can remember when we stood there with our mouths standing open looking at this incredible blue jewel floating in a vast darkness. I truly believe that as a human society, as a species, that image evoked a shift of consciousness on

this planet. I truly believe this. It's not something that's going to happen. It's something that really already has happened in a very fundamental way. We got it down to the toes of our *interdependency*, we got the fragility of that beautiful blue planet and the *connectedness* . . . it truly is one living planet and we're all part of it and we're all dependent on each other and what I do right here does affect the other parts of the world. That was so powerful for us as human beings. What we have not been able to do is *reconcile our business and economic models with that understanding*, and that's the urgency. That image came at a time when we truly were getting the power to destroy the balance of the earth . . . we might wipe our species out first, but if we do that then unfortunately we'll take a lot of other species with us and that's the real tragedy. I think this happened in a moment in time when we have to have this understanding in order to begin to do things differently.

She goes on to explain that *KM is a part of that new consciousness*, it is a way to *tap into new understanding and awareness*. She sees the related work underway on intelligent complex adaptive systems as a part of that consciousness. As this thought leader reflects,

So we have this new world view that's coming forward, but we're very much stuck in a building where there's another kind of world view operating, so how do we reconstruct, how can we take the elements of that old structure and system and reharass them when we can into this new understanding?

Making One's Life Meaningful

Meaning and purpose. Closely related to the discussion above, thoughts around the “making meaning” and “larger meaning” elements of our framework appear 80 times specifically using the word “meaning” and 52 times specifically using the word “purpose” in the overall response. For example, one thought leader said KM defined the sense of purpose for his career. Another responder touted knowledge and KM as predecessors to higher level understanding and meaning. And of course meaning and purpose can be—and are—talked about in many different ways, such as the example above of forwarding ideas for humanity, certainly laced with purpose, even a larger purpose.

Thought leader response identified in Table 3 around these areas is: “It provides meaning to our own life;” “people fulfilling something worthwhile in their lives;” “creates meaning;” and “work really worthy.” In addition, the framework moves towards a larger meaning and purpose with: “promoting the greater good” and “part of a larger picture.” John Seely Brown says his passion for this work *creates meaning*. This would reflect the reinforcing loop drawn in the framework.

Four thought leaders address a *growth of understanding of the human*. The first says,

It has profoundly changed me . . . it enriches my awareness of what livingness is by bringing in this whole *social dimension*. In my most private thought I use *tools of meaning that derive from my belonging to human society*. So in my most private thoughts I'm a social being.

A second says, "It's been huge. We've been denigrating the *value of human judgment* for too long. KM allows us to get over that." The third says,

It's made me recognize at a deep level the need to incorporate humans and human behavior into the very design of technical systems and not just give lip service, which is how it's normally done in the technology design process.

And the fourth says,

It's given me a better focus and understanding of organizations and even of human beings . . . *understanding opens the door to values, to meaning, to purpose*, and it's all a necessary prerequisite in a sense. *Knowledge and KM are predecessors to higher level understanding and meaning*.

Internally Felt

Promoting the Greater Good

Madanmohan Rao sees the knowledge movement as *helping us move as a world toward responsibility and peace*.

Developments like this war in Iraq have shown us how knowledge must be balanced with responsibility. . . . So as a human race, we have to realize that the most important values are human life, dignity, justice, and notions of that sort, and unless we can bring a good knowledge-based perspective into the whole system, we will not have peace. We need to get better and better knowledge about quality of life, disease control and those kinds of issues, whether SARS or AIDS, or whatever they may turn out to be, and we need to move towards having some kind of a global system of justice for different kinds of problems around the world, and finally, peace. In fact, the dedication of my first KM book is to the noble quest for those elusive goals: knowledge, peace and justice. So I think one of the noblest callings of all for us as human beings is to continue to *find better ways of embracing the knowledge movement and beyond*, moving toward dispute resolution and peaceful coexistence.

Can KM be a major transformative force in the world? One thought leader says, "I'm not sure the indicators really express that society is moving in the right direction, but it might be some indicator that when you embrace KM on the larger scale, you actually engage policy and spend money on it . . . it actually might have an impact."

Another thought leader, who says she is pretty discouraged about the state of the world and does not see KM doing much, exclaims,

Oh, God, if only we could get across this idea of *understanding other people's perspectives*. You know, if we could actually get people to listen, or trade places, or believe that they are not the only ones who are hearing whatever they think are God's commands . . . we could change the world.

One thought leader says KM was lucky to hit *a moment in human evolution* of potential extreme importance.

I'm convinced that . . . we as humans are confronting in our history the possibility to *overcome a fundamental contradiction between our biological constitution and our social vocation*, between our animal constitution and our aim to build civilization, and this is a contradiction that has been pointed out frequently by scientists and thinkers and historians and social biologists. . . . I think that KM brings the opportunity to *look above* why humans are reacting the way we do, to *generate a further level of consciousness* that will help us perhaps to in time rethink the social systems that we created before in the more mechanical way we inherited from the past. . . . So I believe that KM, or more from the *mental reflection on knowledge systems* as the core upon which social human life, human societies are constructed, that we are now facing this opportunity. And that's why I believe it's so *tremendously significant*, because it *fits right upon this historical opportunity*.

One thought leader muses,

I'm very curious about how this is going to unfold as organizations find each other and master value network philosophies and build understanding. I think what we're going to see is an entirely new kind of global governance on the planet, which is not going to be *civil societies or nation states or business*, but a very, very interesting *dynamic relationship between all three*, with networks and network strategies really at the heart of what makes it all work. And I'm going to be absolutely fascinated to see how that unfolds.

Similarly, in another thought leader's words,

It appears to offer the potential for a world change . . . it would be great if one could live for 100 years and trace the history of knowledge and KM. It undoubtedly will take on different words, different theories, different aspects, but fundamentally we're talking about understanding and taking effective action. If one could trace that over 100 years in the future it would be fascinating to see what happens.

In this same vein, Debra Amidon offers,

Now with the focus on knowledge, innovation and collaboration, I think we have the potential to create the *platform for world peace*, and I think that's what many along this journey are trying to do. They are really looking to make a difference.

As one thought leader sums up,

It has the potential to change the world if it were focused more on *what is the world*, and would have a lot more to do with *honoring the world*, and would also have more to do with reflecting and practicing interaction with others in the world itself. And so it puts us as *part of the world in a very deep way*, as opposed to putting us above the world, or isolated from the world.

Figure 11 is a “thought bite” which provides a synopsis of the responses focus around KM and its potential for world change. This figure is representative of the thought bites used in the analysis process to think about the data around specific focus areas.

Doing the Right Things Right

While speaking about the rewards of being a thought leader one responder shared, “I feel almost as if *I'm being pulled forward*. I'm not pushing myself anymore. I feel as if I've come into a space which has a life of its own. And it just feels right. It feels right down to my core that I'm on the right track.”

Duty Toward Others

This area of focus is represented in earlier thought leader response by “Opportunity to help people view organizations in another way.” Some responses that could easily fit in this area are included in other areas. For example, one responder stated, “I think of myself as primarily interested in helping others learn and helping to communicate really tricky ideas.” In like manner, when sharing a KM learning-after-doing process, one thought leader said,

You take a team that's done something major, the end of a major part of the program or project, to *reflect and learn from what they did in a team setting* so the learning of individuals can be built on and actually create new knowledge that gets embedded right in their brain, and then is also easily codified through this process for reuse by others.

Another responder said,

The idea is of course that what we, for example, help our customers to do is for them to understand that all work should be based not only on personal respective

