



## **Book Review**

Pauleen, D.J., & Gorman, G.E. (2011). *Personal Knowledge Management: Individual, Organizational and Social Perspectives*. Farnham Surrey, England: Gower Publishing Limited. Hardcover, \$134.95. 269 pages.

Reviewed by Donovan A. McFarlane, *The Donovan Society, LLC* and *Frederick Taylor University*

Academic thinkers and scholars are no doubt the greatest pioneers of progress. Their witty and inquisitive minds probe the universe of thoughts and consciousness for new modes of expressing our ambitions, our desire for advancement in various fields, and our quest to survive, change, and adapt to the meandering tides of time and life. They have always been and will always remain the first and greatest of knowledge workers. Such are the editors and contributors of *Personal Knowledge Management: Individual, Organizational and Social Perspectives*, a book exemplifying the scholarly and practical creativity by which knowledge adds value to our stock of resources, and one which also increases our understanding of the field of Knowledge Management directly applied to our own personal growth and development inside and outside of organizational and institutional settings.

Personal Knowledge Management (PKM) is a new term which many scholars and students of knowledge studies and management will be happy to add to their growing vocabulary of technical jargons. However, a reading of this interesting and well-written book will prove PKM to be much more than just another fancy management concept, as the editors and authors bring to us a new field of study and body of knowledge which will no doubt create new professional opportunities and research that will guide both study and practice. Knowledge Management (KM) as a field of study is still growing and the editors of this book are quick to clarify the connection or relationship between Personal Knowledge Management (PKM) and KM. Editors Pauleen and Gorman also claim the book as the first devoted specifically to PKM and define PKM as “an evolving set of understandings, skills and abilities that allows an individual to survive and prosper in complex and changing organizational and social environments” (p. xvii). With an extensive Preface, the editors clarify the place of PKM in the literature by describing it as the “child” of Knowledge Management (KM), and a concept growing out of a combination of fields including personal information management, cognitive psychology, philosophy, management science, education, communications and many other disciplines. Prelude to further discussion they describe two unique perspectives from which PKM strategy could be pursued: individual perspective and broader research and practitioner perspective. From the perspective of individual PKM strategy, the editors provide us with three questions to guide application: (i) How do I view my knowledge and how have I come to own it? (ii) What is the role of a social network in PKM? and (iii) How do I (and/or my network) maintain knowledge currency in rapidly changing environments and anticipate the inevitable changes in environmental conditions? From the broader research and practitioner perspective,

Pauleen and Gorman suggest the following three questions: (i) How do knowledge workers rise above the role of mere information processors or knowledge processors? Can they become knowledge forecasters, ‘conglomerates’, brokers and creators? (ii) Can the often seemingly clashing motivations between organizational KM and PKM be harmonized so that the ‘enlightened self-interest’ of both parties can be realized? and (iii) What is the role of government in providing PKM skills to its citizens in times of extreme discontinuity such as we are currently experiencing?

*Personal Knowledge Management: Individual, Organizational and Social Perspectives* is a twelve chapter academic, theoretical, and practical book written by 18 highly qualified contributing authors and two exceptionally qualified editors who are associate professor and full professor at Massey University and Victoria University respectively. Chapter 1 is written by the book editors and examines “The Nature and Value of Personal Knowledge Management”. In this chapter the editors clarify where PKM stands in relation to KM and explain how it differs significantly from KM and must therefore not be construed as an “offshoot of KM” (p. 1). This chapter discusses how individuals can remain competitive by applying five practical aspects of PKM strategy: management, lifelong learning, communication and interpersonal skills, use of technology, and forecasting and anticipating. They present PKM in this chapter as a remedy to uncertainty and change that affect the competitiveness and value of individual as resource based on two factors: information overload and the changing nature of work. The authors also examine organizational knowledge management conceived through KM ideas and discuss PKM and the knowledge worker. Finally, this chapter discusses ways to capitalize on synergies by examining strategic interconnectedness in PKM with an understanding that “The world of knowledge work is intensifying” (p. 13).

Chapter 2 of *Personal Knowledge Management* is titled “Where is the Wisdom We Have Lost in Knowledge? A Stoical Perspective on Personal Knowledge Management” and is a philosophical approach taken by contributing authors Peter Case and Jonathan Gosling in examining the foundations of PKM. The authors try to contextualize the ideas of “knowledge” and “wisdom” with the philosophical idea of Stoicism emerging as a dominant theory which they regard as providing the most practical approach to PKM practice and strategy. According to the authors, both the pre-classical and post-Enlightenment perquisites as conditions for knowledge and virtue have been lost and this they believe affect how we define knowledge as it affects PKM perspective. They explore the role of personal knowledge in terms of what they call “person-in-role” (p. 25). The idea of “person-in-role” is contextualized in terms of a process that converts diverse inputs and outputs and affects how one manages oneself in the role of personal knowledge manager. The authors further explore the concepts of knowledge and wisdom from an Aristotelian perspective and distinguish between potential knowledge and evolutionary or realized knowledge. The authors believe that “*Phronesis*” (“the ability to make judgments about ‘what matters’” p. 32) is important to personal knowledge management (PKM).

