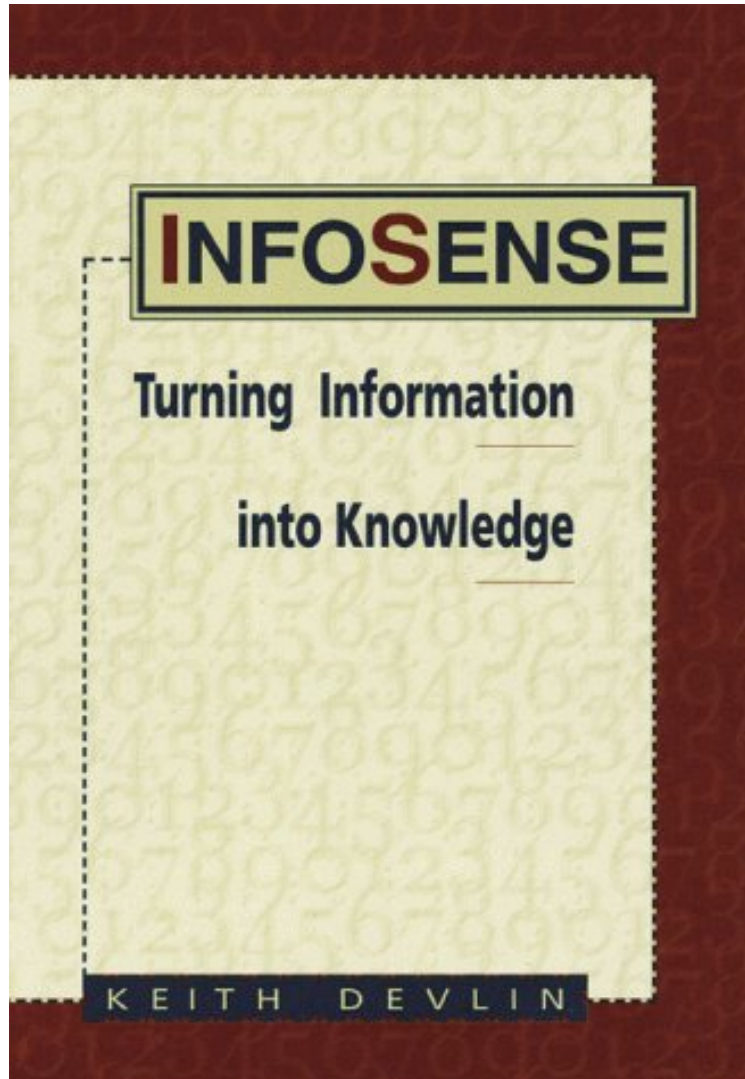


[Ebook free] Infosense: Turning Information Into Knowledge

## Infosense: Turning Information Into Knowledge

*Keith Devlin*

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#4519761 in Books 2001-05-14Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.28 x .62 x 6.081, .78 #File Name: 0716741644240 pages | File size: 60.Mb

**Keith Devlin : Infosense: Turning Information Into Knowledge** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Infosense: Turning Information Into Knowledge:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. 'Dick-and-Jane' Information and Situation Theory for DummiesBy Sarah ColganAs primarily a business-oriented book, Infosense is intended to improve the flow of information, particularly in companies. The initial problem with any book discussing an academic theory is to keep it in terms which the intended audience can understand and use. However, by keeping to 'Dick-and-Jane' simplicity, the clarity of Devlin's overall work suffers.Throughout the first chapter alone, confusion ensues. Devlin attempts give a functional definition for the terms data, information and knowledge but does not ensure the reader's understanding of this. Giving