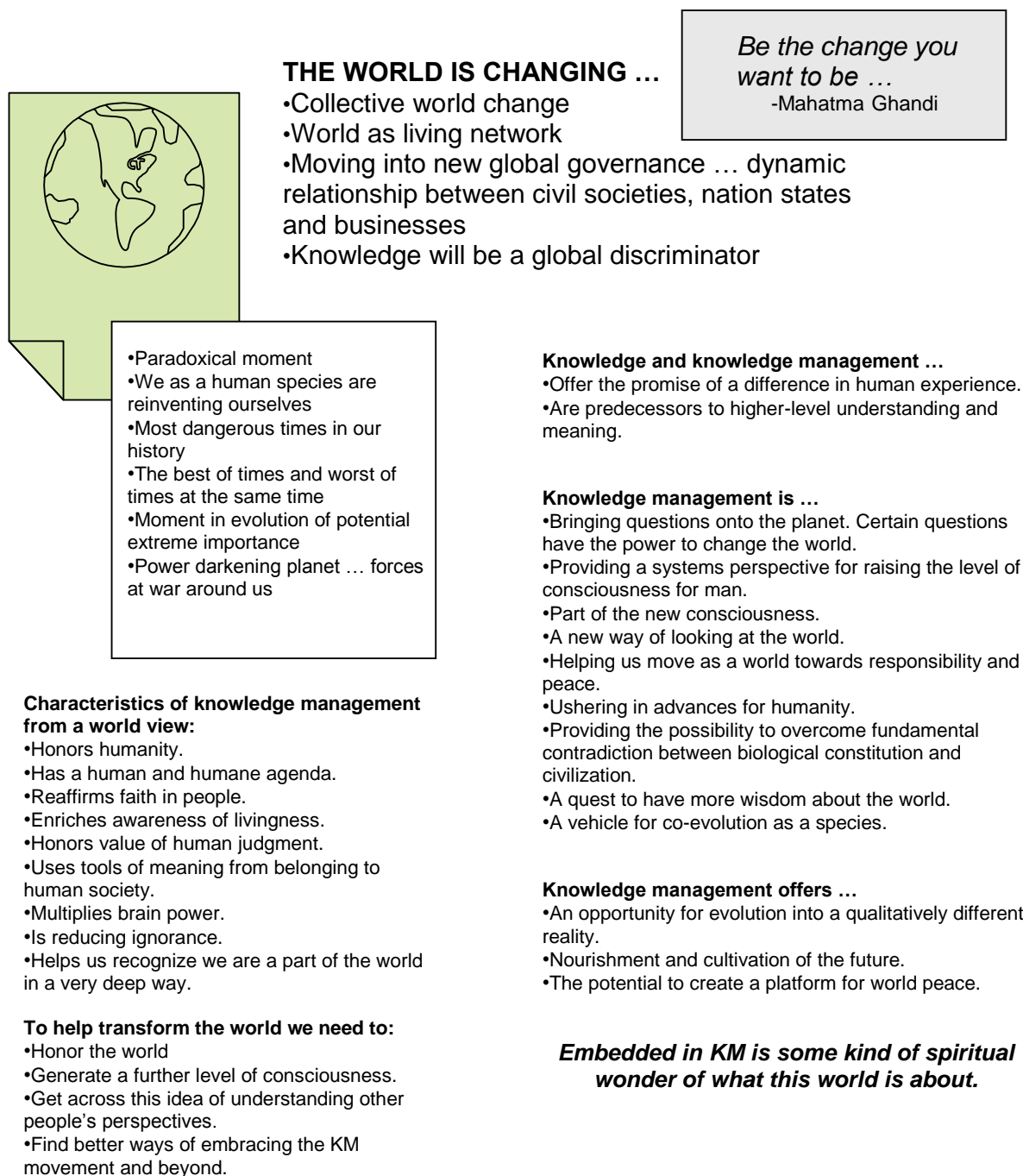


Figure 11: Thought bite: “KM is significant because it fits right upon this historical opportunity.”

practices but on learning from others, others who have done something in a similar context or with similar technologies or with similar customers.

As is indicated by these and other quotes, thought leaders keenly feel a duty toward others as part of their personal commitment and thought leadership.

Intersects with Goals and Needs

One thought leader summarizes,

What we're doing, it's *in a way my life's work*, and if people find it valuable it's a tremendous boost for the work I do. If people prove the point that I'm trying to make, and it works for them, then of course I'm extremely happy.

Another thought leader shares that KM has,

somehow defined the sense of purpose for my career, and defined my focus for learning, defined the way I want to learn, and defined how I do things and how I work with others. So I guess it has somehow defined me as well!

KM supports mentoring relationships both in the field itself and *among thought leaders*. For example, one thought leader said,

What's been most important for me from them [other thought leaders] is more of a mentoring relationship, people who have been through this process and were able to provide context and perspective to me at times when I needed it to think about how I want to shape my own activities and initiatives.

As an example, Karl Wiig shared two points he had learned from another thought leader: "One thing was that things are never as they appear to be, and the second thing is for you to do something about anything you have to delve deeply into it."

Two other thought leaders noted the importance of being a part of the conversation. KM enables conversations. For example, Debra Amidon says, "People write books to share their experience and observations with others, but they are instruments for a conversation, that's what they are." Hubert Saint-Onge agrees. "I was included in many conversations, and this is really in many ways the key. It's how you get included in many conversations that are really important. It becomes a privilege, but also you get exposed to ideas that you wouldn't have seen."

It Is Precious, of Higher Interest and Great

This concept is a description of those aspects that are embedded as part of passion itself. In those terms, this concept relates to aspects forwarded under the areas of external

stimuli, externally observed, correlation to larger picture, internally felt, and internal inducers. With this understanding, this category assumes the responses across these areas and is not repeated here.

Optimism and Confidence in the Future

KM ushers in advances for humanity. As one thought leader shares, If people develop new innovations, new insights by building off what's already been done . . . the possibilities might be a more democratic view or at least knowledge-oriented view of life that was less geared toward hierarchy.

He continues that to the extent that we can build off what has already been done, and combine expertise in new and unique ways as a society, certainly the advances in terms of health and various things like that have the potential to be powerful. One responder states he is optimistic that KM will prevail. Another says that basically *we as a human species are reinventing ourselves*. "This opportunity for evolution into a *qualitatively different reality* is what I find most passionate, and that transcends KM itself."

Demands Attention

Attention itself is an area of interest and significance in learning and the sharing of knowledge, so much so that KM thought leaders have written extensively on this subject. Tom Davenport says his work on attention affected him personally.

In terms of attention, I did become much more conscious even of the emails that I send, the letters that I write, the presentations that I give . . . am I getting the attention of the people this is targeted at? What can I do to make it more engaging to their attention? Am I allocating my own attention effectively?

It changed his behavior, as has his passion around the work he is doing on personal information and knowledge management. He explains, "It's how individuals manage their own personal information and knowledge environments, and that has changed my behavior too. How could it not?"

Another thought leader says his passion for KM has *increased his tenacity*. If you have a passion for it you're not going to give it up just because there are some hard times. There's no giving up . . . the word commitment means something . . . and a person with passion is a person who has the ultimate in that commitment. That means *tenacity*. You're going to stick to it no matter what.

That which demands attention and its relation to the KM field is also explicated under the heading of passionate commitment, action and a sense of urgency.

Internal Inducers

Values and Morals

Values and ethics are entangled throughout the thinking of thought leader response. These terms appear 229 times in the overall response. As one thought leader defines it, ethics is a framework of how you approach leading your life and taking action in regard to the greater community, and that you are trying to perform at a level which is alive with best practices, laws, regulations and in some sense aligned with some moral framework, although not the same thing. Geoff Malafsky considers ethics,

A critical component of KM in the sense that KM, for something to be knowledge, requires trust and verification and for people to have confidence that something is appropriate. Now the confidence is not just that the information is correct or that it was blessed by the formal standards body or the proper chain of command, it also means that there's *trust and confidence* that it can be used in that individual context. So ethics is an underpinning. We all relate back to the human. Basically, ethics is critically important to maintain that trust framework.

Moral ethics involves and affects our organizations, our systems, the procedures we use, the practices we adopt, and so forth. Karl Wiig sees this whole movement as a moral ethic. He explains,

In this connection, KM is the mentality of building knowledge, not only building it, but also utilizing it . . . And what I'm after is the fact that we see these principles of KM as a set of tools and techniques and operational philosophies for how to deal with this whole issue of building the mental capabilities as well as the organizational capabilities which allow us to act more effectively, and acting effectively, for example in research, is very important. Isn't building new knowledge through research so as to behave more effectively as people or as an organization a moral ethic?

One thought leader felt that KM was changing the way organizations value people. "It's making organizations respect employees much more. . . . Where a lot of reward was based on hierarchy, it is now your own merit, your own original ideas, your own collaborative work that takes you forward. You're knowledge contribution takes you forward."

Every thought leader interviewed was asked for core beliefs and values, and then how they perceived those core beliefs or values extrapolated across to the field of KM. These responses are provided as appendix D, "Thought Leader Values and beliefs Connected to KM" and discussed at pages 133-137 when addressing the secondary research question: "Does the data reveal anything about the relationships of knowledge management thought leaders to these aspects about which they have expressed passion?"

One thought leader felt that the sharing of knowledge and perception across connections built on relationships could provide value in a larger sense.

I mean I don't know how else it can work. Absolutely. We're going to be held together by new types of social fabrics, and I think we're beginning to see this even in our ability to change the use of *information technology to support the emergent* as opposed to the authorized, support the social rather than the formal.

Another thought leader sees this relationship value in terms of connectedness and contactness, what he calls relationship capital.

We are in our infancy. But it is what Peter Russell was talking about, the global mind actually, where he compared the evolution of the telephone system and the Internet system increasing the connectedness of people and *consequently thought patterns*. But it looks like connectivity is only one dimension. We have to *expand that to contactivity*, where we include some of the other senses. We aren't there yet, we are still in our beginning . . . a fascinating beginning though.

