



# Reflections on the Future

**John Hovell**

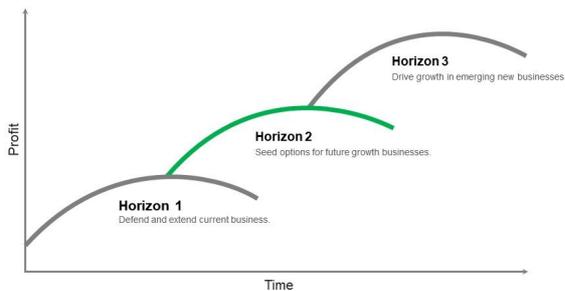
Visiting Faculty, [Advancing Your OD and Change Programme](#), Henley Business School  
[STRATactical International](#)

## Combining the Three Horizons Model with the 3 Eras of KM

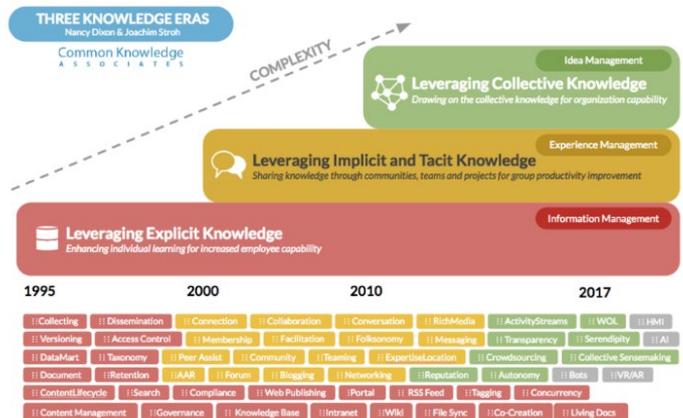
“5 years ago, literally every person that was asked ‘where do you think you’ll be in 5 years’ must have provided a wrong answer.” As we find ourselves in the middle of a pandemic, that meme is one of the more lighthearted perspectives being offered. We have an opportunity to leverage our gifts to creatively think, sense, and plan ahead even though we know the future is unpredictable.

The consulting firm McKinsey offers the “[Three Horizons Model](#)” for innovators and futurists to engage in conversations about potential future scenarios. The model uses three categories to label and separate different time spans. The first label is “Horizon 1”. Horizon 1 creates the category of ongoing current projects that are intended to improve the organization. The second label is “Horizon 2”. Horizon 2 creates a category for innovative growth and development for the organization. The third label is “Horizon 3” which creates a space for visibly new opportunities within the organization. The labels of Horizon 1, 2, and 3 are purposefully different from using the categories of “1-3 years from now” or “5-10 years from now”. These horizon labels offer a more dynamic and fluid timeframe for the conversation. As helpful as this model has been for many organizations, there is also an opposing view that considers the speed of change. This alternate perspective offers that the speed of change necessitates constant renewal. Therefore, we could consider immediately starting projects in all of these horizons. In other words, it is possible for all 3 horizons to be happening in the here and now.

McKinsey's 3 Horizons of Growth Business Framework



This slide is 100% editable. Adapt it to your needs and capture your audience's attention.



Similar to the Three Horizons Model, Nancy Dixon and Joachim Stroh offer a retrospective view of “[The 3 Eras of KM](#)”. They list the first era of KM as Information Management which leverages explicit knowledge for individuals. Continuing their model, they define the second era of KM as Experience Management which leverages implicit and tacit knowledge for teams. Our current era is Idea Management which leverages collective knowledge at an organizational level. Notice that each era did not end, in fact, each era augmented the previous era and added complexity to the field of KM. Given the timeline and estimated starting point of each era, we could estimate that a new era of KM is upon us. What do you imagine that new era to be? What are you seeing right now that possibly demonstrates a new era of KM?

Combining the Three Horizons Model and the 3 Eras of KM provides a framework for reflecting upon the future of KM. Here are a few ideas for consideration and yet there are so many more possibilities to imagine, discuss, and build!

**Horizon 1 Activities: What’s happening in KM right now that’s likely building a new future for KM?**

<b>People</b> <i>(to include culture, organization structure, individual and team psychology, sociology, etc.)</i>	<b>Process</b> <i>(to include linear and non-linear processes, models, frameworks, and theories)</i>	<b>Technology</b> <i>(to include tools, software, hardware, etc.)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mindfulness, meditation, self-awareness, emotional intelligence</li> <li>▪ Knowledge Champions, Knowledge Ambassadors, Change Agents/Leaders</li> <li>▪ <b>Business cases:</b> culture change, employee engagement, digital transformation, knowledge retention, etc.</li> <li>▪ Personal Knowledge Management (PKM) and “seek, sense, share”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Communities of Interest/Practice becoming simply known as “Communities” and continuously improved</li> <li>▪ Working Out Loud</li> <li>▪ Knowledge Retention</li> <li>▪ Liberating Structures</li> <li>▪ Expertise location</li> <li>▪ World and Knowledge Café</li> <li>▪ KM Maturity Models</li> <li>▪ Stacey and Cynefin sense-making models, and frameworks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Miro, Mural</b>, Zoom, Meet, Webex, RingCentral, Teams, and so many more</li> <li>▪ Content Management, Document Management, Records Management</li> <li>▪ Taxonomy, Ontology, Knowledge Mapping</li> <li>▪ Knowledge Audits</li> <li>▪ Cybersecurity</li> <li>▪ Artificial Intelligence, chatbots</li> <li>▪ Employee Social Networks</li> </ul>

