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## **KM Reviews**

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**Dixon, Nancy M., *Common Knowledge*, Harvard Business School Press, 2000, (ISBN: 0875849040)**

Internal 'know-how' that is unique to a specific company is the stuff of which sustained competitive advantage is made. Nancy Dixon, an expert in the field of organizational learning, calls this knowledge borne of experience 'common knowledge.' She argues that in order to get beyond talking about knowledge management to actually doing it, companies must first recognize that all knowledge is not created-and therefore can't be shared equally.

Creating successful knowledge transfer systems, Dixon argues, requires matching the type of knowledge to be shared to the method best suited for transferring it effectively. Based on an in-depth study of several organizations that are leading the field in successful knowledge transfer, including Bechtel, British Petroleum, Chevron, Ernst & Young, Ford, Texas Instruments and the U.S. Army, *Common Knowledge* reveals insights into how organizational knowledge is created, how it can be effectively shared and why transfer systems work when they do.

Dixon helps managers take the guesswork out of this process by outlining three criteria that must be considered in order to determine how a transfer method will work in a specific situation:

1. the type of knowledge to be transferred.
2. the nature of the task.
3. who the receiver of that knowledge will be.

Dixon distills five distinct categories of knowledge transfer, explains the principles that make each of them work and helps managers determine which of these systems would be most effective in their own organizations.

*Common Knowledge* gets to the heart of one of the most difficult questions in knowledge transfer today: What makes a system work effectively in one organization but fails miserably in another? Going beyond 'one-size-fits-all' approaches and simple generalities, this book will help organizations of every kind construct knowledge transfer systems tailored to their unique forms of 'common knowledge,' and in the process create the best kind of competitive advantage there is – the kind that can't be copied.

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