

## What do we want our taxonomies to do?

*[In South Africa] race classification and reclassification provided the bureaucratic underpinnings for a vicious racism ... classification systems are often sites of political and social struggles.*

(Bowker and Star, 1999: 232)

One of the main objectives of the first five chapters of this book has been to break down the limited traditional view of what taxonomies are and of what comprises taxonomy work. In this chapter we briefly review the diverse ways in which taxonomy work contributes towards organisation effectiveness, and structure this understanding in a way that will allow us to plan effectively for our own taxonomy projects in practice. We look at an organising framework for what taxonomies actually enable us to do, and this will help us to make better decisions about how to align our taxonomy work to our organisational and business objectives.

Taxonomies are tools for effectiveness, and as such they can be developed and used badly, or they can be developed and used well. Judging which taxonomy development strategy is appropriate to take depends on circumstances, environment and objectives. By the end of this chapter we should have a better idea of how to set our pragmatic taxonomy goals and define the approach we should take in any particular project.

In Chapter 3 we looked at the critical role that information and knowledge infrastructure plays in supporting organisation effectiveness, and the important contribution that taxonomy work makes towards enhancing large-scale coordination across and between organisational boundaries.

In Chapter 4 we looked at the way that taxonomy work underpins effectiveness in four major areas of business activity: