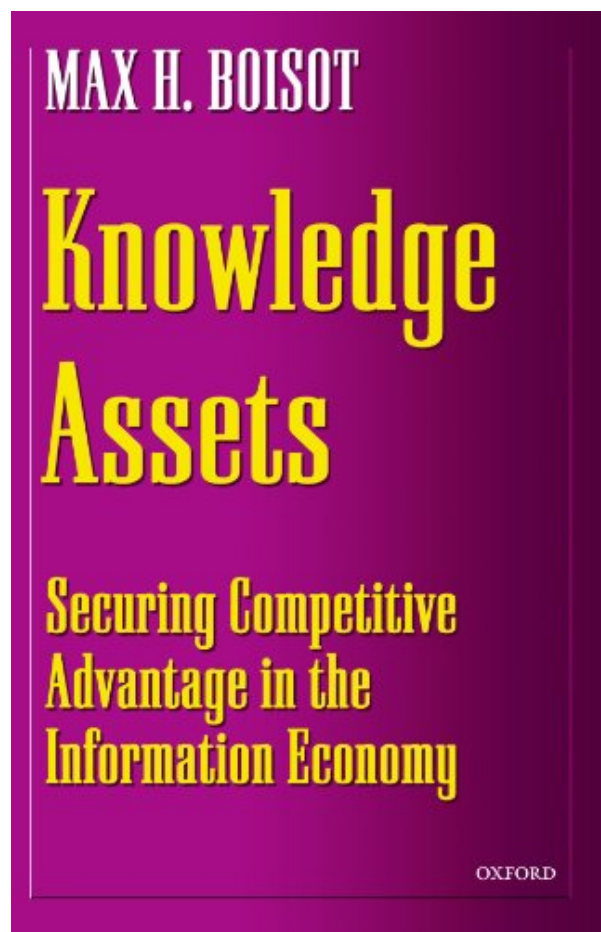


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MAX H. BOISOT

# Knowledge Assets

Securing Competitive  
Advantage in the  
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## Review

`this is a most original and thought-provoking analysis of the factors which create value and promote organisational viability in the knowledge economy. I recommend it heartily.' Blaise Cronin, Journal of Documentation, Vol. 57, No. 2

Don't judge this book by its phosphorescent cover or cookie-cutter title. What may seem like yet another vogueish volume dealing with knowledge management is, in fact, a fiercely intelligent treatise which seeks to lay out the foundations for a political economy of information. Max Boisot is a gifted scholar, ... extremely widely read, well-informed and blessed with an unusual ability to theorise intelligibly for a wide audience. ... He doesn't just make arguments; he crafts them with the sensitivity of a true artisan, layering and linking a latticework of ideas. Knowledge assets is a serious book which warrants close reading because of the tightly coiled thesis. It is neither pretentious nor condescending. Boisot, an economist, writes with lucidity and not without humour.

## About the Author

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# **KNOWLEDGE ASSETS: SECURING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE INFORMATION ECONOMY BY MAX H. BOISOT PDF**

It is now widely recognized that the effective management of knowledge assets is a key requirement for securing competitive advantage in the emerging information economy. Yet the physical and institutional differences between tangible assets and knowledge assets remains poorly understood. If we are to meet the challenges of the information economy, then we need a new approach to property rights based on a deeper theoretical understanding of knowledge assets.

This clear, accessible study provides some of the key building blocks needed for a theory of knowledge assets. Boisot develops a powerful conceptual framework--the Information-Space or I-Space--for exploring the way knowledge flows within and between organizations. This framework will enable managers and students to explore and understand how knowledge and information assets differ from physical assets, and how to deal with them at a strategic level within their organizations.

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- Dimensions: 5.80" h x .60" w x 9.10" l, .97 pounds
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- 312 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

15 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

A brilliant framework for managing knowledge assets

By Bill Godfrey

It would be difficult to over-estimate the value of this book. It is very important contribution to our understanding of how to build and manage knowledge assets and, in particular, the rules by which knowledge gains and loses value and 'travels'.

It is directly useful to business people who have to wrestle with strategies for managing knowledge. It is also a formidable piece of analytical architecture that links the management of knowledge assets to economic theory and learning theory. Considering the depth and range of the original thought packed into it, the book is surprisingly readable, partly because of the clarity and relevance of the examples with which the author illustrates his concepts.

Perhaps of widest importance is the clarity and precision of the definitions offered, in a field in which the definitions have been notably 'muddy'. One of the things I have gained from reading the book is a much clearer 'mental model' of what knowledge management is all about, its dynamics and linkages, and what is happening at various stages in the development, codification and diffusion of knowledge.

