

## Introduction to Minitrack on Virtual and Knowledge-based Organization

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The explosive growth of the virtual space such as internet and on-line service networks as well as proprietary corporate networks will change the business environment of the 21st century fundamentally. Capability of the instantaneous communication among business partners and availability of the near perfect information on the marketplace will strengthen the responsiveness and intelligence of the firm in meeting customer needs. Unlike in the physical space, however, we are bound to encounter more challenges in the virtual space as business cycle time shrinks, markets become more fragmented, and customers become invisible yet more demanding.

As the organizational norms and behaviors need to change when firms move from the physical to virtual space, so do their use of information technologies for various intra and inter-organizational operations. Knowledge creation and sharing takes on the global scale thanks to the global network and knowledge repository. Thus, two of the most distinguishing characteristics of a virtual organization must be IT-enabled networking of related firms and utilization of corporate knowledge as a strategic asset.

This year we have accepted three papers out of the six submissions. Unlike the previous years, all three accepted papers deal with knowledge management issues.

The first paper, "Knowledge Management System for Visualizing Competence Patterns," by R. Lindgren presents a case study on the

development of a knowledge management system for managing organizational competence. More specifically, the paper identifies the fields of application that could be supported by the KM system for visualizing organizational competence patterns. It also suggests a research direction on how to improve the KM system for visualizing competence patterns.

The second paper, "Defining Knowledge; An Epistemological Foundation for Knowledge Management," by J. Biggam provides a conceptual foundation for the discipline of knowledge management through establishing the criteria for knowledge and eliciting different types of knowledge.

The third paper, "Stage Theory for Knowledge Management," by J. Lee and S. Yu defines four distinct stages through which organizational knowledge management initiatives progress. By identifying a set of various indicator variables of knowledge management, they propose this framework as a diagnosis and planning tool for organizational knowledge management.