

From Empowerment to Intelligence: Enhancing the Intelligence Level of Knowledge Management—Interview with Dr. Xia Jinghua, Vice President of Lanling, by Knowledge Management Forum (Print Version)

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Abstract

KMF: Hello, Dr. Xia Jinghua! Thank you for accepting our interview. Landray has consistently been a premier institution in China providing enterprise knowledge management solutions, and has established a Knowledge Management Research Institute, initiating and promoting the development of the national “Knowledge Management Standards.” Therefore, please first provide a brief introduction to the research and application of knowledge management at Landray.

Full Text

Preamble

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From Empowerment to Intelligence: Elevating the Wisdom Level of Knowledge Management—An Interview with Dr. Xia Jinghua, Vice President of Lanling, by *Knowledge Management Forum*

Interviewee: Xia Jinghua, Vice President of Lanling Software, Dean of Lanling Research Institute, Postdoctoral Fellow at Tongji University. With 17 years of experience in enterprise management consulting and informatization, he specializes in knowledge-based organizational transformation and enterprise digital transformation practices. He is a leading advocate and promoter of knowledge management in China and a major contributor to the formulation of national knowledge management standards. He is also a guest lecturer for CIO/MBA/EMBA programs at Peking University, Tsinghua University, Fudan University, Tongji University, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and other

domestic and international institutions. His publications include *Knowledge Management*, *Knowledge-Based Survival: A Knowledge Management Methodology*, *Leading Enterprise Informatization: A CIO Work Manual*, and *Creating Smart Work*.

Interviewer: Wang Zheng, Editorial Department of *Knowledge Management Forum* (hereinafter referred to as KMF)

Transcription: Wang Zheng

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1. Knowledge Management Originating from and Oriented Toward Practice

KMF: Dr. Xia, hello! Thank you for accepting our interview. Lanling has long been a leading provider of enterprise knowledge management solutions in China, with a dedicated Knowledge Management Research Institute that initiated and promoted the formulation of the national *Knowledge Management Standard*. Could you please begin by briefly introducing Lanling's research and application of knowledge management?

Xia Jinghua: Thank you. Knowledge management in enterprises has undergone a gradual development process. Objectively speaking, seven or eight years ago, explicit demand for knowledge management in enterprises was not yet prominent. Lanling's early product was called the "Knowledge Management-based Office Automation Platform" (KOA), which primarily addressed office management and document management needs. Of course, our research on knowledge management began very early, but initially it did feel somewhat "highbrow"—the concepts sounded good, but implementation in enterprises often fell short. However, Lanling has persisted in this endeavor, and in retrospect, it has proven especially meaningful.

Specifically, our internal knowledge management research at Lanling operates on three levels: First, research on knowledge management methodologies, particularly oriented toward practical implementation. Since we have enterprise consultants facing real-world client problems—such as how to plan knowledge management, how to conduct knowledge mapping, and specialized knowledge activities like knowledge harvesting and experiential knowledge management—these all require methodological support. I have personally written numerous articles presenting Lanling's research findings on knowledge management methods. We also participated in formulating the national knowledge management

standard, contributing Lanling's insights.

Second, using research to guide our product planning. We need to study the application scenarios for knowledge management products, which primarily derive from user needs and field observations. We abstract and refine the requirements we investigate, and based on this, our research institute provides substantial input to the product planning department, including analyses of the latest technology trends and recommendations for product features.

Third, research on knowledge management best practices. Lanling was among the first in China to introduce and promote the MAKE Award (Most Admired Knowledge Enterprise), now renamed the MIKE Award (Most Innovative Knowledge Enterprise). Lanling has served numerous clients in China, ranking at the forefront in the enterprise-level knowledge management market, and we have cultivated and shaped many award-winning enterprises. Building on this foundation, we conduct best practice research, distilling and synthesizing our findings into replicable models.

In comprehensive terms, Lanling's knowledge management research encompasses methodological systems, best practices, and supporting system tools to enable better implementation of knowledge management. In these areas, Lanling has maintained consistent effort and achieved notable results, such as our widely recognized conceptual models including the early "Knowledge Wheel" model and the Knowledge Management Maturity Model. More recently, we have been exploring how to achieve scenario-based empowerment of knowledge management from different dimensions and have developed corresponding methodologies.