What else would you add to these lists? There is certainly much more happening right now! Two items are bolded above, namely “business cases” and “miro, mural, etc.” The business cases for KM continue to shift as organizations increase their maturity. Further, the business cases for KM continue to be different across cultures, nations, industries, and organizational structures. A few examples of current challenges that call for the support of KM are culture change, increasing employee engagement, digital transformation, and knowledge retention. What other business challenges do you currently hear calling for KM support? Another example of current KM activity includes all of the

technology that organizations are using during the pandemic. If video conferencing is allowed in your organization, you may see many different applications being used for that capability such as Zoom, Webex, Adobe Connect, GoToMeeting, blue jeans, and so many more. In addition to video conferencing, many organizations and teams are adding “infinite canvas” capability to offer even more interactivity in their meetings. Examples of interactivity in those applications include sticky note exercises, card sorting exercises, decision making templates, Kanban boards, interactive presentations, and so many more capabilities.

**Horizon 2 Activities: What’s on the periphery right now that might provide broader value than we realize at the moment?**

<b>People</b> <i>(to include culture, organization structure, individual and team psychology, sociology, etc.)</i>	<b>Process</b> <i>(to include linear and non-linear processes, models, frameworks, and theories)</i>	<b>Technology</b> <i>(to include tools, software, hardware, etc.)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Organization Development</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Conversational Leadership</b>, maturity, depth, range, and skill of conversation and leadership</li> <li>▪ Change Management</li> <li>▪ Project Management</li> <li>▪ Re-thinking rewards, incentives, recognition for knowledge sharing – somehow embedding into culture</li> <li>▪ Re-thinking approaches to the common approaches to km business cases – saving time, not wasting time, not repeating mistakes, on-boarding, increased perceived clarity and certainty, rotations and gig economy, multiple overwhelmings, problem-solving, decision-making, sense-making, making scarce expertise widely available, KM techniques</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Theory U change management</li> <li>▪ Storytelling, story Thinking, story listening</li> <li>▪ Polarity mapping and thinking</li> <li>▪ ISO 30401</li> <li>▪ ONA</li> <li>▪ KM strategic thinking, planning and KM strategic planning process</li> <li>▪ Return on Investment (ROI), KM metrics, measurement, evidence</li> <li>▪ Quick wins and big initiatives</li> <li>▪ Buy-in (at all levels of organizations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Digital Disruption</b></li> <li>▪ Blook</li> <li>▪ Virtual worlds, Terf, Virbela</li> <li>▪ Augmented reality, virtual reality, mixed reality</li> <li>▪ Machine learning</li> <li>▪ Semantic search</li> <li>▪ Predictive analytics</li> <li>▪ 3d printing</li> <li>▪ Faster and faster connectivity</li> <li>▪ Smart cities, “array of things” (beyond the Internet of Things)</li> <li>▪ Transportation such as hyper-speed travel, self-driving cars, even moving off of the Earth</li> </ul>

What do you see happening on the periphery of KM that might expand the field? Three related disciplines might provide insight into the future of KM. Those disciplines are Organization Development (OD), Conversational Leadership (CL), and Diversity & Inclusion (D&I). As a related

discipline, OD studies how groups behave as well as how to change those group behaviors. OD has augmented its practice from “diagnostic OD” to “dialogic and dynamic OD”. Diagnostic OD focuses on gathering data, analyzing data, and shifting systems based on the data. Dialogic and dynamic OD focus on designing and convening conversations to make real-time sense of ongoing complexity. Conversational Leadership is a newly emerging field that focuses on a blend of “practicing leadership” with “practicing all ranges and depths of conversations”. This is in direct comparison to the perspective that “leadership” is only “those at the top of the hierarchy” or “those with leadership positions”. Many books have been published over the past several decades to focus on topics such as crucial conversations, humble inquiry, non-violent communications, neuroleadership, healing conversations, getting to yes, dealing with difficult people, and many other conversational concepts. Building on all of those approaches, Conversational Leadership looks to serve all conversations through these three questions:

1. Are we having the conversation we need to be having right now?
2. Are we having it in *the way* we need to be having it?
3. In what ways is this conversation serving (or harming) our community?

