



# Conference showcases new knowledge management approaches

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by Jesse Piccin, Information Systems & Development Specialist

Forest managers are all looking for ways to manage knowledge. While practical knowledge management is a powerful tool, many wonder how to implement it effectively and to uncover, and avoid, hidden pitfalls. This shared concern prompted more than 120 forest managers, scientists, extension specialists, information managers, and information technology developers from 24 countries to attend an international conference in Germany that was dedicated to sharing new approaches to practical knowledge management.

Called forestXchange: New approaches in Knowledge Management, the October 2006 conference was organized by the initiators and operators of the joint trans-national forest information platform <http://www.waldwissen.net>. The conference addressed how knowledge management is increasingly important to forestry. Community building, new technologies, Web-based knowledge exchange, peer-to-peer communication, new ways of integrating experts into knowledge management, and a new perception of the notion of “knowledge” and “expertise” are expanding knowledge management in forestry. The conference offered new theoretical approaches and transferred practical experiences from other disciplines of knowledge management to forestry.

Conference topics included:

- From Knowledge Transfer to Knowledge Management: Knowledge as an organizational resource
- The Learning Organization: Implementation of Knowledge Management Strategies
- Knowledge Engineering: Information systems and new media
- Communicating knowledge and know-how

Here are highlights from the presentations and sessions.

## Keynote Presentations:

**Practical experiences and concepts of knowledge management in the forest industry**—Anna Aminoff and Mikko Höynälänmaa

How can knowledge management research and development projects enhance communication, knowledge sharing, knowledge creation, and innovative learning using Information Communications Technology (ICT) based tools and methods? **Mikko**

**Höynälänmaa**, with Pöyry Forest Industry, shared his company's knowledge management challenges and their experiences with being a global company that develops methods, practices, and tools for capturing tacit knowledge, like storytelling digitization and virtual mills. Read more here: <http://www.forestxchange.org/presentation.php?id=200>

**How Wikis and Weblogs can change the world**—Erik Möller

Being a well-known expert on Wikis, as well as a member of the board of trustees of the Wikimedia Foundation, **Erik Möller's** focussed on how adopting the open-source and contribution-friendly environment of Weblogs and the Wikis methodology can better extend forestry and natural resources knowledge. Read more here: <http://www.forestxchange.org/presentation.php?id=201>

**Knowledge: Concepts, communication, and production**—Dr. Ulrike Felt

**Dr. Ulrike Felt** explored the shortcomings of the classic relationship between communication and knowledge, and promoted the need to rethink the traditional methods of distributing knowledge. By highlighting the complexities of communication and the transformation process of information, Dr. Ulrike pointed out that communication is not a simple process of handing over information, and that handling knowledge is more about open access than storage. Read more here: <http://www.forestxchange.org/presentation.php?id=202>

## Subset of parallel sessions:

**Using social networks analysis to enhance knowledge management at forest-based organizations**—Judd H. Michael

The transferring of tacit knowledge between individuals in an organization can be one of the most difficult types of knowledge sharing, especially when faced with a rigid “organizational chart” structure of communication. So just who are the knowledge sharers in your organization, and to whom do you go for advice? **Judd Michael** explained how important these informal relationships are for knowledge exchange and management, and how they can be mapped using Social Networks Analysis (SNA) software. This fascinating “fingerprint” style graphical display showcases who speaks to whom, which employees are leaders in giving advice, and who is sharing information. This enables management to identify the “gaps” between individuals, teams, and even between one's

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# Piccin summarizes NRIN study at conference

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own company and its external stakeholders. Read more here: <http://www.forestxchange.org/presentation.php?id=26>

**Interactive Web tool for forest protection knowledge transfer: a result from exchange between research and practice—Luuk Dorren and Frederic Berger**

By synthesizing over 10 years worth of formalized knowledge from applied research projects, **Luuk Dorren** and **Frederic Berger** have developed a trilingual, publicly available Web tool called Rock-For.Net (<http://www.rockfor.net>) that quantifies the protective function of a given forest against rockfall. Practitioners are able to perform analysis and efficient assessment using the tool, and can harness it as a management guide and helpdesk to, among other things, assist in field training courses in both Switzerland and France. Read more here: <http://www.forestxchange.org/presentation.php?id=40>

**A multilingual Internet-based approach to transfer forest knowledge in the alpine space—Reinhard Lässig, Martin Moritz, Marcus Schaub, and Roderich von Detten**

With the creation of <http://www.forestknowledge.net>, **Reinhard Lässig** discussed how this Web site is the first trans-national on-line service in Europe that aims to supply practical knowledge on forests

in a user-oriented way. It does this by providing a central hub for practitioners who are looking for specialized knowledge, advice, or contact information on experts on forest management, forest protection, silviculture, nature, landscape protection, and natural risk management. Using this service, the trans-national team hopes the exchange of professional knowledge and know-how will benefit natural heritage and encourage protection and profitable forests in the alpine regions. Just launched in 2005, the site is still mostly in German, but intends to be in English, Italian, French, and Slovene by 2006/07. Read more here: <http://www.forestxchange.org/presentation.php?id=50>

**Exploring knowledge exchange hurdles between organizations and the willing participants—Jesse Piccin**

Are you wondering why users and stakeholders, who initially embraced a knowledge management system, have suddenly become resistant? More importantly, how can you overcome this resistance? By summarizing a six-year case study based on the Natural Resources Information Network (NRIN), **Jesse Piccin**, who works with FORREX, explained the initial user adoption hurdles and outlined solutions to help others overcome user resistance. Piccin also provided real examples, experiences, and multiple surveys results that were dedicated to improving NRIN. Read more here: <http://www.forestxchange.org/presentations/61.pdf> 