2. Knowledge Management in the Artificial Intelligence Era

KMF: Currently, artificial intelligence (AI) has become a buzzword across various domains. AI and knowledge management are also inextricably linked. How do you view AI's impact on knowledge management and knowledge workers? In the AI era, how should the value of "human-centeredness" be manifested?

Xia Jinghua: I actually first encountered knowledge management from an AI perspective. I recall that during my postdoctoral research at Tongji University from 2001 to 2003, my background in computer engineering led me to AI, where I discovered the field of knowledge management and gradually understood its concepts. My first doctoral research project was even a fault diagnosis expert system, whose core was representing expert knowledge through rules—matching "fault phenomena–fault causes–solutions." By inputting fault phenomena, the system could perform matching and reasoning to automatically provide solutions. However, at that time, discussions about AI and knowledge management remained largely academic, with few practical implementations.

In recent years, with AI's rapid development, its impact on knowledge management has grown increasingly significant. A 2013 McKinsey research report identified 12 disruptive technologies that would profoundly affect the global economy, business, and daily life, with mobile internet ranking first and “knowledge work automation” second. I believe the combination of AI and knowledge management holds great potential for knowledge management automation. About three years ago, I conducted research on integrating AI with knowledge management, particularly in applications involving knowledge graphs and text processing. We have also noted relevant arguments, such as Kai-Fu Lee's matrix analyzing which professions are most susceptible to AI replacement, using two dimensions: “degree of human interaction” and “degree of structurization.” Work characterized by “low human interaction” and “high structurization” is most easily replaced by machines, whereas work with “high human interaction” and “low structurization” is least likely to be replaced.

Against this backdrop, how will knowledge management evolve, and how should “human-centered” value be demonstrated? The more structured, standardized, and rule-based the knowledge and its scenarios are, the more easily they can be replaced or assisted by AI. Traditionally, knowledge management involved organizing numerous document-based knowledge assets. In the AI context, these texts need to be formalized and “fed” to machines in ways they can understand, thereby enabling AI to better realize knowledge value. In this process, one manifestation of “human-centered” value is that machines require human training and “nurturing”—imbuing them with collective wisdom to simulate and assist humans. On the other hand, human value lies increasingly in engaging in innovative and creative work, which for organizations means providing a more open environment.

KMF: Does this impose new requirements on knowledge management professionals' backgrounds and skills, such as computer science and programming expertise?

Xia Jinghua: This is actually relative. On one hand, AI applications challenge knowledge workers; on the other hand, they also challenge computing and software itself—requiring that ordinary people be able to apply AI and interact with it. This demands higher standards for human-computer interaction and user interfaces.

KMF: What new requirements does the AI environment impose on “knowledge management workers”?

Xia Jinghua: New positions related to knowledge management may emerge in enterprises. For instance, some perspectives suggest new roles such as “digital management specialists,” who primarily utilize digital platforms for organizational structuring, operational process maintenance, workflow collaboration, and big data decision analysis during digital transformation. Another is the “knowledge trainer,” because AI systems need training to improve their “intelligence quotient.” I believe AI systems differ fundamentally from traditional

information systems. Traditional systems can be planned extensively in advance, with processes solidified and then operated largely unchanged for long periods. AI systems, however, “evolve” continuously—they must be used and trained constantly; otherwise, they become difficult to use.

Therefore, many enterprises currently harbor misconceptions about AI, thinking it will immediately reduce or eliminate labor costs without considering that upfront investment and training costs are essential.

3. Perspectives on Different Types of Knowledge Service Models

KMF: After years of development, a massive market for knowledge management has formed in China. In recent years, various internet-based knowledge payment service providers have emerged. How do you view this knowledge payment business model?

Xia Jinghua: The new internet knowledge payment services you mentioned primarily target “2C” (to Consumer, 面向大众消费者). Of course, knowledge services also include “2B” (to Business, 面向企业级客户), and there may be models that evolve from “2B” to “2C”. In fact, when we conduct research in universities, we utilize many specialized knowledge services provided by university libraries, such as literature retrieval, novelty searches, and patent searches. Although the concept of knowledge services may not have existed previously, similar services have long been available. However, knowledge services remained largely within academic and professional fields for a considerable time, not yet becoming a socialized concept or form.

