THE CULTURE AND COMMUNITY OF KNOWLEDGE SCIENCES

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Current State of Knowledge Sciences as a Discipline

- Knowledge management as a discipline is at a critical junction. Over 70 years, we have developed a new discipline that leverages and expands on traditional fields.

- We've experienced some rapid advances and some setbacks.

- As a discipline we are not quite there yet – academia considers us a "niche practice"

- We have suffered from a Ground Hog Day Syndrome – a continuous relearning and reiteration of the early ideas

- How do we break out of this syndrome and move forward to a rich and growing discipline?

Role of Culture and Community in Growing a Discipline

- Since we first described ourselves as a discipline, we've leveraged a number of different methods and strategies – research agendas, standards, developed handbooks and attempted to establish education programs and curriculum

- Let's be honest – they rarely have an impact, they rarely sustain

- They are important products, but they are the products of well established disciplines which advance and sustain them

- What are we missing? Two fundamental and invisible elements….
  - a rich, multifaceted and identifiable community
  - a rich and established culture that reflects what the discipline has learned over its lifespan

Advancing the Practice to a Discipline

- To advance the field, to achieve a status equivalent to other disciplines or even as a subdiscipline, we have some work to do.

- If we can embrace a more holistic culture and build a more inclusive community, I believe we can break out of the Ground Hog Day Syndrome

- Working on the new Emerald Working Methods for Knowledge Management series has exposed what can be accomplished when we build stronger communities, and draw from a rich culture

- These are not gaps a few thought leaders can fill – they can only be filled by each one of us deliberately and intentionally adapting our actions and changing the way we work

- Please let me explain….

THE COMMUNITY OF KNOWLEDGE SCIENCES

What does the Community of a Discipline look like?

A healthy academic discipline should have the following community members.....

- Robust research community

- Stable and healthy academic community

- Business community to apply and test research and provide feedback

- Practitioner community with full set of roles from novice to expert

- Professional societies and associations

- Steady stream of students and lifelong learners

- Collaborative networks across institutions

- Areas of specialization that continue to expand and deepen the discipline

- Publishers in the discipline

- Libraries, stocks and collections of domain knowledge

How Would You Assess the KS Community?

- Let me ask you each to consider for a moment what community you most closely associate with for your knowledge sciences activities.

- How would you rate your community? What aspects off the community need to be enhanced and improved?

- To build a global community for our discipline, we need to improve the health of each of our regional communities

- Let me share with you my view of the health status of the North American knowledge sciences community might look like this....

Use Case Scenario – North American KS Community

| Community	Health Status
Research community	Critical
Academic Community	Critical
Business Community	Shows signs of improvement
Practitioner Community	Shows signs of potential growth
Professional Societies	Critical
Student Community	Improving and growing outside the field
Collaboration Networks	Critical
Communities of Specialization	Critical
Publishing and Peer Review Communities	Critical
Library Collections and Knowledge Stocks	Scattered and Fragmented Across Other Disciplines

THE CULTURE OF KNOWLEDGE SCIENCES

Defining the Culture of a Discipline

- How do we define the culture of a discipline? How would you characterize the culture of chemistry, physics, linguistics, performing arts, or medicine?

- To understand the culture of a discipline, we need to apply the common cultural model (Schein, Hofstede)

- Each level of the cultural model helps us to understand our strengths and weaknesses

- Let's walk through the five levels to assess the knowledge sciences culture

Five Levels of Culture

- The culture of a discipline is defined by five components, including:

  - its basic assumptions and theory;
  - its beliefs about how the discipline relates to and supports the larger world;
  - ethics and values that support and govern practices, methods, and behaviors;
  - behaviors and practices that represent how practitioners and professionals behave and approach the discipline;
  - artifacts and physical symbols that represent and promote the discipline.