no precise definitions, Devlin leaves the reader to comprehend by oblique means. First, he writes that "Whatever it is, information can be a valuable commodity, to be collected, guarded, duplicated, sold, stolen and sometimes killed for" as he is leading up to an explanation. However, the explanation is quickly derailed by the statement that first we must understand data and then we must understand knowledge, and so on until it is skipped over completely to follow the path of how information flows and solving problems. Devlin often returns to his favorite buzzphrase "Situation Theory" which he has been involved in for more than ten years. Even as he tries to trace most of his assertions back to this wondrous cure-all, one has even less of an understanding of this theory than of information. One more into the oblique, my friend. Since "Infosense" was penned by a mathematician, one might expect a horrid series of equations and scientific methodology (which occur in small, easy to use quantities although not very useful) but instead find unsubstantiated numbers in many of his examples. An early discussion surrounding the effect of the growth of necessary information-processing on productivity in the United States starting in 1950 to today. Data abounds in an attempt to exemplify that we do not as yet know how to utilize information. However, no sources are cited for his data nor is 'productivity' ever defined. A question which came up in my mind but was never addressed by Devlin is that if the United States were increasingly relying on information-processing, perhaps the definition of productivity would change. To put Devlin's own methods to use on this particular situation, he provided his readers with data. This data was the physical words on the page which I perceived by my senses. Because I know how to read (this is a constraint), I get information from the data. Because I know how to weigh this information it becomes knowledge to me. Unfortunately, I was not given useful information and thus it caused confusion which is the opposite of being informed. Generally, this is the case with "Infosense" throughout. If one is prepared to believe Devlin without questioning and to use his proffered business methods and ideas, then perhaps it will work. Unfortunately, for any other kind of intellectual or beyond the surface analysis, "Infosense" is useless as it creates more uncertainty than it resolves.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Camping with Devlin By Benjamin Graff Keith Devlin suggests in the preface of "Infosense" to "think of this book as a 'how to survive' manual for life in the knowledge age." However, if the reader attempted to use this book as a survival guide he would probably find himself lost in the forest of information, with Devlin's comments acting more like fireside anecdotes and marshmallows of common-sense advice than a field manual. This book was written for professionals looking to understand the nuances of interpersonal and intracorporate communication; to Devlin's credit these subjects, as well as persuasion, developing expertise, and the basic role of computers in "the knowledge age" are all (albeit briefly) discussed. At his best, Devlin uses examples and anecdotes from his vast experience in communication research to reveal the basic principals underlying these topics. Chapters 12 through 22 deal with an array of pertinent topics: for example, in Chapters 15 and 16 Devlin explores how both national and workplace cultures effect worker productivity and creativity, citing examples from the U.S. Navy, the film "Waterworld," and Microsoft. In these two chapters, Devlin explains that it is neither the technology nor the how-to information which drive an industry, but rather "that culture is the key to an efficient working infrastructure; culture endures and resists change but specific expertise [both technical and how-to information] can be acquired" (147). On this topic, as well as meeting discussion (Chapter 12), persuasion (Chapter 13), the nature of expertise (Chapters 17, 20, and 21), and especially information organization and sharing (Chapters 18 and 19), Devlin is well served by his anecdotal style, and workforce readers will certainly be able to identify with the presented concepts and themes. Unfortunately, during the course of Devlin's stories and advice virtually no new or innovative theories or concepts are forwarded. The author suggests "a 5-percent increase in output and efficiency" is possible if the "science" (Devlin's quotes) in his book is used as the basis of ones understanding of communication. In actuality, the 5-percent increase would come from the refresher course Devlin offers in basic management theory and implementation that any businessperson would surely get from an intro management or leadership course in college. While his anecdotes are entertaining and compelling, it seems Devlin reinvents the wheel several times under the guise of his "science" - termed "Situation Theory." Devlin presents Situation Theory as his "manual for life in the knowledge age." Beginning in the prologue, the author promises to "outline the basic science and give some applications...both in everyday life and in real companies" (p.5). While Devlin obviously succeeds in the second of these goals, it is the first that makes "Infosense" problematic. For example, during the first 6 chapters Devlin continuously attempts to define the key term "information." In the meandering discussion of the first 68 pages, Devlin defines information as: "Information=Data + Meaning" (p.12), "Information=Representation + Procedure for encoding/decoding" (p.32), "Information=Representation + Constraint" (p.33), "information is context-dependent" (p.37), and (my personal favorite) "information tells us something about something" (p.61). By the end of this string of defining and redefining, the reader is left solidly confused as to what information is, let alone how it is applicable to Devlin's Situation Theory. As if that weren't confusing enough, Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 11 attempt to apply this befuddled view of information and Situation Theory to conversation. These 40 pages can be summarized in two simple statements: 1) Conversation relies on the background of the speakers and the situation they are in, and 2) The more people that are in a conversation, the greater chance of confusion. These very simple and obvious natures of human interaction are hammered home again and again, often belaboring the same points and failing to analyze exceptions to the rules. To add to the difficulty, illustrations have been added which only complicate what should be a fairly straightforward