Now, knowledge services are indeed “entering ordinary households,” and this new internet model enables more people to access and benefit from knowledge services. I consider this a positive development. The value of knowledge should not only be recognized and enjoyed by professional researchers but also by the general public. This represents a favorable phenomenon and direction for knowledge management workers.

KMF: In recent years, critical perspectives have emerged regarding internet-based knowledge payment models, such as concerns about knowledge fragmentation and superficiality. How do you view these critiques?

Xia Jinghua: I actually have many such knowledge-based apps on my phone myself. Knowledge fragmentation may indeed be an issue, and when your attention also becomes fragmented, it may impact the depth of your knowledge acquisition—this warrants further research. Particularly on the “2C” (consumer-facing) side, people may purchase many knowledge service products due to “knowledge anxiety,” but the actual benefits derived from these purchases likely vary among individuals.

From my perspective, however, and based on professional work requirements, existing internet knowledge services sometimes offer limited assistance for specialized work. Instead, professional knowledge services hold greater value for me. For example, in my recent work, I have been researching “knowledge contribution,” such as how a corporate headquarters can assess and evaluate knowledge contributions from subsidiary units—I believe this is a worthwhile research direction. In this process, I need to read professional papers for insights and inspiration. For such research needs, professional, in-depth, and personalized knowledge services are more valuable. Of course, different types of knowledge services target different needs and levels, and each has its place.

KMF: As you mentioned, different knowledge service types have their own space to meet knowledge needs at different levels. For instance, internet knowledge payment apps target ordinary consumers, while high-end think tanks also provide knowledge services oriented toward higher-level decision-making needs.

Xia Jinghua: Yes. For example, in some research institute projects we have participated in, we collect articles and writings from senior experts and hope to use technologies like text processing and knowledge graphs to extract and refine their core ideas and perspectives on different fields, thereby forming an “external brain” for experts that continues to generate value from their thinking. This can be understood as a higher-level knowledge service.

4. The Role of Knowledge Management System Platforms from a Knowledge Lifecycle Perspective

KMF: How do you understand the role of “software tools” and “system platforms” in knowledge management implementation?

Xia Jinghua: Platforms are certainly important as they enhance knowledge management efficiency. Understanding from the knowledge lifecycle perspective, we first focus on how knowledge originates (knowledge generation), followed by how knowledge is organized, represented, stored, and applied. In fact, knowledge management systems themselves offer limited assistance for knowledge generation, but provide substantial value for knowledge representation, storage, learning, and application after generation.

Many enterprises initially fail to adequately address the question of how knowledge originates and is generated. If they merely implement a system tool without solving the knowledge sourcing and generation problem, how can they encourage people to learn and use it? Therefore, the question of knowledge origin often requires managerial approaches and expert participation. Within enterprises, when we need to mine expert knowledge, asking experts to spend time writing down their tacit knowledge may not be feasible. In such cases, we adopt diversified approaches—for instance, we establish an “Expert Lecture Hall” where we regularly invite experts to give lectures that are recorded as video series,

which experts find more acceptable. After generating knowledge through such methods and placing it on the platform for systematic learning, the knowledge management platform can deliver value.

In summary, for this primary question of knowledge origin, solutions depend not only on the system level but more importantly on management and mechanism design. Without addressing this issue, the system will struggle to generate greater value later on.

5. Knowledge Management Positions and Department Setup in Enterprises

KMF: Based on your understanding, what are the current demands for dedicated knowledge management positions and talent in Chinese organizations? We have also observed that many organizations may not directly use “knowledge management” as the name for positions or departments—so which departments tend to have higher levels of knowledge management?