Personal knowledge management (PKM) affects how we think, use knowledge, communicate and use creative imagination. In Chapter 3 of *Personal Knowledge Management*, contributing author Peter Murphy describes the development of PKM along a tangent where information, logic, and system creation are variables. Titled “From Information to Imagination: Multivalent Logic and System Creation in Personal Knowledge Management”, this chapter investigates the relationship between information and imagination as the author explores how factors such as intuition, visualization, pattern recognition, and other processes shape the way in which we manage personal digital libraries. The author describes information management as “a

form of architecture” (p. 45), as it involves and requires design and building structures. This chapter is similar to the previous because of its decisively philosophical analysis of some of the fundamental bases of PKM and the fact that both treat of PKM as a continuing development.

If knowledge management is to be “personalized” then it is obvious that the individual is the center of its theorizing and strategy. Contributing author Mark Wolfe understands this idea and thus, Chapter 4 which he pens is titled, “Recovering the Individual as the Locus of Knowledge: Communication and Personal Knowledge Management”. Recognizing that the individual is “the locus of knowledge” (p. 59), Wolfe raises an important issue which has for long troubled some educators and scholars, the role of technology and ‘pragmatic action’ as they could potentially pose as dampers to the development of PKM. This is a legitimate concern which the author expresses as he points out that communication theory and language are central to PKM as core elements, especially considering that knowledge occurs in linguistic context. The most important point in this chapter is that “Personal knowledge management...recovers the person as the locus of knowledge” (p. 74).

Personal Knowledge Management as a body of knowledge becomes more apparent as we examine Chapter 5, “Systems Intelligence as a Lens for Managing Personal Knowledge”. Contributing authors Rachel Jones, Jim Corner and Raimo Hamalainen demonstrate how PKM like KM has decisively taken on a technologically driven approach rather than one which is organically driven. PKM depends on systems intelligence as individuals use technology to manage personal knowledge similar to organizational MIS (management information systems). Systems intelligence is seen as the theoretical lens as the individual attempts to manage knowledge within organizational contexts where he or she plays a major role. In fact, the authors believe that relevant to effective PKM in our technology-driven rather than organically-driven contexts is the individual’s awareness of organizational systems which surround him or her.

*Personal Knowledge Management: Individual, Organizational and Social Perspectives* as a text offers vast amount of understanding on managing oneself, which essentially translates to managing one’s personal knowledge. Contributing authors Larry Prusak and Jocelyn Cranefield relate this understanding in Chapter 6 of the text, which is appropriately titled “Managing your own Knowledge: Personal Perspective”. The authors prescribe four PKM practices: (1) scanning and reinvention, (2) vetting and filtering, (3) investing in one’s networks, and (4) getting out of the office. These are some practical suggestions that individuals can put into practice as they invest in managing their own personal knowledge for growth and success. The authors conclude this chapter by stating: “As individuals, if we are to effectively manage our personal knowledge, we need to continually seek out and capitalize on opportunities – inside and outside our workplace, day by day and minute by minute” (p. 11).

The next chapter of the book is an interesting one which questions the idea of “personal knowledge management” in the framework of conceiving individuals as inseparable from the idea of a community. Titled “Knowledge Management and the Individual: It’s Nothing Personal”, contributors Dave Snowden, David J. Pauleen and Sally Jansen van Vuuren propose the concept of “social knowledge networking” based on our inborn basic skills to create such networks and understanding about how we retain social relationships derived from social interactions. Chapter 7 uses a series of mini case studies to illustrate these concepts and the authors speak of “sense-making skills” as “diverse skills acquired through practice” (p. 122). Social knowledge networking which the authors view as the dominant stream of knowledge management in concurrent contexts is examined from both individual and organizational perspectives, and this, in a comparative and contrasting manner. The chapter concludes by declaring social knowledge networking as the right tool at the right time.

Consistent with the technology driven perspective which dominates KM and now PKM theories and writings, contributing authors Darl G. Kalb and Paul D. Collins introduce the idea of PKM within this same context as they explore “Managing Personal Connectivity: Finding Flow for Regenerative Knowledge Creation”, the title of Chapter 8 of *Personal Knowledge Management*. The authors introduce us to what they call the “Duality of Knowledge Creation” by proposing that “knowledge is created and maintained within a duality of connects and disconnects” (p. 130). They further argue that this duality provides both the theoretical insights and practical implications for those seeking to manage personal knowledge. Their perspective, known as the “connectivity perspective” on personal knowledge management (PKM) and creation is underpinned by the following three premises: (1) personal knowledge is seldom, if ever ‘stand-alone’ knowledge; (2) we need to be connected to create knowledge; and (3) we need periods of regenerative disconnection in the process of managing and creating PKM. In this chapter Kalb and Collins also discuss the duality of connectivity in terms of ten dimensions: geophysical, technical, interpersonal, group, organizational, networks, economic, cultural, political, and philosophical (pp. 132-133). Four attributes of connectivity are also discussed: latent potentiality, actor agency, temporal intermittency, and unknowable pervasiveness (p. 135). Finally, the authors argue that in order to achieve personal knowledge management and creation (PKMC), we must discover and manage connective flow by engaging in five practices: (1) think and create when we are at our best; (2) saying no to hyper-connectivity; (3) ensuring that no means no (most of the time); (4) respecting others’ reflective space; and (5) expecting and managing our connectivity emotions.