Conceptual Model of a Culture

Artifacts

Behaviors

Values & Norms

Beliefs
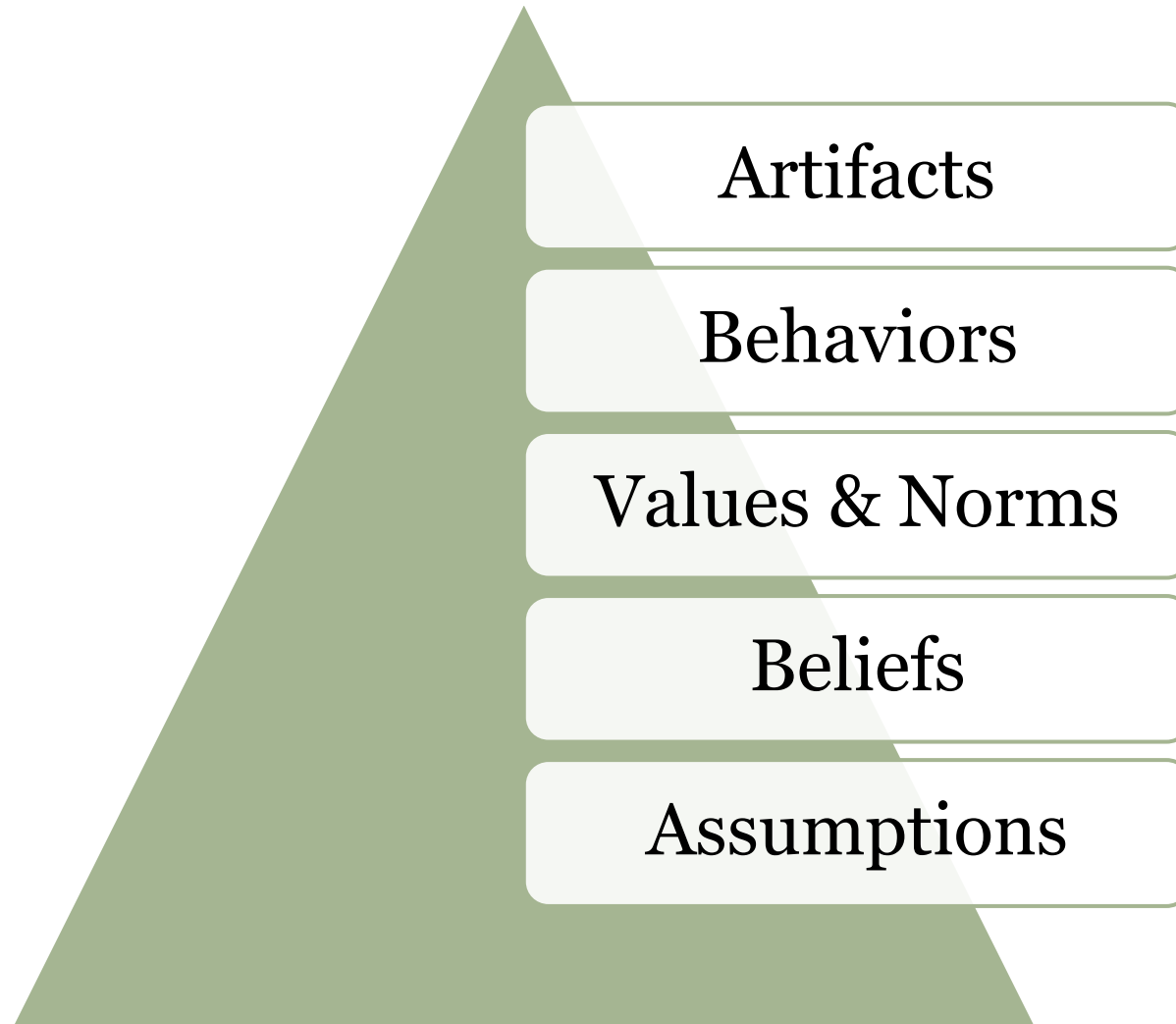
Assumptions

Common Assumptions of Knowledge Sciences

- Do we have a coherent and consistent set of assumptions and core concepts? Are they passed on to each new member of our community? Are they taught as the foundations of our education and training?

- I think the honest answer is that we have some, but they are not comprehensive across the scope and coverage of the field - there is a fragmented understanding across the discipline.

- The lack of commonly accepted assumptions and concepts leads to a failure to advance theory which is grounded in research.

- Fragmentation is across practitioners, across professionals, and from practitioner to professional

- How do we begin to coalesce these assumptions? How do we promote their adoption?

Example of Common Assumptions

- A core concept around which we should have developed a common set of assumptions is intellectual capital or knowledge capital.

- There are key researchers in the field whose work has significantly advanced some common assumptions yet we still see wildly different characterizations in the literature

- Rather than seek out common assumptions, we tend to redefine – this creates a trust and reputation issue for those outside our field – we appear to lack a common body of knowledge…..

- We need to achieve this consensus because we should be the authority, and should be able to communicate to other disciplines.

- Can we identify a set of core assumptions to ground the discipline? What would a glossary of Knowledge Sciences look like?

Common Beliefs of Knowledge Sciences

- Do we have a consistent and grounded set of beliefs and world view of the discipline?