Xia Jinghua: Based on my observations and experience, first, some enterprises may establish a dedicated “Knowledge Management Department” and even appoint a CKO (Chief Knowledge Officer), reflecting top-level commitment to knowledge management, though this proportion remains relatively low. Most commonly, knowledge management is integrated into existing relevant business departments. Moreover, you will find that where knowledge management is placed also reflects different orientations. Several common scenarios exist: when positioned within the human resources system, knowledge management focuses heavily on its relationship with employee training, development, and capability enhancement; when placed in corporate management departments, it emphasizes strengthening the implementation of systems and processes through knowledge management; many enterprises also establish dedicated knowledge management positions within business lines they consider critical, such as technology, R&D, or marketing systems. These cases generally lack company-level coordination, starting instead with business lines initiating knowledge management projects independently.

Overall, this reflects two fundamental knowledge management models: “business-oriented” and “top-level coordination.” The emergence of these models relates to the enterprise’s knowledge management development stage. For instance, during the project stage, various business lines spontaneously launch knowledge management initiatives, operating independently. After reaching a certain stage, they discover the formation of knowledge silos, necessitating top-level coordination—typically undertaken by HR systems, corporate management departments, or the CEO’s office. Particularly when entering long-term operation stages, dedicated company-level knowledge management departments or positions may be established.

However, regardless of the model, the long-term trend will likely see the emergence of KMBP (Knowledge Management Business Partner) roles similar to HRBP (Human Resource Business Partner), with KMBP positions embedded in each business line to align with business characteristics.

6. The Relationship Between Knowledge Management Research and Practice

KMF: In the knowledge management field, there sometimes exists a “disconnect” between theoretical research and practical work. How does Lanling balance and integrate theoretical models with practice in its knowledge management research?

Xia Jinghua: This is indeed a valuable question. I believe enterprise research differs from academia in that we don’t dwell on pure theoretical models but instead derive insights from practice and client needs, staying closer to practical application and real-world combat. Put figuratively, first we examine whether anyone is willing to pay for what we research, and then we assess whether our research findings actually work after implementation and gain recognition. In short, client satisfaction serves as the evaluation criterion, not merely the pursuit of published papers or patents.

Of course, during the research and practice process, we also need theoretical guidance. Compared with human resource management and process management, the theoretical system of knowledge management is not yet as mature. Particularly when serving research institutes, they demand higher theoretical and methodological rigor, paying close attention to the theories, principles, and their sources underlying consulting solutions. Private enterprises, conversely, focus primarily on practicality and problem-solving effectiveness. Therefore, we face different challenges across various client scenarios.

Thus, our research strives to stay close to real-world combat, oriented toward client value, while also pursuing modelization, theorization, and methodologization—not primarily for publishing papers, but for practical application and reuse to better guide practice.

Under this guiding philosophy, our current knowledge management research focuses on several deepening priorities: first, articulating the value of knowledge management to senior leadership to connect KM with corporate strategy; second, the operational methodology research mentioned earlier; and third, AI-related research focusing on application scenarios in enterprises. We have also identified some typical AI applications, such as position knowledge mapping—previously requiring manual 梳理 of required knowledge, skills, and relationships for a position, now made more intelligent through knowledge graph technologies that automatically crawl and associate relevant content based on position tags and profiles for positioning and recommendation. Additionally, there is process

and system management in enterprises, where various processes and systems have interconnections that were previously not well discovered or presented but can now be mined and visualized through knowledge graph techniques.

7. Future Trends in Knowledge Management: From Empowerment to Intelligence

KMF: In recent years, the term “wisdom” has become a popular concept with new connotations, such as smart cities, smart communities, and smart enterprises. From your perspective, how do you understand the meaning of “wisdom”?

Xia Jinghua: Lanling actually has a slogan: “Smart Organizations Use Lanling.” “Wisdom” is also a key term Lanling promotes. I first understand wisdom literally: “智” (zhì) emphasizes “action-through-knowledge”—learning a little more each day, focusing on experience replication, moving from “having” to “optimizing,” from 1 to 100 to 1,000, from individual success to team success to organizational success. “慧” (huì) emphasizes “innovation power”—focusing on creativity and creation, generating “something” from “nothing,” achieving a leap from 0 to 1. Only when “智” and “慧” cycle mutually can true organizational wisdom emerge.

KMF: Your interpretation of “wisdom” is quite insightful. “智” and “慧” represent reuse and innovation, which are indeed the essence of knowledge management.

