

Taxonomies and infrastructure for organisational effectiveness

Given the distributed character of organisational knowledge, the key to achieving coordinated action does not so much depend on those 'higher up' collecting more and more knowledge, as on those 'lower down' finding more and more ways of getting connected and interrelating the knowledge each one has.

(Tsoukas, 2005: 112)

In the next two chapters we examine the broader role that taxonomies have to play in helping organisations to function effectively. In this chapter, we look at how organisations fail to be effective. It is failures, especially systemic failures, that teach us most about the infrastructures we need to maintain in order to sustain our effectiveness. As Star and Ruhleder put it, 'infrastructure becomes visible upon breakdown' (Star and Ruhleder, 1996). We will identify and describe the factors that, in an increasingly interconnected world, render organisations ineffective. This helps us to identify the important stabilising and enabling roles that taxonomies play as boundary objects in – and between – organisations.

In the following chapter, we look at the things that organisations need to do in order to be effective, using an interpretive framework called the strategic information alignment framework (Marchand, 2000). We will use this to identify a range of practical ways in which taxonomy work is done to support effectiveness in organisations. This will set the context for Chapter 5, where we will consider the different roles that taxonomies play within knowledge management more specifically.

Before we embark, however, we should define what we mean by *organisational effectiveness*. For our purposes in this book organisational effectiveness is evidenced by a combination of:

- the ability to set collective, realistic and achievable goals;