Another thought leader discussed knowledge and *its relationship with the deepest things, motivations, beliefs, and the value system*. As Karl Wiig explains,

Years ago I struggled with something that I called proxy values, which essentially deals with such things as the tendency of a person—given a certain situation and certain condition about which the person would want to have an opinion—to project using essentially that person's understanding, that person's embodiment of how this particular situation would evolve and project his/her basic value set onto the outcome of what would take place. As a result, it becomes a proxy value for what the person's real values are as influenced by the person's understanding of how this particular condition would evolve. It touches everything. For example, pollution, where we all want to have clean water and clean air. The reason we disagree (apart from the fact that we might have people we want to pay back because they have invested in us) is that a projection of our basic values (which might be identical) are influenced in different ways by our personal and different understanding of the evolution that we project as a function of what we believe the physical system will do. And since we all have bad knowledge, bad understanding of the dynamics of how things propagate in an open system such as the ecology, there is very much room for disagreement and misunderstandings, not because we have different basic values but because we end up with different proxy values.

Similarly, one thought leader also noted the potential for knowledge *as it becomes more familiar to become more acceptable outside the bounds of our value system*. As she explains, we are really driven in our reactions to situations, meaning the way we handle

situations, by what can be called intuition, or perhaps automatized mental modes that we have, those that are accessible to us non-consciously.

And it's essentially evoked through priming, and primed by our basic beliefs, our basic values, and called to the surface if you will, called to interaction, based on the recognition of how they apply to a certain situation as well as how well they deal with our basic values.

He pauses, then continues,

Now one of the problems that we have is that as we become more and more familiar with a situation, even if it was the type of situation that was at odds with our basic values and issues, as we become more familiar with it, it becomes more acceptable and actually changes the perspective that we have.

An example would be kids who are exposed to violence and suddenly find it less objectionable to do bad things.

Further, one thought leader points out that knowledge gathering does not inevitably lead to tolerance or larger connectivity *unless* it is involved in experience outside the bounds, outside the framework. She explains, "People put their bounds around what they wish to know about, and they can grow a great deal of knowledge within that but *there's a fence around the field* of knowledge." She provided an example.

Suppose I am a mom in Iraq. The only relationship that the growth of knowledge has to me is the growth of knowledge about a particular part of Islam, and that's all I care about. It has nothing to do with relationships except within those bounds. So it's not an outreach thing. . . . From my point of view it's narrowly framed and bounded, so gathering knowledge has bounds beyond which there's no need for that person to wish to go. So once you're inside that, and this tends to be true for a lot of religious-based knowledge systems, there are bounds, and if you wish to step beyond you are outside the bounds.

Purpose Beyond Ourselves

Part of that "purpose beyond ourselves" for thought leaders is providing a vision of the future. As John Seely Brown so aptly describes,

Category of the future, category of the human condition: by *providing a vision*, I think that's what leaders are basically doing, *they provide us a vision that compels*. And these people . . . I think they have maybe affected me in that they helped me envision how our organizations and societies could be like.

When applying the framework earlier, the indicator of “seeing ideas light people’s eyes up” was associated with a purpose beyond ourselves. In like manner, many responses that fall easily into other areas reflect a purpose beyond ourselves. For example, all responses in the element of promoting the greater good also fall under this area, as well as most of those responses included under part of the larger picture. In addition, responses under what it means to be alive, a passion to serve, and deep longing to make a difference clearly fall under the area of purpose beyond ourselves.

Goals and Needs

Goals and needs are discussed under the area of Intersects with Goals and Needs, and included in areas dealing with purpose, meaning, what it means to be alive and morals and values, as well as deep longing to make a difference, below. Those responses are not repeated here.

Deep Longing to Make a Difference

One thought leader shared, “It [KM] has reaffirmed my faith in people in very practical ways. And seeing it travel all over the world at some level has changed me from feeling that I have to do it myself. We, together, have this *yearning to make a difference*.”

The framework specifically refers to a deep longing to make a difference. This concept also relates to the framework element of purpose beyond ourselves. Overall, there are 13 responses that specifically use the terminology of making a difference. For example five responders specifically describe high-level rewards from working as a thought leader in terms of *making a difference*. One says, “I feel that this is a philosophy and *a concept that can really make a difference*.” A second reflects,

Well, I feel like we’ve been able *to make a difference in things* we care about . . . so to contribute in some way in this period where we are so highly polarized and where it looks like our collective intelligence is failing us as a species, to make some small contribution to people *remembering that they can be life affirming* rather than life destroying in a very simple, easy way is very rewarding when I find evidence of that out in the world.

A third shares, “I think there’s the soft stuff, which is *knowing that I made a difference*, and that’s the most important thing to me in my life.” A fourth states,

The primary reward as I see it . . . is one of satisfaction in *having made some contribution*, having made some difference in the progress of the field. The real drive is to contribute to the exploration of this frontier, and to do so directly . . . and to encourage others to strike off in directions that they might not have

otherwise seen . . . I feel the importance of being on the frontier contributing to it and bringing civilization to that frontier in the sense of being an explorer.

The fifth responder says, “When you sit back and have a reflective moment, you want to think about *what you’ve done as the right thing*. That’s high on my agenda.”

As noted above, this theme is repeated in varied ways. For example, Leif Edvinsson talks about making a difference in terms of the nourishment and cultivation of the future. Another responder says, “It’s made me really believe that everybody has something to contribute very worthwhile in your *quest to have more wisdom about the world*. . . . So I find something worthwhile in everybody that I meet.”

The Nature of this Passion

A secondary question explored through this research process was: ***What is the nature of this passion?*** Perhaps ironically, while thought leaders view the aspects of KM explicated above—and indeed the field itself—as exciting their passion, passion itself was also *viewed as part of the reward system*. For example, John Seely Brown says his passion for this work *creates meaning*. As noted earlier, this would reflect the reinforcing loop drawn in the framework. Similarly, in addressing the rewards of being a thought leader, one responder says, “I get really excited about the ideas and writing them down . . . in ways people might find interesting.” Another says this passion “gives wind in my sails.” Another has a passion for finding solutions to things that people did not really think they could pursue properly.

One thought leader shared,

The things that I am, it made them, focused them. You know, put something in the fire and it glows white hot as opposed to being ember. We’re talking about a *richness of life*. I think it was Confucius that said if you love what you’re doing, you’ll never work a day in your life. If you have a passion for something, you’re not working; *you’re doing what you love to do*.

Another responder spoke in terms of a rich fantasy life she had when she was young.

I envisioned a life of getting to go all over the world and see interesting places and do interesting things and hang out with really cool people, and I never, never, ever imagined that I would be doing it under my own cognition. So I envisioned the life style a little bit, and all of that has come true. But what I didn’t understand as a child, that I do now, is that the really great thing is to be able *to live a life of passion*. I get to do something I am passionate about.

These passions, themselves seen as rewards, are shared across thought leaders. In one responder's words, "It's created a working environment where we share a lot of the same passions."

In considering the nature of passion I explored characteristics of this passion as seen by thought leaders first in terms of energy, and then looked at the effect of this passion on their work. Consistently passion was viewed as derived from a higher order in terms of thought leader's nourishment and cultivation of the future. Not only does this field provide richness in terms of multidimensionality of experience and the creation of new ideas, but offers value for individuals and society, that is, "work really worthy." Representative quotes from the response explicated in this section appear in the thought bites that are Figures 8, 9 and 11 (pages 74, 91 and 110, respectively).

In addition to viewing passion as a reward, thought leaders said it provided personal satisfaction and helped fuel their personal energy. As is seen in the responses explicated below, the largest number of thought leaders who talked about their energy in terms of change since they entered the field saw that energy as fluctuating up and down. This is likened to the energy fluctuations of the field itself. Again (only this time in terms of energy) thought leaders describe the shift, reorientation and redirection of the field toward a more human focus, providing greater value for human beings.

In turn, thought leader passion for the work they do directly impacts that work, driving *what* work they do, energizing it, making the work easier and more enjoyable, and creating meaning. To provide the context for these summary results, and to facilitate understanding through the rich expression of thought leader words, related responses are explicated below.

Thought Leader Energy

Responders were specifically asked, "How has your energy changed over the years since you started in this field?" Thirteen thought leaders responded to this question in terms of *level of energy*. Describing these patterns, one responder felt her energy had stayed the same, seven felt it had moved up and down through the years, one felt it had surged up and then back down to a sustaining level, and four felt they had more energy than when they began. Figure 12 shows patterns reflecting the way responders describe their energy changes.

The responder who felt her energy had stayed the same stated,

I think it has always been. I can go back even to childhood and upbringing and sort of see the origins of it . . . I'm just interested in things . . . I'm just incredibly curious all the time and wanting to understand. And it gets in the way sometimes, but it is absolutely a passion for me.

