

THE Evolution of Knowledge Management



This Time It's *personal*

When you think of knowledge management, you probably think of the corporate variety in which organizations try to get a handle on the vast amounts of knowledge locked inside the minds of individual employees across the organization. But there is also a more personal type of knowledge management whereby individual workers (especially knowledge workers) try to keep track of the information they encounter in their daily work lives, and more importantly, make intelligent use of that information.

When it comes to personal knowledge management, it is particularly hard to get a handle on the vast amounts of information workers encounter every day, whether

things I have acquired or been exposed to and find them all in one place," says Mary Ellen Bates, a former librarian who now runs Bates Information Services, an information consulting firm, and an *EContent* column.

Robert Berkman, editor of the monthly newsletter the *Information Advisor* (published by *EContent* publisher, Information Today) thinks PKM focuses on the individual worker, rather than organizations, and helps provide some context for the information. "Knowledge management has been all about how organizations can share knowledge to benefit the organization, but this idea is about how individual knowledge workers can find personal sources of information on their own computers and leverage this information to create knowledge and work better," Berkman says. He adds that it is about managing all of the information that comes to your computer desktop, but that it's also about contextual knowledge, making sense of that information and what it means to you.

it's emails, instant messages, documents, RSS feeds, subscriptions, Web site or blogs . . . not to mention journal articles, newspaper clippings, and other paper articles. How do you incorporate this information glut into your increasingly large digital universe and make sense of it without a "Swiss Army knife" of software packages? This article looks at personal knowledge management and explores some of the solutions available.

WHAT IS PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT?

Personal knowledge management (PKM) is a difficult concept to nail down because it involves many different types of information as well as approaches and methodologies. "I'm not sure anyone really knows what it is. It's sort of an amorphous topic, a way to externalize [what's in] my brain and take all the

David Gurteen, a consultant and industry veteran who runs the Gurteen Knowledge Web site, agrees, but prefers to draw a line between what he calls personal information management and personal knowledge management. Gurteen believes it's more about how you use this information than how you organize it, and for him this is a key distinction. "When I talk about personal knowledge management I tend to talk about people-centered or people-centric knowledge management. I just find that a little more descriptive." One of the problems he has with PKM is that it is interpreted differently by different people. "If you conduct a search on Google, you will find a lot of stuff where they are talking solely about people organizing their hard disks and what search engine they use and how they tag stuff. To me that is not personal knowledge management,