Xia Jinghua: That was the literal understanding. At the implementation level, Lanling proposes achieving smart organizations through “four modernizations”: “management online,” “knowledge empowerment,” “operation digitalization,” and “human-machine intelligence.”

“Management online” encompasses organizational online presence, communication online, collaboration online, business online, and ecosystem online—essentially extending management activities from offline to online. Without online data accumulation in the future, both big data and AI would be castles in the air.

“Knowledge empowerment” includes empowerment at four dimensions: individual, team, organization, and business, summarized as “individual empowerment precision, team empowerment openness, organizational empowerment servitization, and business empowerment intelligence.”

“Operation digitalization” primarily refers to building efficiency indices and effectiveness indices based on process 梳理 and operation. By quantifying enterprise efficiency data, problematic processes and individuals can be identified, enabling efficiency optimization and improvement from department to company-wide levels through layered analysis to pinpoint causes of process index issues

and achieve refined efficiency control.

Finally, “human-machine intelligence” represents a higher stage. For instance, some current work tasks are performed by machines and some by humans, requiring collaboration between them. One particularly memorable demand scenario involves research institute employees who spend substantial time writing various reports—their primary knowledge scenario. They expressed the need to conveniently reference templates, material libraries, and internet content while writing in Word, without having to specifically search the knowledge base. Based on this need, we developed an “Intelligent Writing Assistant.” This includes our own enterprise’s process of writing bid proposals, which comprises business and technical components requiring preparation from different departments. We transformed this into a collaborative intelligent writing task where, during the writing process, users can 随时 call upon material libraries, case libraries, and external internet content, conveniently inserting relevant knowledge into documents. This significantly enhances report writing efficiency and better solidifies past experiences. I believe this intelligent writing scenario is needed by many knowledge workers.

Moreover, a more mature form of “human-machine intelligence” is natural language interaction with intelligent robots. For example, Lanling internally uses the “Little K Robot.” Previously, employees asking about systems, processes, and other common questions needed to consult HR or IT colleagues directly; now they can simply ask the robot.

KMF: Finally, please describe and envision the future development trends of enterprise knowledge management.

Xia Jinghua: I have always felt that knowledge management is like Chinese martial arts. Martial arts is a broad concept with many schools, and knowledge management is similar. This has both advantages and disadvantages: on one hand, it makes knowledge management more inclusive; on the other hand, it becomes somewhat generalized, making it easy to lose direction or fail to grasp priorities during enterprise implementation. The overall trend is toward increasing specialization, with dedicated tools and methods emerging in every 细分领域.

From my understanding, knowledge management development exhibits “three stages”: The first stage is “assetization,” where most domestic enterprises currently reside, typically manifested by establishing knowledge repositories and knowledge maps. Building upon this, the second stage is “empowerment,” where we can enable individuals, teams, organizations, and business as previously mentioned. Individual empowerment can be based on position knowledge path maps combined with diverse learning tools such as 闯关 learning, daily learning, and expert livestreaming. Team empowerment takes project processes as the main line, integrating project KM activities, supported by professional communities, and then solidifying 精华 through knowledge assets to promote position knowledge empowerment. Organizational empowerment can advance through institutional

process systematization, knowledge interpretation atomization, knowledge point embedding, and knowledge service intelligence. Business empowerment targets different work scenarios such as marketing, R&D, customer service, and market operations by integrating internal structured and unstructured data as well as external and internal data to build various thematic knowledge graphs, achieving knowledge association and discovery, fusing with specific scenarios, and providing intelligent push for scenarios. The third stage is the “intelligence” we just discussed, where knowledge work automation will be more widely applied in enterprises. In fact, AI techniques can be superimposed on each previous stage, and knowledge management has great potential at every stage.

If we borrow the three stages of Zen Buddhism, the assetization stage is “seeing a mountain as a mountain” (self-existence), the empowerment stage is “seeing a mountain as not a mountain” (non-self), and the intelligence stage reaches “seeing a mountain as still a mountain” (forgetting self). This represents the continuous evolution of enterprise knowledge from “static assets” to emphasizing “scenario application” and ultimately pursuing “mastery-through-comprehension.”

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.