Because of its depth, density and range, absorbing the content requires real effort, but the effort is very worthwhile. It has several different audiences.

**Knowledge managers:** Those directly responsible for knowledge management will want to read and understand this book in full.

**Business Strategists:** The book provides a coherent and well argued rationale for developing strategies around the exploitation of the value in knowledge assets, based on the clearest explanation of the dynamics of knowledge value creation and dissipation that I have seen.

**Managers of Organisational Change:** Anyone concerned with organisation change also needs to understand the underlying concepts for their relevance to strategies for learning and to the shaping and linking of organisational structures.

**Economists:** Chapters 2 - 4 provide economists with a re-conception of the production function around data as a factor of production, and an explanation of the nature and dynamics of information value that is both challenging and important in integrating the realities of information and knowledge value into economic theory.

Those with a more peripheral or general interest in knowledge management should at least read: \* the Preface, which is a 2 1/2 page masterpiece in the expression of the central concept in a compressed form, \* pages 12 - 14 and 18 of the Introduction and \* they should scan Chapter 3: The Information Space (I-Space) to understand the author's three dimensional construct and its use. J-C Spender's short Foreword is also valuable in putting Boisot's work in context with other work, particularly Nonaka and Takeuchi's The Knowledge Creating Company.

If general readers are tempted to go further, they will find an extraordinary range of thought-provoking concepts along with quite a lot of material that may be familiar from other writers: Boisot's primary aim is to get us to think differently about our world and to recognise that much of our current thinking about information and knowledge is grounded in the very different world of the energy based economy. He provides an alternative framework that is rigorous, persuasive and practical.

12 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

**STRONG WELL WRITTEN MASTER PIECE**

By Sebastiaan B. Nijhuis

The decision to read a book, any book, is an exercise in cost-benefit-analysis, usually conducted under conditions of uncertainty (Boisot, 1998). This review strives to mitigate this uncertainty and instigate you to read it!

Boisot delivers a genuine new perspective on knowledge assets quite distinct from the existing knowledge literature. First he states that knowledge is embedded in physical objects (public knowledge -like a pack of

Marlboros - understood as a pack of cigarettes of a certain quality and length), in documents, and in individual brains. He builds a three dimensional Information-space consisting of codification (codified - uncoded), abstraction (abstract - concrete), and diffusion (diffused - undiffused). Plot these elements on three axes of a three dimensional rectangle and you got Boisot basic mental model. In this box (I-space) the movement of knowledge results in the Social Learning Cycle (SLC). The SLC consists of 6 phases, respectively Scanning, Problem Solving, Abstraction, Diffusion, Absorption, and Impacting. This model fundamentals subsequently the rest of the book in which he illustrates the value of knowledge, two learning theories (the N-learning strategy - hoarding knowledge and S-learning strategy - sharing of knowledge), culture in relation to knowledge (identifies the centripetal culture - tunnel vision and the centrifugal culture - promotes learning), core competence and strategic intent, the impact of IT on knowledge and finally applies I-Space on two companies, Courtaulds and BP oil exploration business. The theory Boisot used to build his model and arguments are very fundamental - deep-rooted in classic philosophy-, economy-, and chaos and complexity theories. However the major added value provided lies in the massive multifaceted range of examples offered, very intelligent and smart entrenched.

Knowledge as keyword in the Amazon search engine generates more than 9000 books. However the number that fundamentals the basic knowledge theory infrastructure doesn't exceed 25. There are essentially only a few you want to read the rest is all derived from this small number. Boisot book (next to Nonaka & Takeuchi) is certainly one that falls in the in the 25 cluster in view of the fact that it's an outstanding unique mental model clarified by smart examples. Downturn of his theory that's it very difficult to apply in a practical situation, nevertheless read it (absorb and exploit) and capture valuable `knowledge' on knowledge theories.

12 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

A solid framework for organizational knowledge

By Bastiaan Rosendaal

After reading a number of trendy books on knowledge management, this is the second one with a good theoretical framework. It is not a HOW TO..book (the subtitle is not very informative). It is the fruit of solid analytical thinking. Boisot uses the information space, built from the variables 'codification, abstraction and diffusion'. With this framework he gives an original insight into many organizational aspects, like organizational learning, competences, information technology and organizational culture. I have chosen the book for the course I teach at the University of Amsterdam (Culture and Competences in Changing Organizations), after reading it with red ears.

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