Analysing case studies has both advantages and disadvantages. It is a teaching method adopted by Havard Business School and has been copied by many other management schools. It is a powerful tool to get a “feel” for an organisation and the things it does. However case study accounts are often flawed in that they only report certain aspects. But perhaps the most critical flaw is that the organisation needs to give its permission for the study and often controls what is published. For these reasons case study materials need to be carefully and critically reviewed.

Below are some hints about what to look for when reviewing KM case studies.

What is the activity/mission/goal of this organisation/unit?

To what extent does achievement of this activity/mission/goal depend on the knowledge of the workers in the organisation?

Identify a number of decision-making areas that are crucial to the achievement of the activity/mission/goal.

Analyse some of these areas:

- an estimate of the extent to which the knowledge is documented in public (internal) documents;
- an estimate of the knowledge loss that would occur if the 20% most knowledgeable people left;
- the extent to which people share this knowledge informally and the extent to which the organisation structure encourage this sharing;
- an estimate of the accuracy of the knowledge;
- an estimate of the “hidden” knowledge in the organisation relevant to this decision making area;
- what data stores are maintained that could be “mined” for this hidden knowledge?

To what extent knowledge can be structured to facilitate such computerisation.

Identify the most critical knowledge management issues from this analysis and their potential impact.

What sort of computerised system support is available

What would be an appropriate computerised system to support this organisation’s knowledge management initiative?

If you have other suggestion, share them with other students!