In Chapter 9 of *Personal Knowledge Management*, “No Knowledge but Through Information”, contributing author William Jones, takes what could almost be characterized as an antithetical stance on the ideological constructs and philosophical basis of personal knowledge management (PKM). Jones questions the idea of PKM by imposing on our psyches his fundamental idea of what he calls personal information management (PIM) since he passionately contends that it is only through information that knowledge is understood and expressed, building on three strong points throughout the chapter: (i) information is a thing; knowledge is not, (ii) there is no management of knowledge except through the management of information, and (iii) PKM is a very useful subset of PIM (p. 144). Two important concepts that are introduced in his argument of information as precedence and prerequisite to any conception of PKM are knowledge elicitation and knowledge instillation.

It is extremely hard to discuss any aspect of knowledge management (KM) without mentioning or referencing the knowledge worker in some form or another, and with regards to personal knowledge management (PKM), it could reasonably be argued as impossible since the idea of “person” is intricately tied in even with the very coinage itself. Tom H. Davenport, contributing author of Chapter 10, “Personal Knowledge Management and Knowledge Worker Capabilities” understands this quite well, and proceeds from this understanding to define and provide examples of the knowledge worker as he demonstrates how personal information and knowledge management can be used to improve the productivity and performance of organizational knowledge workers. Davenport is concerned about the application of PKM in organizations and examines the capabilities of knowledge workers in relation to ideas of acquisition, personal documentation, knowledge search, and networking and knowledge sharing. He also segments knowledge workers into five categories: functionalists, cube captains, nomads, global collaborators, and tech individuals.

The proper sequencing of the chapters in *Personal Knowledge Management* by editors Pauleen and Gorman becomes more readily apparent as the reader flows from Chapter 10 into Chapter 11, “Exploring the Linkages between Personal Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning”. In this chapter contributing authors Ricky K.F. Cheong and Eric Tsui examine the concepts of personal learning and organizational learning, linking the two to demonstrate the idea of knowledge worker value as they argue for the alignment of individual personal learning and organizational goals and objectives. Cheong and Tsui propose the following three strategies to bridge the gap between individual and organizational learning: (1) align the individual and organizational learning objectives; (2) understand both individual and organizational learning factors; and (3) embed the individual learning process into the organizational learning process. The authors move on to discuss several individual PKM strategies as well as several organizational PKM strategies in closing this chapter.

The final chapter of *Personal Knowledge Management*, Chapter 12 “The Importance of Personal Knowledge Management in the Knowledge Society” is an appropriate closing for this monumental work. In this chapter, contributing author Kark Martin Wiig brings forth the idea of the global “knowledge society” by linking PKM to this construct and arguing that, “The root objective of PKM is the desire to make citizens highly knowledgeable” (p. 230). The idea is that such citizens are equipped with broad personal competences stemming from what Wiig calls “Knowledge-related Globalization Pressures” (p. 231) which influence how society and the individual deal with knowledge. The author examines societal goals and competences and identifies six areas of what he calls “metaknowledge” (task-specific knowledge, enterprise knowledge, relationship knowledge, context knowledge, broad world knowledge, and methodological knowledge). Important to Wiig’s discussion in this chapter is a discussion of knowledge work construed under three categories: (i) operational work, (ii) tactical work, and (iii) strategic work.

This very interesting book provides a wealth of applicable ideas and practices that will benefit organizations in many and varied ways, from increasing effectively knowledge management and knowledge worker competences to raising productivity and performance levels. What is most impressive about this book is the numerous illustrations in terms of tables and figures which the authors use to illustrate concepts and processes. *Personal Knowledge Management: Individual, Organizational and Social Perspectives* is not for the average reader and requires requisite understanding of knowledge management (KM) as a field of study. Furthermore, the book is suitable for practitioners, academicians, and researchers alike, and would serve best at the graduate levels of study in management or KM because of its technical jargons, abstract ideas, and its deep philosophical overtones. This is a well written book with innovative concepts and ideas and brings forth the birth of a new field of knowledge provocatively and methodologically with strong framework and prospects for further development.

A short version book review of *Personal Knowledge Management: Individual, Organizational and Social Perspectives* was written by the same author for JAME.