- Our beliefs and world views tend to be grounded in other disciplines (e.g., management science, information science, communications, computer science…

- If you ask this question, 50% of the beliefs will be related to information management, 20% will pertain to learning, another 20% relate to knowledge sharing and collaboration, and if we are optimistic 10% will pertain the knowledge economics and knowledge capital.

- Without these core beliefs and a consistent world view, we cannot achieve discipline status

Example of Common Beliefs

- One common belief should be the inherent nature of knowledge and its relationship to people. This is essential to grounding the discipline.

- It does not mean a single definition, or a restricted definition. Rather, it means a comprehensive and inclusive description that can be interpreted by individual professionals and practitioners as core beliefs.

- When I work with folks who routinely read and review work and research across the globe, I am more likely to find a common understanding

- When I work with folks who do not routinely engage with the profession or read the literature, I find very fragmented beliefs.

- Can we identify a common set of beliefs about our discipline? How would we package and promote them?

Common Values and Norms of Knowledge Sciences

- Do we base on actions and choices on a common set of norms and values? Of course, these will vary with the cultures of our regions.

- In the North American knowledge sciences community, the most prominent value has been personal reward and recognition in the form of consulting fees and income.

- By and large people enter the field as for-profit consultants or consulting companies

- Their values and norms are grounded in personal reward rather than building a discipline or reaching a consensus on concepts, assumptions, beliefs, and values

- This is changing as large for-profit organizations adopt knowledge science practices

- This upside down approach is unlikely to produce values and norms to support a discipline - we must look to other regions for guidance

Example of Common Values

- Values and norms are often represented in a discipline's code of ethics or their guiding principles - Hippocratic Oath is an example or the World Bank's Code of Ethics

- What would a Code of Ethics look like for Knowledge Sciences?

- Common values might address respect for the ideas of others, recognizing how to conduct knowledge engagements, an individual's responsibility to share their knowledge stocks, a responsibility to mentor and coach junior members of the field, to continually learn, unlearn and relearn, and so on

- Are there closely related disciplines we might use as models?

- What would you include in a Code?

Commonly Accepted Behaviors in Knowledge Sciences

- Common behaviors means a common or fundamental way of approaching a problem or a situation. When behaviors vary, there will be a range of practices.

- This is not the same as different practices or methods. Varying behaviors mean that individuals determine independent of other professionals what is a reasonable strategy or approach to address a problem.

- This introduces uncertainty and unreliability for our stakeholders, and it discourages organizations for engaging with us for advice, coaching, collaboration, or even building on our body of research.

- Common behaviors are often represented in a discipline's Code of Conduct.

- Our challenge is that we do not have a commonly defined set of challenges upon which to define behaviors

Example of Common Behavior

- As an example, let's take coaching an organization to develop a strategy to reduce the knowledge loss or leakage

- We know that there are many viable strategies from which to choose

- A common behavior might be to ensure the "knowledge coach" has a full understanding of the methods before advising the organization to allow the organization to adopt the most effective strategies

- A coach who knows one approach and advocates for that one approach is not demonstrating a behavior that is grounded in a well-formed discipline

Common Artifacts of Knowledge Sciences

- Artifacts and symbols are tangible representations of our assumptions, beliefs, norms and values, and behaviors.

- Consider the artifacts of other disciplines such as chemistry, engineering, computer science, sociology, psychology, medical science, and art.

- When the public sees common artifacts, they make the connection to the discipline.

- We need to design and promote artifacts which will help us to publicize and promote the discipline.

Example of Common Artifacts

- Artifacts we find in other disciplines might include
  - Images on book covers
  - Symbols used by schools
  - Professional association brands
  - Logos for knowledge management companies

- What examples can we find in other disciplines – business and management, communications, computer science, learning and education, information science?

- Would we have a set of generic artifacts for the discipline, and more targeted artifacts for subdisciplines?

- How do we leverage and promote these artifacts? Within our organizations? In the broader world?

CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

A Call to Action

- What I would like to encourage each of you to do – starting at this conference – is to consider thoughtfully and reasonably what you can do to grow the culture and the community.

- I realize this is an additional burden to your current workloads building it into all of your actions and activities makes it a natural way or working

- I have developed my own implicit checklist of opportunities to look for and actions to take.

- It will take each one of us proactively pursuing the culture and community to advance the discipline.

- It is beyond the time when we can expect the discipline to advance to the next stage without deliberate and intentional actions by each of us

THANK YOU!

Comments, Questions, Disagreements?

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