**Horizon 3 Possibilities: What could be transformational for KM and its value?**

<b>People</b> <i>(to include culture, organization structure, individual and team psychology, sociology, etc.)</i>	<b>Process</b> <i>(to include linear and non-linear processes, models, frameworks, and theories)</i>	<b>Technology</b> <i>(to include tools, software, hardware, etc.)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Self-Organizing Systems</li> <li>▪ Social business organizations, Deliberately Development Organizations (DDOs)</li> <li>▪ Wirearchy, and non-hierarchical organization designs</li> <li>▪ Shift from culture change to group dynamics and patterns</li> <li>▪ Triple bottom line – people, profit and planet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Large group interventions – open space, world café, future search, real time strategic change, participative design, simu real, etc</li> <li>▪ Knowledge Retention Framework</li> <li>▪ Knowledge Retention Maturity Model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Holographic and 3d conversational software – engaging more senses than sight and hearing</li> <li>▪ Robotics and automation of all human tasks, including thinking, innovating, and decision making</li> <li>▪ Digitization of clothing and the Internet of Things for real-time data gathering, analysis, sharing, learning, improving, etc.</li> <li>▪ Genetic disruption, augmented humans, healthcare systems</li> <li>▪ Re-thinking economy and financial transactions</li> </ul>

Diversity & Inclusion is also related to KM. The diversity portion of D&I focuses on diversity inside an organization. There are many examples of diversity to include gender, race, ethnicity, physical body,

age, sexual orientation, and many more. Whilst working within these lenses of diversity, D&I practitioners also work on equity and inclusion. Daniel Juday shares this metaphor to describe D&I, “Diversity is going to a party; Inclusion is being a member of the party-planning committee.” For a practical example, D&I often begins their work with a D&I Maturity Model, as well as Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). ERGs are quite similar to Communities of Practice and yet different enough for a potential partnership between disciplines. Imagine where the partnership could go – building diversity, equity, and inclusion into collaboration, knowledge sharing, and organizational learning.

If KM has expanded from individual to team to organization, then the next logical step may be to industries or networks. Or, similar to KM4Dev efforts, maybe Horizon 3 highlights opportunities to optimize the flow of knowledge at all levels of system (as they would say in OD, which refers to all levels of the organizational system such as intra-personal, inter-personal, sub-group, group, whole system, etc).

### **Continue the Brainstorm**

Combining The 3 Horizons and The 3 KM Eras provides us a framework to brainstorm the future of KM. It would be fantastic to continue the brainstorm online and through upcoming events. Other options to brainstorm the future of KM would be scenario planning, where we create several potential scenarios and discuss how KM could provide value. For example, “imagine a business environment in the year 2025, where the entire fortune 500 list of companies is full of companies less than 10 years old, the average tenure for an employee is less than 5 years, the economy is finishing a global recession, and the retirement boom is in its final 3 years.” There is also a card game for futuristic planning where there are 3 decks of cards. One deck is labeled “length of time”, another deck is labeled “amount of funding”, and the final deck is labeled “topic”. Groups of 3-4 people choose one card from each deck and discuss the combination. For example, the length of time could be “50 years”, the amount of funding could be “unlimited” and the topic could be “communities of practice”. The group would discuss that combination and see what emerges. Please share your thoughts with the Henley Forum; let’s keep the brainstorm going and work together in the continued emergence of Knowledge Management.

Thank you for reading and joining the conversation at the Henley Forum. You may contact John at [John.Hovell@STRATactical.com](mailto:John.Hovell@STRATactical.com), <http://www.twitter.com/klowey22>, <http://www.linkedin.com/in/johnhovell1>

## Author bio:

### John Hovell



John Hovell is the CEO and co-founder of STRATactical. He is a practitioner, speaker, and author in OD/KM strategies and their application to current organizational challenges. John believes and practices the blend of OD, KM, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, especially in online and virtual environments. John is on the team to converge these fields and create an emerging new discipline currently known as Conversational Leadership. Clients of STRATactical International report award-winning improvements in organizational performance, customer satisfaction, and retention, and employee engagement and retention.

John led a team to win a Chairman's Award at BAE Systems in 2014. Previously, John was part of a team to win the prestigious NOVA award, Lockheed Martin's top recognition award. Additionally, he has been instrumental in the creation and execution of transformation change efforts in dozens of countries.

John volunteers as the corporate lead for the award-winning annual STEMmerday event where thousands of participants engage in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math related learning activities. John serves on several advisory boards including the International Association for the Advancement of Gestalt Therapy, International Knowledge Management Institute, Training Industry Quarterly, and Synergy Development and Training.

John has led 5 different teams that have won awards from Chief Learning Officer magazine. In 2015, he was named the 8th most influential person in Knowledge Management. He published a chapter in a book titled "Making It Real: Sustaining Knowledge Management" and became a fellow with the Royal Society for Arts (RSA). In 2009, he was honored by Training Magazine as one of the "Top Young Trainers" after being honored in 2008 as one of the top "Young Trainers to Watch."

John identifies as loving awareness and is particularly passionate in an emerging field called Conversational Leadership. Conversational Leadership is a blend of Organization Development, Diversity & Inclusion, Knowledge Management, and Project Management. More information at <https://www.conversational-leadership.com>