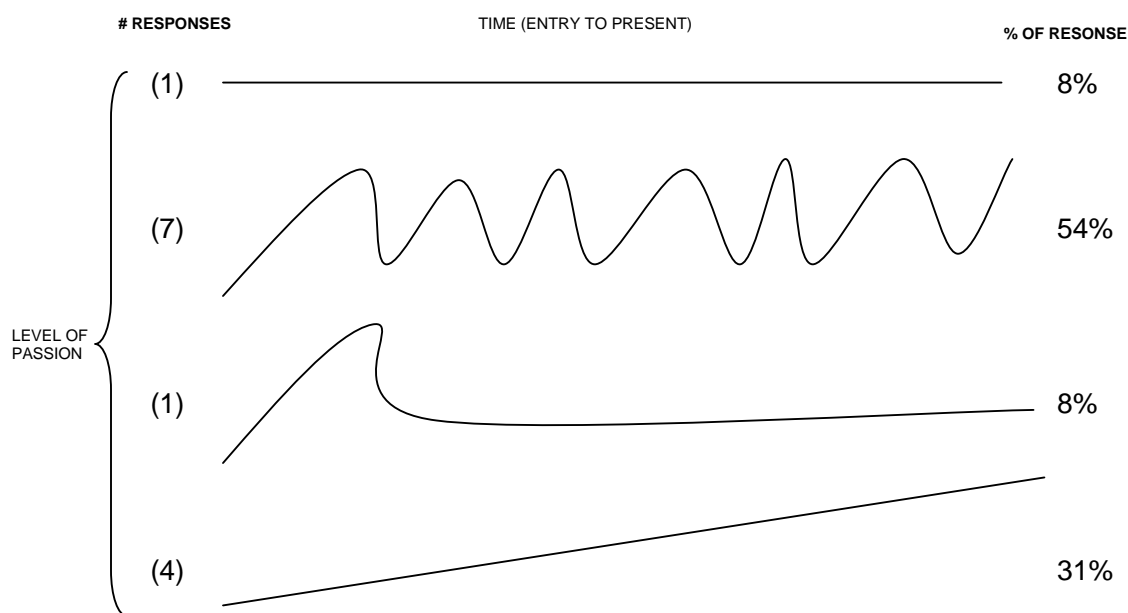


Figure 12: Patterns of passion levels described by thought leaders.

The four thought leaders who felt their *energy had increased* offered varied explanations. One said,

At first it was a little bit more of a gut . . . something I felt was important, and I saw people around me that actually sustained that optimism. Right now I see *much more consistent signs that this is the right track*. I see a lot more people. For example, I have many students and many colleagues that have joined and are working together. I have a very, very rich and active network around the world of colleagues joining forces, sharing experiences, so I feel momentum . . . more energy, because this is more than my individual emotional commitment in the beginning. That hasn't disappeared, but it's also sustained by a more rational and objective sign that it is working.

A second responder says, "I've always had passion for it" then shares that his energy has moved from potential to kinetic to "almost frenetic energy." A third thought leader feels he has more energy today than ever because he's a much wiser guy than he was 20 years ago. A fourth responder reflected,

My energy . . . I think I've just sort of become more who I am. It's kind of always there, but it's getting more and more comfortable in the messages that I carry. We can't be all things to all people. I've learned to stop doing that a long time ago, and I will say no to opportunities that don't feel like they're right on target for me where I know that I'm not the best person to serve that question, whatever one is being posed. And I will try to help people connect to other good people that will do that. . .

So there are some deep principles about working with other people and collaboration that I live and breathe down to my toes.

The “up and down” movement cited by the largest number of responders is similar to the pattern described by Csikszentmihalyi in the literature review linking passion and creativity, whose research identified an energy generated by the conflict between attachment and detachment, what Csikszentmihalyi called a yin-yang alternation between passion and objectivity. Specifically, Csikszentmihalyi stated, “Their creativity unfolded organically from idea to action, then through the evaluation of the outcomes of action back to ideas—a cycle that repeated itself again and again. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 316). Linking our thought leaders description of this changing energy and Csikszentmihalyi’s findings, we discover a model that looks something like Figure 13, a dance between passion and objectivity, action and reflection.

The descriptions of energy fluctuations provided by the thought leaders certainly support this model. As one thought leader in this grouping says of their passion, “It rises and falls like circadian rhythms and all that.” “Circadian rhythms” is the term given to the daily rhythmic activity cycle (24 hour interval) of many biological organisms, similar to the rise and fall of tides. Another responder actually describes this process in words similar to our model:

Well, there was a period of high passion when I was actually implementing theory in action, you could say. . . . Then my interest waned, then caught a renewed push when the interest in KM made people also show an interest in my early work, and I got more enthusiastic toward the end of the 90s when I could see a shift in the trend away from IT and technology and more towards people.

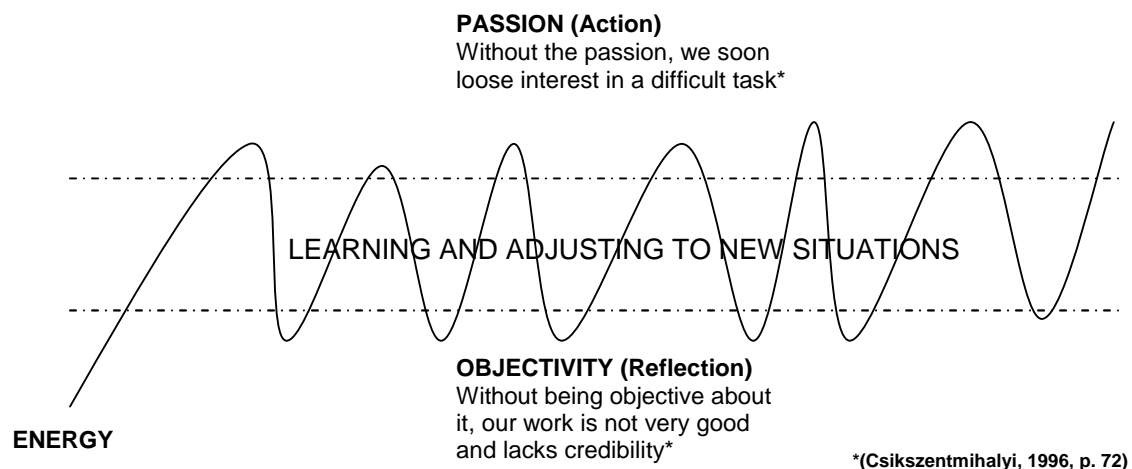


Figure 13: The changing energy of KM thought leaders

Similarly, another responder says, “My energy has changed as I’ve redefined what it [KM] means. So, for example, the energy around certain aspects of this field has waxed and waned.” Another explains, “Like everyone, we have highs and lows that are tied to specific happenings in the environment. It’s not dissimilar to the way electrical circuits work, where you have a transient period of highs and lows, and then you reach the steady state.”

One thought leader suggests that perhaps a bit more relevant is KM itself undergoing highs and lows.

There are peaks and then all of a sudden this report comes out saying, ‘It’s a total failure, it’s out the door’ . . . when I read what they say it’s obvious that they don’t understand either what KM is or how it’s working or how it’s really embedded itself in so many other disciplines and processes with other names.

The suggestion here is that KM as a field follows this pattern. That concept certainly makes sense when reflecting on historic descriptors of the field, what several participants described as the three waves of KM: the passion around technology, then a waning of interest, the passion around communities of practice, then a waning of interest, and the passion around knowledge strategies. One thought leader noted that the next wave was around knowledge innovation. In this interpretation of the model, KM itself is the dance between passion and objectivity, action and reflection.

This dance could also account for the pattern indicated by thought leader response around the life cycle of KM (see pages 70-72). By assuming a linear relationship—and force-fitting the response—we discover the spiral pattern presented in Figure 6. However, if we consider the fluctuating pattern suggested above and reflected in Figure 13, the response could easily fall into that pattern in terms of continuous rebirth rather than a linear spiral. This would require further study to validate the appropriate pattern.

Outside this initial response focused on changing levels of energy, 14 responders talk about a *shift, reorientation or redirection* occurring since first focusing on this field. This shift is described as widening or narrowing, focusing, and sometimes programmatic. The idea of a shift was introduced in responses at pages 97-98 and again at pages 122-123. While similar in nature—and therefore reinforcing the passion expressed around responses presented earlier—the responses provided here were focused around energy change. It is important to note that in all cases thought leaders connected energy with passion.

Four thought leaders purport a movement from a technological and information focus to a human focus, the same historical movement the field has experienced in the U.S. One thought leader in this group says,

Of course, initially it [his passion] was technology based, then has gone *more towards the human condition* and how people enter into it, why we have to be concerned with such things as cognitive sciences, and the mechanisms within.

He indicates that this redirection caused KM to become more exciting for him, “Because *it is at the cusp of what we are learning about*, it’s really where things are happening, so from that perspective it’s very important.” A second responder said, “It’s moved from being tool related and mechanical more into a people motivation rather than process and tool centered. So it’s *more people centered* than tool centered.” A third states that while his energy has pretty much been maintained, in the early days it was more narrowly focused toward particular problems.

I would say that it has broadened out into a very great interest not only in the technological approaches to knowledge handling, but also into certainly an appreciation and interest in the non-technological aspect of KM, as well as how the technological and non-technological need to be put together in order to be successful.

