

## Discussion Questions

1. Knowledge management is a business process, not a technology. Discuss.
2. Describe various ways that knowledge management systems could help firms with sales and marketing or with manufacturing and production.
3. Your company wants to do more with knowledge management. Describe the steps it should take to develop a knowledge management program and select knowledge management applications.

## Hands-On MIS Projects

The projects in this section give you hands-on experience designing a knowledge portal, identifying opportunities for knowledge management, creating a simple expert system, and using intelligent agents to research products for sale on the Web.

### Management Decision Problems

1. U.S. Pharma Corporation is headquartered in New Jersey but has research sites in Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Australia. Research and development of new pharmaceuticals is key to ongoing profits, and U.S. Pharma researches and tests thousands of possible drugs. The company's researchers need to share information with others within and outside the company, including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the World Health Organization, and the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations. Also critical is access to health information sites, such as the U.S. National Library of Medicine and to industry conferences and professional journals. Design a knowledge portal for U.S. Pharma's researchers. Include in your design specifications relevant internal systems and databases, external sources of information, and internal and external communication and collaboration tools. Design a home page for your portal.
2. Canadian Tire is one of Canada's largest companies, with 57,000 employees and 1,200 stores and gas bars (gas stations) across Canada selling sports, leisure, home products, apparel, and financial services as well as automotive and petroleum products. The retail outlets are independently owned and operated. Canadian Tire was using daily mailings and thick product catalogs to inform its dealers about new products, merchandise setups, best practices, product ordering, and problem resolution and it is looking for a better way to provide employees with human resources and administrative documents. Describe the problems created by this way of doing business and how knowledge management systems might help.

### Improving Decision Making: Building a Simple Expert System for Retirement Planning

**Software skills:** Spreadsheet formulas and IF function or expert system tool  
**Business skills:** Benefits eligibility determination

Expert systems typically use a large number of rules. This project has been simplified to reduce the number of rules, but it will give you experience working with a series of rules to develop an application.

When employees at your company retire, they are given cash bonuses. These cash bonuses are based on the length of employment and the retiree's age. To receive a bonus, an employee must be at least 50 years of age and have worked for the company for more than five years. The following table summarizes the criteria for determining bonuses.