Response to George Kanof's Posting of

12th September 2002 entitled "Poorly Researched Book"

at

http://www.knowledgeboard.com/doclibrary/knowledgeboard/generations_of __km.pdf

By

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Original Quotations are in black, responses are in blue.

George Kanof, 12th September 2002 "Poorly Researched Book"

"After reading the paper, I was amazed at the lack of research these two authors did to arrive at their conclusions."

And we are *amazed* at this comment. Lack of research compared to what? If we use citations as a rough guide to the amount of research involved in our article, and then compare the number of citations in our article to the articles we critique, then we get the following results: Generations: 77 references, Snowden's article: 23 references, Koenig's article: 11 references, McElroy's 1st article, 5 references. If we use length of the articles as a measure of the research involved, we have: Generations: 51 pages, Snowden 14 pages, Koenig about 8 pages (about 2 KM World Pages), and McElroy about 6 pages (3 KM Magazine pages). This article was very heavily researched compared to the works it was critiquing.

"For example: Knowledge Management was originally coined in 1973 in an article about knowledge engineering."

Well, this is very interesting, but a wee bit vague. First, exactly what is the citation involved? Second, what does Mr. Kanof mean by "coined"? Third, did this use of the term introduce KM as a field? Our research, cited in the paper, indicates that Karl Wiig introduced the term Knowledge Management in 1989 in his *Managing Knowledge: A Survey of Executive Perspectives*, Arlington, TX: Schema Press. This was not a casual use of the term, but a conscious recognition that KM was a type of management that had not been recognized before.

"Labeling KM as supply-side vs demand-side is utter nonsense. "

Why? Is there something inherently wrong with the idea that knowledge is produced in response to a "demand" from those who have a problem? Is there something inherently wrong with the idea that there are processes that "supply" pre-existing knowledge to those who need to use it in business decisions?

"There is plenty of research about the management of knowledge from both sides of the issue that goes back to the 1950s."

Actually as we point out in the article, thinking on supply-side KM goes back at least as far as Frederick Taylor in the early part of the 20th century. And thinking about the demand-side is at least as old as the R & D movement, starting at about the same time as Taylor's work. More importantly, what does the recognition that research relating to supply and demand-side KM pre-dates 1999, when McElroy wrote his article, have to do with the price of eggs? Earlier research was not associated with any conscious, recognized KM field. When one did appear in the early 1990s, its concerns were "supply-side" in character for the most part. Interest in knowledge production and Innovation comes to KM, the field, only later.

"This is just a few problems with the piece. "

As we can see these "problems" are debatable at best, non-existent at worst.

"It also seems that the book is mostly an advertizement of the KMCI and the two people running it rather than a work of scholarship.
GK "

Now how can Mr. Kanof possibly know that? "Generations" is only a single Chapter of *Key Issues in Knowledge Management*, a book that is perhaps 6 months away from publication. "Generations" does not outline the book, nor presage the rest of its contents.

And not knowing that the book is an advertisement for KMCI, why would Mr. Kanof say it? What is his agenda? Why pick on KMCI? Wasn't Snowden's article an advertisement for IBM and its new Cynefin Centre? Wasn't Koenig's article an excerpt from his new book, intended in part to sell more copies of it?

Furthermore a search of the article shows that prior to the reference section and the biographies appended to it, the abbreviation KMCI occurs 3 times, (pp. 2, 10, and 43). The full phrase, Knowledge Management Consortium International also occurs 3 times (pp. 2, 11, and 43). Since the full phrase and KMCI are coupled together on pp. 2 and 43, it turns out that KMCI the organization is only referred to 4 times in the first 43

pages, the text portion of the article. By contrast, the term "Cynefin" occurs 37 times. Some advertisement! We wonder who paid for this "ad," KMCI or IBM?

Finally, the "Generations" paper we wrote (and the book in which it will appear) were not conceived with advertising per se in mind. It is worth pointing out, however, that we are deeply committed members and board members of KMCI, and that KMCI was formed in late 1997 for the express purpose of developing and promoting a new body of KM theory and practice.

Further, to the degree that the ideas we express were developed and advanced by us in connection with our KMCI activities, in what way does it potentially offend our readers to simply call attention to what, in fact, happened? Or to the industry context in which our ideas were developed and continue to be expressed? Should we hide the KMCI connection? If so, why? And what does any of that have to do with the relative merits of the ideas themselves? Or is this just about making personal attacks, ad hominem arguments, and unsupported assertions? Let's keep the dialogue focused on the issues and the knowledge claims about them, shall we?

Regards,

Joe and Mark