discussion. With the exception of Chapter 10 (an interesting example highlighting the art of persuasion), the first 11 chapters of "Infosense" are a cluttered collection of facts, common-sense advice, and jargon which do little to increase the readers understanding of information or how it is applicable to the workplace. As this is both Devlin's stated purpose and the target audience's ("the CEO, the middle manager, the ambitious young assistant, the office worker..." p. Viii) goal in reading the book, "Infosense" falls regretfully short, at least in this half of the book. In final analysis, Devlin's "Infosense" can be read by anyone looking for an anecdotal introduction or refresher of basic management and/or communication skills. I would not recommend buying it (especially in hardcover), but the stories of the second half of the book, if taken as solid examples of the fundamental points they emphasize, certainly warrant checking it out at the library.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Devlin: Surviving the Information age By Bushra Ahmad I would recommend this book for everybody. I personally believe it truly depends on the audience. I found the book far from being boring or "mind boggling". I was a bit lost towards the beginning but caught up what Devlin was getting at through reading the chapters that followed. Its pretty good for business oriented people. As a college student I would say its above average. The chapters are short and have useful summaries. Well atleast to me it shows the author took the readers into consideration while writing 'Infosense'. As a mathematician, Devlin used equations to distinguish between information, data and knowledge. He wants his readers to understand knowledge and information based on a scientific logical foundation. The author provides equations such as "Information = Data + Meaning" (p.14) and "Knowledge = Internalized information + ability to utilize the information." (p.15). In essence information only turns into knowledge when we attach meaning to it. Anyone can obtain information but comprehending it makes it meaningful. Devlin and his colleagues have used Situation theory, which they have procured mathematically and come up with interesting strategies to increase productivity and improvement within a group. He mentions that the ideal group size is two or three and with the addition of more group members the likelihood of confusion increases. I think this is obvious. This reminds me of a newspaper article I recently read. It was in the Baltimore Sun, and the article discussed the enormous class size of the University of Maryland. Imagine you are a student in a class of 450 (or so). It is pretty obvious that it would be easier for Western Maryland College students (in a class of 30 or less) to deal with the information (class lectures) when you communicate back and forth with the professor and your classmates. We in a small group of people are more likely to attach meaning to the data and gain knowledge faster than would UMD students. Incidentally my College Park friends disagree with me on this argue that it all depends on the professor capability to manage the class. They are mistaken of course, because our chances of confusion and misunderstandings multiply far faster than our brainpower. But, I have no doubt Devlin is right on the right track with this idea. Furthermore, Devlin has also discussed that "information immersion" can make communication more efficient by increasing the overlap between team member's individual contexts. Also, he has used good examples to point out the situation theory view of information and how it can prevent complexities. The airline disasters and the poorly designed ATM are examples of this. Also, like others I found the titles of the chapters intriguing. I think the author is very good at specifying examples. In page 161 he discusses IBM's computer Deep blue, which beat world champion Garry Kasparov in 1997. Devlin explains that while computers process information human expertise involves knowledge. As I mentioned before this book is highly recommended for the average businessperson because of the practical information that Devlin provides in this book. He has discussed Microsoft's electronic knowledge guide (SPUD) and People and information finder (PIF) which could better help manage organizations. Hence, to turn this fruitful information into knowledge a business person would have to apply it.

Information has been called everything from the new gold standard to the fundamental building block of the universe. No matter where we live or what we do for a living, it is ever present in our lives, and many of us are barraged with it daily. Yet few of us know how to distinguish information from mere data, worthwhile communication, or real knowledge in short, few of us know how to make sense of it. In InfoSense, noted mathematician Keith Devlin shows how to make sense of the constant flow of information that swirls past us daily. What is crucial, Devlin points out, is to understand the differences between data, information, and knowledge. By exploring the nature of each, and describing what distinguishes them from one another, he shows how businesses and individuals alike can benefit from better information management. Using clear, non-technical language, simple diagrams, and many real-life examples, Devlin explains Why people can beat computers How culture influences work The hidden rules of conversation How to conduct a successful meeting As information becomes the single most valuable asset in many industries, the key to success lies in our ability to manage that information. With InfoSense, Keith Devlin offers an easy and accessible way to learn not only how to manage it but also how to use it to live and work successfully in the Knowledge Age.

"Devlin, an accomplished numberist . . . gives us a clear picture of his subject . . . the key, says Devlin, is not information, but knowledge, which he defines as information put into practice." Wired "The best thing about doing business today is the wealth of information available. The worst thing about doing business today is the wealth of information available. If you want to make sense of it if you want to learn how to turn information into useful knowledge read this book." Guy Kawasaki, author of Rules for Revolutionaries and How to Drive Your Competition

Crazy" In InfoSense, Keith Devlin deftly applies some of the insights of the new discipline of Situation Theory to common problems in business communication. The importance of context and the frequent vagueness of conversation are just two of the areas he illuminates in this enticing study." John Allen Paulos, author of Innumeracy; A Mathematician Reads the Newspaper; and Once Upon a Number" Devlin and his colleagues have mathematically validated a number of interesting strategies for boosting productivity and innovation within a group . . . Readers immersing themselves in InfoSense will find there is far more to information than meets the I." Technology