A fourth responder shares,

Well, I’ve probably gone from being a KM tools guy . . . to a fan of an emerging large laptop and PC in Taiwan called BEN Q. If you look at the web site you can find a little story of how it is a spin-off from one of the three largest laptop brands in the world. BEN Q stands for ‘bringing enjoyment and quality’ to the laptop. I was paying a visit a month ago and I was impressed, really impressed, with this notion of bringing enjoyment and quality into laptops!

So the energy change he shares is a movement from something that was a closer connection with IT to a *realm of joy*, and somewhere in between touching the brain and neuroscience.

Similarly, another responder talks about this *shift* as one from a focus on processes and systems to the human element.

My ideas have gotten better and my energy higher in a sense, because to some degree before I was teaching much more about manufacturing and engineers and so forth, which is very interesting, but my real heart lies with the psychology of people. So since then I’ve been able to move more into fields having less to do with processes and systems and more to do with motivations and ideas and creation. There’s been kind of a shift. I feel as if I’ve gone back to my roots. I needed to take a detour . . . I needed to do that work in order to get where I was going.

Another thought leader feels the shift he is going through now is from a cognitive focus. He spent years pouring through tons and tons of books on cognitive psychology and understanding how the brain works with the belief that if we could design databases through stories, schemas, categorical representation and things like that we could increase the likelihood of people recognizing and assimilating information.

And that's very much shifted over time in several ways. One was realizing that it's not just information that matters, that people use other people to figure out where they want to go and what they want to accomplish in a project, to get validation of their ideas. So it opened my eyes very much to more of a social look at knowledge creation and trying to be precise.

The second push was in asking, "What kinds of content move in networks, and can we use network analysis as a tool to better understand that?" A third push is trying to understand how emotion, both in an individual's mind and how it's conveyed, affects how learning occurs in groups, how innovation occurs and how leadership occurs, and how to become more grounded in looking at and understanding groups in this new light. The shift in energy here is very much in seeing the potential applications of the ideas and, in large part, the interactions with the people and organizations that are going to undertake the ideas in new and unique ways.

Three thought leaders discuss a *movement from what they term as proselytizing or being an evangelist*. The first clearly states,

Well, I think I was more evangelical then. In those days there were very few people interested in this so I would run around and give speeches for no money just to get the word out. I would go to companies where I had a frosty reception just to get the word out. I felt very much I think like an evangelical in religion, probably with similar motivation. Now there's many people interested in this, there's books, this huge library category of books on Amazon called KM, so clearly I don't have to be the evangelical I was as many, many people can see the truth of these things.

In summary, he says that he still has a strong interest but a little less evangelical energy (noting that this coincided with him getting older, so clearly those two things have an effect on each other). Similarly, a second thought leader shares,

When I first got started it was about proselytizing. I don't really have very much energy around that any more. My energy really has been around concrete action. If you have a continuum from theoretical to practical, I'm at the very end of practical. . . . But for me it's very much about the point where the theory becomes action. That's where I get energy.

In that same vein, a third thought leader explains,

I guess I've become more relaxed about the attitudes I run into and the need to change everyone. I no longer feel I have to change everyone. I feel the results speak for themselves . . . I'm no longer really an evangelist to be honest with you . . . I'm not out there trying to sell it any more. I'm out there doing it and living it and through my actions trying to show people what's possible.

One thought leader sees this shift as an *opening*.

I've become more open. I'm more prepared to accept some different views, contradictory views which have a place, that's been a big difference. I think I've realized that a lot of the things that many of us got intuitively actually have a scientific base, and once you understand the scientific base you can get more scalability, and it's been fascinating the last 3 or 4 years to have to dive into cognitive psychology and linguistic theory. You find things that just make sense that you can connect together, and you wonder why in hell these different disciplines haven't connected themselves together.

Another responder noted that the shift was from spending no time thinking about knowledge really to spending 24 hours a day doing just that. "There's something about story that occupies me 24 hours a day, and knowledge is still a significant part of that." He points out that human beings dream in story. As an example, Steve Denning *tells* a story.

When I was director of knowledge management at The World Bank, this was the central focus of my working life so I was quite passionate about it, and I'm certainly passionate about it for any organization that is facing challenges for which this is a central issue. For instance, last week I was in Paris talking to the Nuclear Energy Agencies of the world. They are facing massive knowledge problems because they have a large number of nuclear facilities which are, many of them, being decommissioned. In Europe and the U.S. there are no new facilities being built, so the number of nuclear engineers coming into the sector is in very sharp decline. There are major problems being faced as to how to run and maintain these facilities and the waste deposit which will be radioactive for another 10,000 years at least. So this is a massive knowledge problem which may well *affect the future of the planet*. I was *passionate* about helping them see how important it was for them to share their knowledge.

He was passionate about *making a difference*. (A representative quote from this story was used when addressing sharing knowledge under transfer and reuse of knowledge.)

One thought leader sees his *thinking as evolving*.

I've been involved in bringing organizations out of training into what I would call a learning approach. . . . It's been reoriented in many ways. Yeah, I think my

thinking about it has really evolved and has become in a sense more pragmatic at once and more comprehensive in the sense that I've done a lot of work now on the definition of strategies, on the interaction of strategies and culture."

Another responder sees this energy change as a refocusing from KM as a buzzword to innovation management, putting knowledge to use in companies. "I haven't lost any belief in what I'm doing." He thinks he actually sees KM more pragmatically than before because he has seen many dangers of the hype and how it has not produced any value in some companies. He tells this story,

Actually, I was working in India last year for a month and there were some people who were calling these subjects high-level bullshit, even using it sarcastically. Now, when I talk to managers, and even in our team, *we call KM high-level bullshit*, but then we challenge ourselves to see through the hype and high-level bullshit to really sell the fundamentals behind it and the philosophy behind it, which is not easy because it's usually seen as a very abstract field. We are trying to show the real value and, without being very religious or evangelistic about it, trying to pass the good message forward.

Another responder reminds,

In the end, people will see the message if they see you being (a) *passionate in a genuine way*, and (b) really practicing what you're talking about, that you're demonstrating and displaying quite vividly to the people around you *not only are these things that you're talking about, but these are things that you live*.

Several thought leaders have become focused on the *larger potential* of this thing called KM, a reinforcing theme to previous responses. As one responder explains, I've become much more focused on the need for the things that we do in KM to help the organization achieve its large objective, at the same time helping individuals grow and learn and *be all that they can be*. And I've seen that happen in KM, and there's a real strong satisfaction in seeing how people have come to the fore and get recognized by executives as future leaders . . . So I think there's even more focus now. Along with the desire for the organization to see results and for KM to become part of the way we work, there's also a strong sense of the *value of this to human beings*.

The Way Passion Affects the Work Thought Leaders Do

Thought leaders were specifically asked how this passion has affected their work. The first grouping of this response talks about KM as an energizer, continuing our focus on energy, particularly considering passion as a reward. One thought leader responded, "It gets me up in the morning." As she explained further,

I've had jobs that I did not believe in what I was doing and also that were not intellectually challenging ... With KM there's the certainty that I'll never run out of things to do. I'm not wasting my time. I'm making a contribution.

A second responder viewed this passion as,

Essentially the *energizer* for what I do . . . *creating the purpose* of why this should indeed be the way of pursuing things. Why would I be interested in KM unless I would find reasons for successes?

Asked why he was interested in KM, he responded, "Because it does a *whole lot of good* ... it does a whole lot of good." A third responder continues this theme.

Oh, I wouldn't have done it, I wouldn't do anything where I wasn't passionate. Where would be the point? I could sell something and just make money. So, no, it motivates me. I don't do anything without passion, I mean I try not to, certainly not work.

As cited in the introduction to this section exploring the nature of thought leader passion, John Seely Brown says his passion for this work *creates meaning*. The telling of his story is full of his passion.

It was so fun. For example, we had this book all figured out but we hadn't started writing it in detail and my co-author and I flew to Asia and we started to experience things that we only vaguely understood intellectually. We started experiencing things with texture which was amazing to us, and we started seeing things that we never thought existed before.

He laughs.

There was a sense of suddenly being a participant in some incredibly, rapidly evolving, passionate ecologies, knowledge ecologies . . . it just changed our lives. We went in with one set of eyeglasses, and we honestly came out with another set of eyeglasses.

The effect?

It's sort of changing my whole sense of what globalization is going to be about. It's changing my whole sense of where value gets created. Somehow there were a lot of precursor things . . . a lot of things I've been experiencing in the last 4 or 5 years all got twisted in a very interesting way to *suddenly see the world differently*.

Still energetic, he continues after a pause,

So half of my life is seeing the world differently having to do with rethinking globalization and what this is going to mean to business architectures, learning architectures, knowledge sharing and so on and so forth. And the other half is understanding kids that grow up digital and what digital culture is about, which I'm equally passionate about and spend equally as much time doing. But both of these activities have involved my grinding new conceptual lenses with which to make sense of the world. So it's not a question of learning, it's a question of learning to see completely differently. My ontologies themselves have had to shift. It's kind of like building a *whole new set of dispositions on how to see the world*.

