Pekka Kess 2007: A Company External Knowledge Taxonomy. Doctor of Engineering (Industrial Engineering), Major Field: Industrial Engineering, Department of Industrial Engineering. Thesis Advisor: Associate Professor Kongkiti Phusavat, Ph.D. 318 pages.

The purpose of the research was to build a taxonomy to the external knowledge that small and medium sized companies utilize in order to perform better in business terms. The building of the taxonomy is based on literature survey of the knowledge management literature, on a survey carried out mainly in Finland and partly in Thailand as well as on interviews. The research utilizes the qualitative concept creation research paradigm and grounded theory is used to analyze the data from the surveys and interviews.

The result of the survey is a taxonomy where at the highest abstraction level the following 6 areas of expertise are identified: the Mentor - the Angel - the Guru – the Coach - the Politician - the Father. These roles represent all aspects of the external knowledge that was identified in this research. The taxonomy has been built as a three level hierarchy.

The academic contribution of the research comes from the fact that the knowledge content in this research has been fully defined from the SME utilization point of view. The results of the research gives the SME managers a tool to analyze their external knowledge needs and the possibilities utilize to utilize various forms of external knowledge to specific needs for the company. To the government agencies the created taxonomy gives a tool to develop better knowledge services to the SMEs.

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