

# THE KNOWING-DOING GAP

How Smart Companies  
Turn Knowledge Into Action

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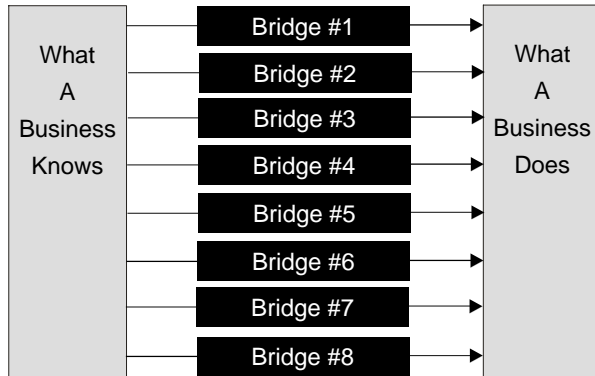
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**MAIN IDEA**

Why does so much education, training, management consulting and business research as well as so many published books and articles actually generate so little change in what managers and organizations do?

Simply because it's not what the people in any organization know that counts most – it's what they do. In other words, knowledge is great, but action is everything. Therefore, smart companies are constantly coming up with better ways to increase the amount of in-house knowledge that actually gets applied in the marketplace.



Conceptually, this is easy to visualize as a set of “bridges” spanning the gap between what’s known and whatever is applied.

Whichever organization manages to build the strongest and most numerous bridges between what the company knows and what it does will outperform all others.

Value in the real world is created by the transformation of knowledge into action, not merely by the possession of knowledge.

Bridge #1 – Understanding the “why” of anything is always more important than the “how”. . . . . . Page 2

Knowing what to do is far less important than knowing why something should be done. In other words, before getting down to details, spend more time understanding the philosophy of why that task is important.

Bridge #2 – Avoid the “smart talk” trap – actions count more than plans, presentations or history. . . . . . Page 3

When talk becomes a substitute for action, problems develop and the knowing-doing gap widens. Sounding smart will never be an effective substitute for doing something smart.

Bridge #3 – Knowing comes best from doing – and by teaching others how to do the same. . . . . . Page 4

Actual firsthand experience is the best possible teacher. People who learn by doing rather than by hearing or reading have a deeper level of knowledge, understand the subject in greater detail and have little or no gap between what they know and what they do.

Bridge #4 – Mistakes are an inevitable part of doing. There must be a high tolerance for new mistakes. . . . . . Page 5

To build a company culture which lauds action, things will frequently go wrong. How these mistakes are treated will have a major impact on whether the knowing-doing gap becomes narrower or wider over time.

Bridge #5 – Fear widens the gap between knowing and doing. Therefore, eliminate fear and you close the gap. . . . . . Page 5

Attempting to manage an organization through fear is always counter productive. You might be able to generate some short-term results, but over the longer-term, an environment of distrust is bad business.

Bridge #6 – Internal competition is destructive. Get everyone fighting competitors, not each other. . . . . . Page 6

Turning knowledge into action is always easier in an organization where everyone works together rather than competes against each other. Instead of focusing on internal contests, get everyone united in beating the marketplace competitors.

Bridge #7 – Measure only what matters – whatever translates knowledge into action. . . . . . Page 7

Any organization focusing on increasing the amount of knowledge turned into action must develop measures that reflect the knowing-doing gap and the impact of actions taken on the size of that gap.

Bridge #8 – Leaders always set the pace in closing the gap between knowing and doing. . . . . . Page 8

Everything a leader does is symbolic to the entire organization. Good leaders spend the bulk of their time and the majority of their resources acting on what they know.

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