As one thought leader notes, our passion for this work *changes aspects of who we are*. Another responder says, "It's helped me to be more aware and more sensitive, probably more compassionate and actually listen to what other people are trying to say, and validate that I really understood what they said. So it's made me a better listener." Another thought leader notes that passion can make the *work easier and more enjoyable* as well as more effective. Another responder says,

It makes work fun, frankly. Fun in the sense that you are learning things about a subject which you feel is important and can contribute to the world. You are learning about something that is intellectually stimulating and challenging and gives you a better understanding of what you need to know.

Yet another responder exclaims, "Oh, my work's great! I love it. I absolutely love it, and I've found that I'm incredibly productive as well, so it's great. I love it."

This *passion is catching*. As one thought leader describes, I'm changing my students. It's positive for them in their own life . . . I think they're catching the passion. If students see that you're passionate, then they believe . . . it increases their acceptance of the material as well . . . if you don't have the passion how are you going to get the passion in these folks? That's what I'm there to do. I'm there to teach them about KM, but I would say . . . in equal measure I'm there to give them the passion for it.

Leif Edvinsson agrees, "It still affects me. Right now I'm the first intellectual capital professor in the world, so I'm trying to activate and share the passion with the younger generations." From a receiving viewpoint, another thought leader says, "I find it an enormous source of energy being able to work with someone that has the same passion, the same drive, and the creativity. I love it, absolutely love it."

Passion can quite literally *drive the work one does*. One thought leader says that he retired 12 years ago to become more involved in the field, and he expects he will never leave the field because it excites him. Another thought leader said passion around this work impacts to some extent which clients she chooses and what she tries to focus on.

She does not separate the passion she feels from the work she chooses to do. She explains,

Well, it's the nature of the knowledge that's getting transferred, the nature is knowledge that is going to save people's lives or knowledge that helps keep people safer, so it impacts whether I take client A or B ... because with one of them I can really feel like I'm doing some real good, this is going to make a difference, and the other one well, it adds to shareholder value, and that's great and we need to keep doing that, but it's not the same. You can't see the tangible results in the lives of people in the same way.

Other thought leaders agree. Two responders say this drives the specific work they focus on. The first says,

It's dictating studies that I undertake, dictating day-to-day opportunities that people come to me with right now, what I take and what I don't do. I'm very much geared towards those opportunities which let me further explore the social aspect of these issues.

The second says it has very much shaped his work in the sense that he looks at the organization in a very comprehensive way.

I find that it is very important to first have a good sense of focus on what the organization intends to achieve, and then have a clearly laid out customer strategy that will actually bring this about, and within that have an organizational strategy which is a function of the customer strategy which itself is a function of the strategic intent. Only when these three levels are well-defined can you actually start working meaningfully on a knowledge strategy, because a knowledge strategy is at the service of those other three layers.

This strategy approach was echoed by another thought leader, "It has moved increasingly into the strategic side, being more responsive to opportunities on decision-makers and decision-groups." And another says, "It has guided me towards projects that are related to strategy, related to activities around people, it has guided me to develop tools, educational and planning tools that *engage more of the whole person.*"

Several thought leaders focus on specific areas of passion. For example, one says, "Well, honestly, I spend the majority of my time in any effort mainly ensuring that those three learning processes are what get implemented: peer-assist, to learn before doing; the action review, a learning-by-doing tool; and the learning-after process." Another says,

It's this idea that I'm trying in small, small ways to get those people around me to think in very, very small steps to improve how they get things organized. This is not rocket science, but at the mundane level most individuals have never learned

to exercise their minds in a way to organize things digitally. No one ever taught them that. No one ever gave them the skills, and they're all struggling with that same very critical generic problem. If they can't get past that they can't get into really organizing things at a much more complex level.

Another thought leader admits that there's the potential that her passion sometimes seems counter-productive. "I'm not the most comfortable person for people to work with because I continue to try to get to the *question behind the question*. What's the question behind that? Why are we really asking that question?"

One thought leader is more generic in her response,

I follow my nose, I always have. I think I have a rather circuitous route. . . . And it's only with retrospect that I can see the thread going through, which is kind of interesting. . . . I have projects that I'm interested in and ideas to follow. . . . So I don't seek out things, they kind of come out of my work and emerge in patterns that I see in retrospect.

Another responder shares, "Well, I've been very fortunate in my life in that sense. I've been very blessed in being able to work only with things that I'm very passionate about. This, of course, means that I'm a very passionate guy in everything I do." In contrast, one thought leader says,

I think that in my case it may actually be the reverse, that is, the finding of solutions and working in this field is what really seems to stroke the feeling of passion about it, and that then manifests itself in trying to get the ideas out, trying to get the word out so people can make use of it if they are so inclined.

He pauses, then continues,

The underlying driver behind all of this is a mindset or an orientation that relishes doing research and in my particular case research on the nature of knowledge just seems to have come naturally. Of course, not only the nature of knowledge but also what we can do with that knowledge and maybe even how we should do it.

As seen throughout this section focused on the way thought leader passion has affected the work they do, themes common to the overall responses (such as learning, making a difference, a shift underway, and the potential for something more) are reinforced. This certainly validates the significance of those themes to thought leaders.

Relationship of Thought Leaders to Aspects

An additional secondary question was: *Does the data reveal anything about the relationship of knowledge management thought leaders to these aspects about which they have expressed passion?*

While certainly overlapping with the nature of thought leader passion, this question offered a slightly different focus to further explore the aspects. I looked at (a) how responders described thought leaders in terms of their characteristics; (b) what the data had to say about the relationship of thought leaders to their ideas; (c) what the data had to say about thought leader *values* and the connection of those values to the work they do; and (d) the relationship of the conditions of the flow state and those aspects that thought leaders connect with their passion for the field of KM.

Thought Leader Attributes

In terms of intangibles, the responses show that thought leaders have: a sense of mission; integrity, consistency and persistence; the courage to stand on what you believe; the humility to realize that it may not be right; an openness for listening and seeing new signals; a sincere desire to help people in organizations; passion of one sort or another; an expanded set of sensibilities; a true interest in improving the system; social dynamic, a more full-blooded understanding of what it means to be human, what it means to be a worker or employee, and what learning really means in these complex settings; and an openness for listening and seeing new signals, but also balancing that with personal wisdom and a very humble approach to moving along that rhythm related to applying wisdom. They also “become endlessly prolific.”

Several responders specifically stated that thought leaders were *intrinsically motivated*. For example, one responder stated, “I don’t think any one of the people I know is motivated much, much more than intrinsically. This is what they do.” Another responder described thought leaders as very giving and very generous of both their time and their ideas; and another responder said that thought leaders were idealists and dissatisfied with the status quo. As Larry Prusak sums up this intrinsic quality,

I’ve known many people who really spend a lot of time and energy writing books on management and they don’t have to. They have plenty of money, they have plenty of status, they are senior executives at a consulting firm or business, but they do it anyway because obviously they’re intrinsically motivated. They’re playing to a different audience besides the masses or the people in their firm . . . they are playing to the gods.

Thought leaders are clearly *learners*, touching another repetitive theme in overall responses. One responder explained this in terms of: “Knowledge is not static. Knowledge is like water, when it stops flowing it stinks. So to really know you really

have to be learning. When you stop learning you stop knowing as well.” Focusing on *abilities*, thought leaders are: creative and intelligent; creative in their thoughts, and relatively humble. They have: the ability to articulate ideas very clearly; the ability to listen and be challenged and questioned; the ability to think originally—to come up with new fundamental ideas that challenge conventional wisdom; and they all have dealt with enough organizations that they could start developing themes in their thinking, or enough experiences where they can refer back to here is what they are doing in company “X”, here is what they are doing in company “Y,” and share that information with others as well as coalesce it into different frameworks or visions.

One responder tried to put into words what she was calling *courage*.

[Specific thought leaders] have certainly done a great deal of research . . . so for me I think it is that what they’re writing about is really grounded in both their own and other’s research so that it’s very substantive . . . the research is revealing something that we haven’t quite understood so clearly before, and to some extent the research is also providing something that we all knew, but it’s a little bit on the edge because it’s presenting a new way of looking at something, and sometimes it goes a little against the grain so it takes some courage to write some of those things that push the system a little bit.

One thought leader stated that thought leaders are also selfish—because they are passionate about their idea and do not mind dying in the process of its creation—if it came to it, an idea would win out over a person. In the responder’s words, “I would sacrifice people to get my idea across. And so would most of the others.” In contrast to this viewpoint, another responder describes thought leaders as “people that act not selfishly but in a giving way. This is a field where I find very often *people profess extreme collaboration and exercise extreme competition*.” There is some laughter, and he continues:

So those I named I think are people that are generally *very giving and very generous of both their time and their ideas*. They’re generally *very good networkers* and they *tend to engender trust* in their networks. The network is very demanding for people who are either very selfish or self-driving or not driven by a sense of cause or something that is important to them.

