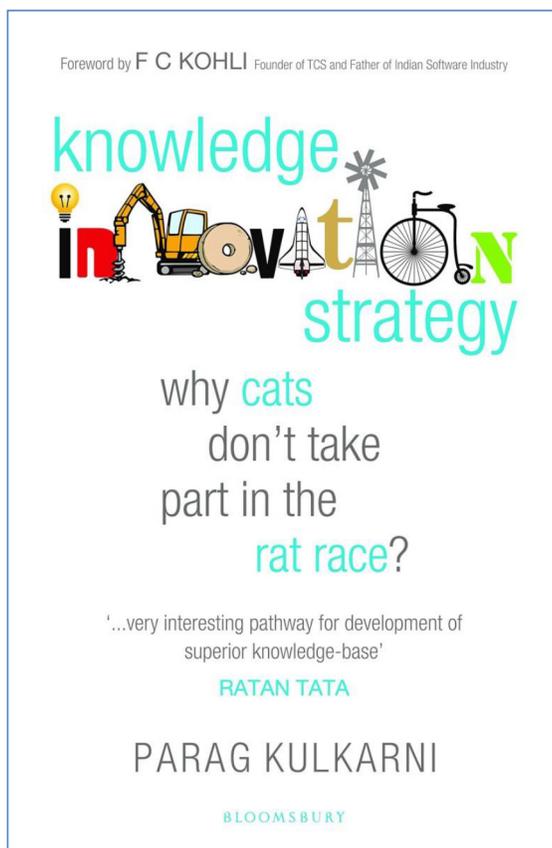


# Knowledge Innovation Strategy: Why Cats Don't Take Part in Rat Race?



## Why Cats Don't Take Part in Rat Race?

By

Parag Kulkarni, Bloomsbury India, 2015, hardcover, 332 pages, ISBN: 978-9384898038

The book elaborates on strategies that can help organizations in achieving sustainable innovation; the author calls such innovations as systemic knowledge innovation (SKI). In the book, Parag Kulkarni emphasizes the point that one doesn't need big teams and huge funds to find solutions to the problems. The organizations must not concentrate only on creating value-based innovation (VBI) focusing only on profit, cost reduction and/or finding new market segment but they should look beyond creating value for stakeholders. This value may be social, economic, business or psychological in nature. According to author these VBIs lead to short-term gains and don't create a long-term impact on the system. The book gives the concept of Systemic Knowledge Innovation (SKI) which focuses on knowledge inefficiencies of the system thus creating a new uncontested knowledge space. According to author this uncontested knowledge space automatically helps

in finding new customers and market segments for the organizations, i.e. an organization doesn't need to compete just for the sake of competition, but it needs to look beyond competition paradigm. The books distinguish between market space and knowledge space and strongly recommends for creating knowledge space for long-term sustenance. It suggests the framework for creating the uncontested knowledge space. According to the book, creating this uncontested knowledge space needs a holistic understanding of different components of the complete ecosystem of innovation. According to the author, while VBI only looks for tapping the market, SKI looks to remove knowledge inefficiencies in the system. The key lies not in unlocking the market but in unlocking the knowledge. SKI involves stakeholders from the whole system. Generally, innovations are the result of groups working in isolation without the knowledge of an overall system; such

innovation is constrained by business goals thereby fails to address the knowledge inefficiencies. Society and environment are often forgotten as important stakeholders of any innovation. The book makes a point that innovation must be treated as a creative art where the purpose of innovation should be to achieve innovation rather than a business strategy. Based on the case studies the author concludes that organization keeps on treating manifestations of the problem instead of hitting at the problem itself, resulting in the failures. e.g., water shortage is a manifestation, but the underlying problem may be the water mismanagement. In the process of achieving SKI, the organization must first identify the problem and the extent of the problem. Then the knowledge boundaries of the system are to be identified; this is where most organizations fail, e.g. in case of Amul, the knowledge boundaries were not limited just to milk production factories, but it included farmers, ancillary's industries, customers, government agencies and dairy researchers. These stakeholders must be made knowledge partners. Making farmers as knowledge partners in one such case helped in understanding social aspects of a technical problem helping in achieving sustainable innovation. Knowledge association is another aspect needed to be achieved once knowledge boundaries are identified, this knowledge association helps in the free flow of information among different components of the system. Innovations achieved in such manner can be a game changer, the author believes. As per the author innovation carried out in isolation results in a research paper, while innovation carried out in a team can at best result in the short-lived component but innovation involving all possible stakeholders can result in game-changing technologies.

Another concept author discusses is that of a learning organization. An organization must be a learning organization if it must survive in the long run. If an organization focuses only on the competition, it develops a learning inability. Kingfisher Airlines is a good example, where the whole purpose was to beat the competitors without learning from the environment, which failed the organization. The author gives a framework for learning which involves identifying right knowledge partners, clarity of purpose, cooperative learning, and strategic knowledge partners. The organization must continuously learn with reference to the environment in which it is operating. To become knowledge efficient, an organization must tap existing myriad knowledge opportunities. Organizations fail because they continue to offer same knowledge to a new set of customers. They look for new customers rather than new knowledge set. To create new knowledge organizations, have to continuously keep extending the existing knowledge boundaries, they have to keep looking beyond existing industry. Just looking for new customers, cost reduction or new market segment keeps an organization too much occupied with competition paradigm, while to look for

creating new knowledge by extending the knowledge boundaries takes an organization to what author calls knowledge paradigm. To develop new knowledge, an organization must develop understanding about what author calls knowledge pointers which help in identifying knowledge sources. After this, knowledge must be elicited from these resources. The process of knowledge building can be inactive if it is achieved in isolation, it can be reactive if it is created in response to some change in the environment and it can be proactive if it is created in anticipation to some future environmental change.

The author argues that most successful organizations are the ones which are involved in proactive knowledge building. To achieve high impact, the knowledge must be applied at right point at the right time, e.g., in acupuncture, the force produces maximum results when it is applied at a proper point. The author refers to the knowledge canvas available in the system; this knowledge canvas helps in identifying knowledge opportunities and knowledge partners. The author explains this as an example of a robot manufacturing company which faced a lot of difficulties in selling its robots because of the popular perception that robots resulting in automation of processes will result in large-scale unemployment. The organization then elicited knowledge about cost saving, precision, social reluctance, automation economies and global forces. Knowledge boundaries of the system were extended from mere robot making technologies to social aspects of the innovation/product, right knowledge partners were involved. All this combined knowledge then helped the organization to develop long-term sustainable solutions.

To conclude the book can make good reading for innovation researchers, policymakers and strategic planners for organizations involved in knowledge building. It can certainly help in making effective business strategies for organizations. One point, however, could have added value to the content if detailed case study of one or more international organization which has made an impact on global scene could have been included. A detailed look at strategy followed by any global giant would have given more insights into the process of creating long-term knowledge innovation. All in all, the book provides excellent reading for all the concerned stakeholders.

**Reviewed by**

**Yogesh Suman**

CSIR-National Institute of Science Technology and Development Studies'. K.S. Krishnan Marg, Pusa Gate, New Delhi, INDIA.

Email: [yogesh.nistads@gmail.com](mailto:yogesh.nistads@gmail.com)

DOI: 10.5530/jscires.7.1.9