Several responders described thought leaders extensively in terms of their *attributes*. For example, Debra Amidon offered 10 characteristics she attributes to thought leaders (shared from a summary chapter of “Creating the Knowledge Based Business Research Report” appearing on her website):

They are people of substance, of value, they value and they should be valued. They have vision, they are not afraid to put their vision into motion with their actions. They have a holistic perspective and are systematic in what it is they do,

and they don't do it necessarily themselves, but usually in collaboration with others. They are effective communicators. They are effective in their interactions with purposeful conversations. They learn from these conversations. They tend to be open, transparent. They have integrity. They have convictions, and some of their convictions may not necessarily be aligned with my own, but I respect people who have convictions. And basically I think thought leaders are learners.

Relationship to Their Ideas

While discussing their new ideas, thought leaders were asked, *How do you feel about these ideas?* While clearly choosing to let their ideas go, by virtue of sharing and publishing them, most thought leaders remain attached to those ideas in a relationship similar to what several thought leaders term as that of a parent and child. The passion around these ideas is visibly expressed in the following paragraphs.

Once those ideas are published, out there for the general public to read, reflect on, question and apply, how do thought leaders feel about those ideas? Immediate positive responses to this question included: “absolutely thrilled,” “enthusiastic,” “excited,” “grateful,” “I enjoy them,” “I feel good about them,” “I genuinely like them,” “proud,” “very positive,” and “well, good.” Several thought leaders shared that this enthusiasm around published ideas provides continuing energy for further development of those ideas. For example, Rob Cross states, “What I get enthused about are the ways in which the work that’s been done to this point helps me engage with others and kind of creates that *enthusiasm around possibilities* in the work.” Positive responses that denote thought leader relationships with these ideas are: “haven’t outgrown them;” “I don’t take ownership—I’m a conduit for them;” “I feel like they are gifts;” “I’m absolutely delighted when one pops up!;” “I think they are true;” “share with delight;” “they are indeed valuable;” “they are my friends;” and “they are painting in some of the white spaces.” One thought leader thinks of them as foundational things to build upon and another noted they have the potential to make companies really nice places to work . . . *a learning environment where people can live up to their aspirations.*

Another grouping of responses talks to the effect of their ideas on others. In their words, thought leaders shared: “It was satisfying to hear people found my ideas worthwhile enough to make major changes in their lives;” “I’m enjoying that these *thought seeds are spreading around;*” and “I’m tickled pink when I know that people I have touched or influenced are successful.” One thought leader said he felt embarrassed when people run up to him at a conference and tell him how good his work is. “This is just some common sense log of my experiences,” he explains, “I had no idea it would have such an effect on people.” Another thought leader feels *frustrated by the length of time it takes* to actually bring people to accept some of these ideas, finding it difficult to accept what he knows, that people’s own experiences shape their receptivity to these ideas.

Five thought leaders referred to their *ideas as children*; they grow up and leave home, and you hope they will not embarrass you and they might even do some good in the world, and when they are successful you are happy to see them successful. The way these ideas are received, however, is out of your control. As Tom Davenport says, “You sort of realize that a lot of the acceptance of ideas is out of your control. It’s like having children in a way. You try to put all that you can into them and turn them loose.”

How do thought leaders feel when these ideas are misinterpreted and/or misapplied? Some turn it into a learning experience and, again, use it to *provide energy for new thinking*. For example, John Seely Brown states,

A lot of times these things are . . . received but misinterpreted, and the way that they are being what I would call misinterpreted often turns out to be insightful . . . how come? How come these things got heard one way when we meant them another way? That tells us something as well. So putting things out and having them either accepted, slightly transformed or rejected all leads to additional signals that turn out to be interesting to reflect on. But then you begin to see how these *fundamental constructs actually can be used in new ways*.

Thought Leader Beliefs and Values and Their Relationship to KM

The 34 thought leaders interviewed shared 53 personal beliefs or values, then extrapolated these across to the field of KM. These 53 beliefs or values are loosely grouped as indicated below. An explication of these core beliefs and values, along with their extrapolation across to the field of KM, is in Appendix D.

The first grouping of responses is concerned with *philosophical issues*: positive energy; honoring the world; living in the light; living with love and compassion; making some sort of a difference for other people; working with people together to change the world to be a better place; wanting to make a difference; working for a larger good than yourself; trying to understand the world intellectually; the inviability of humanity; the value of life; and the affirmation that there is a creator in my mind of this universe.

Another grouping is around *self*: building and developing and *nourishing our own identity*; being close to my own livingness; self initiation and ownership; and the whole idea of self-worth. And another grouping is around the *other*: a sense of other; the other; everyone is fundamentally good and nice and peaceful; real contributions come from people; people know a lot; everybody truly wants to do their best; people have a fundamentally good side; everybody thinks that they are basically better than everybody else and more ethical and more compassionate; supporting people; *ordinary people can create extraordinary results*; and the power of individuals and teams to lead others. The next grouping is around *relationships*: belief in family (twice); building relationships; relationships with other people; and community or relationship. Another grouping is

around *learning*: everybody wants to learn; experts should be teachers; continuous learning (twice); the joy of learning; and the value of sharing.

One grouping is around characteristics such as curiosity; openness and receptivity to new ideas; and perspective. Optimism comes into play as one thought leader responds, “Tomorrow is going to be a better day than yesterday.” A grouping focused on specific *values*: kindness; honesty (twice); honesty is the best policy; being genuine; doing one’s best to tell the truth; tolerance; integrity (twice); sense of justice; equity or justice; respect; and respect and caring. And a grouping around the *work ethic* and organizations: very strong belief in attempting to be cooperative in working toward common goals, sense of rigor and discipline, trying to apply my best effort whatever I’m working on, things should be useable, people should behave within the organization toward the goal of the organization, and organizations should be seen as living entities. Finally, some *rules for living*: respect other people’s beliefs, it’s amazing how much you can get done if you do not care who gets the credit for it.

In the course of the interviews, several responders cited changes occurring in their own organizations. For example, Ramon Barquin shared,

To a large degree I’ve built this company as somewhat a reflection of my own values and my own professional thinking . . . a lot of this is coming from that KM framework. [My values] are very traditional . . . love of family, love of country, respect for the individual. Having lived in at least three dictatorships, I know the importance of freedom and democracy . . . in many ways they [my values] are tied in. I think it’s very difficult, for example, to have freedom and democracy unless you have an open marketplace of ideas, ideas of course linked to knowledge. I think you cannot just absolutely stiff-arm and obliterate an idea just because you don’t like it. You need to let it play out. Ideas, by the way, are going to in some way have the marketplace vote on them, and more often than not you’ll find that *society will move in directions that are for the common good*. So openness is really, really important.

One responder moves value into a broader humanities perspective, linking knowledge and KM to *inherent value in terms of spirituality*.

It’s important to recognize that for individual workers to continue learning and gaining knowledge, it’s essential that they learn how to learn and understand themselves. This is particularly important when it comes to the phenomena of knowing and developing intuition and judgment. As individuals in organizations pursue learning, the development of knowledge and the sharing of that knowledge, as well as the application in organizational context, they not only learn more about themselves, but they learn how they learn and through this process have the possibility of developing a *higher sense of the self and the relationship of the self to the external environment*.

He pauses, then continues,

This relationship is as much the Eastern perception of *spiritual understanding*—including meditation and self-awareness and mindfulness—as it is the Western perception of the *acquisition of knowledge about the external world*. Thus, while perhaps not a direct intention of KM and organizational learning, many people who work in KM have the intuitive feeling that the acquisition of knowledge (and particularly self-knowledge, intuition, judgment and heuristics) will move the individual beyond the Western perception of developing knowledge about the external world and include developing knowledge about the individual person and the worthiness and usefulness of that knowledge relative to both organizational performance and personal and collegial human worth and intention.

For a more in-depth discussion of the results in terms of spirituality, see pages 104-106.

After exploring this group of responses separately, we now take the opportunity presented by the framework to see how these expressed values and beliefs map over to the elements of the framework (see Table 6).

Table 6

Comparison of Interview Response Around Values and Beliefs to the Framework

MODEL BASED ON LITERATURE REVIEW (Elements)	INTERVIEW RESPONSE FOCUSED ON VALUES AND BELIEFS (Aspects)
<p>CHANGING EXTERNAL EVENTS AND STIMULI</p> <p>(The field) (Breadth of field) (Changing nature of field) (Value/Results) (Transfer and Reuse of knowledge) (New thinking) (Knowing) (Challenges and opportunities)</p>	
<p>EXTERNALLY OBSERVED</p> <p>Passionate commitment, action and a sense of urgency</p> <p>Leadership in terms of unleashing energy, building, freeing and growing</p> <p>A passion to serve</p> <p>Speaking from the heart and drawing out other people and engaging them</p> <p>Joy</p>	<p>Experts should be teachers</p> <p>Real contributions come from people; ordinary people can create extraordinary results</p> <p>The joy of learning</p>

CORRELATION TO LARGER SELF	
Part of larger picture	Working with people together to change the world to be a better place; organizations should be seen as living entities; freedom and democracy; People developing a higher sense of the self and relationship of the self to the external environment
What it means to be alive	The inviability of humanity; the value of life; being close to my own livingness
Flow experience	
Spiritual awakening	Living in the light; living with love and compassion; the affirmation that there is a creator in my mind of this universe
Making one's life meaningful	
INTERNALLY FELT	
Promoting the greater good	Working for a larger good than yourself; the common good;
Doing the right things right	Sense of justice; equity or justice; things should be useable; very strong belief in attempting to be cooperative in working toward common goals; sense of rigor and discipline; people should behave within the organization toward the goal of the organization; it's amazing how much can get done if you don't care who gets the credit for it
Duty toward others	A sense of other; the other; supporting people; tolerance; respect other people's beliefs
Intersects with goals and needs	Building and developing and nourishing our own identity; curiosity
It is "precious", of higher interest and great	Belief in family; belief in family; building relationships; relationships with other people; community; relationship; respect; respect and caring; love of family; respect for the individual; love of country
Optimism and confidence in the future	Positive energy; tomorrow is going to be a better day than yesterday
Demands attention	
INTERNAL INDUCERS	
Morals	Everyone is fundamentally good and nice and peaceful; people know a lot; everybody truly wants to do their best; people have a fundamentally good side; everybody thinks that they are basically better than everybody else and more ethical and more compassionate; everybody wants to learn; trying to apply my best effort whatever I'm working on
Values	The whole idea of self-worth; openness and receptivity to new ideas; the value of sharing; continuous learning; continuous learning; kindness; honesty; honesty; honesty is the best policy; being genuine; doing one's best to tell the truth; integrity
Purpose beyond ourselves	Honoring the world
Goals and needs	Trying to understand the world intellectually; self initiation and ownership;
Deep longing to make a difference	Making some sort of a difference for other people; wanting to make a difference.

What have we learned from this exercise? Table 7 maps the number of aspects (values and beliefs) to areas of the framework, providing a numeric pattern of these responses in terms of the framework. This numeric pattern is the inverse of that pattern produced when mapping the framework and responses to the survey question, "What about KM excites your passion?"

Table 7
Number of Values and Beliefs Mapped to Areas of Framework

AREA OF FRAMWORK	ELEMENTS IN THAT AREA	NUMBER OF ASPECTS
CHANGING EXTERNAL EVENTS AND STIMULI	The field; Breadth of field; Changing nature of field; Value/Results; Transfer and Reuse of knowledge; New thinking; knowing; Challenges and opportunities	0
EXTERNALLY OBSERVED	Passionate commitment, action and a sense of urgency; Leadership in terms of unleashing energy, building, freeing and growing; A passion to serve; Speaking from the heart and drawing out other people and engaging them; Joy	4
SELF CORRELATES	Part of larger picture; What it means to be alive; Flow experience; Spiritual awakening; Making one's life meaningful	10
INTERNALLY FELT	Promoting the greater good; doing the right things right; Duty toward others; Intersects with goals and needs; It is "precious", of higher interest and great; Optimism and confidence in the future	29
INTERNAL INDUCERS	Morals; Values; Purpose beyond ourselves; Goals and needs; Deep longing to make a difference	24

Since this group of responses specifically addressed core values or beliefs, it is not surprising that the responses spread primarily across the areas of internal inducers and internally felt elements with some clearly falling in the area of self correlates and a few in the area of externally observed elements. It also makes sense that none of these core values and beliefs clearly map to external events and stimuli since beliefs and values are more closely aligned with internal elements and correlated with self. Remembering that thought leaders were able to extrapolate each of these core values and beliefs over to the field of KM, it is clear that these are attributes that thought leaders connect in some way to the field of KM, a field about which they have passion.

Comparing Conditions of Flow with the Aspects

Does the field of KM foster the experience of flow in its thought leaders? Although this question was not specifically asked during the interviews, the nature of the field, the aspects of the field that thought leaders connected with their passion and the relationship of passion to flow suggest several possibilities.

First, we consider the field of KM. Many of its fundamental characteristics, such as wide-spread applicability, improving knowledge, and helping individuals and organizations grow, learn and achieve better performance not only generate passion but, as demonstrated above through thought leader responses, also generate meaning. At the same time those thought leaders have great freedom and control over their own work. In thought leader concepts and words, networking and collaborating with others in the field provide both feedback, a sense of belonging, and plenty of opportunities to "live in a

different world.” As the field grows it offers new challenges and opportunities in many areas and at many levels. As demonstrated in the responses, contributing to the KM field provides many tangible and intangible rewards, as well as personal and transcendent growth. All of these features of the field enable and support flow states in its thought leaders. But in themselves these features do not and cannot create flow states. Only the thought leaders as individuals can experience flow states. What indications do we have that they are likely to do so? I will use representative quotes from overall responses previously presented in the results to map thought leader responses to the conditions of flow.

Recall that a flow state is something that the individual enters into and experiences. It is both personal and subjective. As stated earlier, Csikszentmihalyi has suggested the conditions that foster flow states (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). These include: loss of ego, being involved with something larger than oneself; having passion; being in control and making a difference; being in the present; focusing and deepening concentration; a balance between opportunity and capacity; quick feedback; and clear goals. The first one, loss of ego, being involved with something larger than oneself, or belonging to a good group is exemplified by the following thought leader statements: “we’re talking about a richness of life;” “you’re doing what you love to do;” “to make small contributions to people remembering that they can be life affirming;” “is one of satisfaction in having made some contribution;” “change the way people think about the world;” and “there’s a real undercurrent of missionary zeal that runs through the community.”

That the KM field generates passion that in turn engenders flow (Belitz & Lundstrom, 1997, p. 57) can be seen from the following comments made when responding to the question, “What about KM excites your passion?”: “every time I work with a client;” “every time we are able to get a program going;” “the nature of knowledge;” and “the creation of new ideas.” One responder noted that passion creates energy above and beyond the normal human amount. He further stated that he does KM 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Such self-imposed dedication and intensity provides strong indication of being involved with something larger than one’s self—a flow state characteristic. This characteristic is also one element of our passion framework, and associated responses from thought leaders include: “if these ideas take hold and work it takes us to a more hopeful future for the planet;” “nourishment and cultivation of the future;” and “something in it that’s more.”

Thought leaders repeatedly indicated that they felt in control of their activities and that they could make a difference. For example: “This is a philosophy and concept that can really make a difference;” and “We’ve been able to make a difference in things we care about.” One thought leader, referring to other thought leaders, noted that they were, “Someone who has a vision and isn’t afraid to act on it.” Reflecting on what thought leaders do, one responder stated, “They have been able to influence people’s behavior.” Another mentioned that thought leaders had been able to “change the way people think about the world.”

Being in the present, or what might be called mindfulness, is heavily represented by the way thought leaders talk about the present, such as: ‘impacting performance in the moment;’ and ‘shift is underway.’ As another indicator, over and over again thought leaders talk about what they are accomplishing now. For example, ‘I’m not wasting my time. I’m making a contribution.’

Another condition for flow is the act of focusing and the sensation of being in a special world, almost a state of ecstasy. One thought leader said, ‘I feel almost as if I’m being pulled forward.’ In the responses regarding the attributes of thought leaders, the following attributes were noted: ‘become endlessly prolific;’ ‘passion of one sort or another;’ ‘a sense of mission;’ ‘they are playing to the gods;’ and ‘they have a vision, they are not afraid to put their vision into motion with their actions.’

Relative to the flow condition of a focus, pointedness of mind, and strong concentration, we find one responder saying, ‘It just feels right. It feels right down to my core that I’m on the right track.’ Another responder states, ‘I feel momentum. I feel . . . more energy, because this is more than my individual emotional commitment.’ And another, ‘My ideas have gotten better and my energy higher in a sense.’ This increase in energy was discussed earlier in the results (see pages 118-122).

The flow state occurs when the opportunities and challenges presented to a thought leader are in balance with the thought leader’s capacity. Many responders specifically talked about the challenges offered by the KM field. For example: ‘richness of multidimensionality of experience;’ ‘defining the field;’ ‘changing the way people collaborate;’ and ‘prevent knowledge from being lost to next generation.’ That the thought leaders had the capacity to meet the knowledge management challenges is considered self-evident from their being thought leaders. The observation of their passion towards the field also indicates a balance between their challenges and their contributions.

Feedback is another condition for flow. One thought leader pointed out that thought leaders had ‘an openness for listening and seeing new signals’ while Amidon notes, ‘People write books to share their experiences and observations with others, but they are instruments for conversation, that’s what they are.’

Having clear goals is a strong condition for flow. In the KM field, this is easily seen from the following responses: ‘improved performance of organizations;’ ‘an approach to solving enterprise problems;’ ‘accelerated learning translating into more effective operations;’ ‘improving organizational memory;’ and ‘to get people to share knowledge.’

From this mapping it is clear that the KM field possesses many characteristics that would encourage flow states in its thought leaders. This relationship is addressed further in the discussion.