6 The Case of Planet S.A.

6.1 Context of the Case Study and the Company

6.1.1 The Case Study

Planet S.A. was established in 1987, in Athens, Greece, as a consulting company specializing in management consulting as well as development and engineering consulting. In 2000 Planet S.A. merged with the Ernst & Young management consulting practice for south-east Europe, thereby forming the first multinational consulting firm to provide both management and engineering consulting services in south-east Europe.

The company retains the values and traditions of both Planet S.A., which has been the leader in the Hellenic management consulting market for a number of years, and Ernst & Young, which is one of the leading international consultancy networks. Planet Ernst & Young is the first Greek company to provide management and engineering consulting services on a multinational basis.

In 2000, Planet Ernst & Young had revenues of approximately €14 million, with an estimated 26% yearly average growth rate projected for the years up to the Olympic Games of 2004. The company employs approximately 230 professionals and has established offices in Greece, Belgium, Cyprus, Albania, Bulgaria, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Romania. The company is also following business opportunities in other countries in the wider Black Sea area, mainly in Moldavia, Azerbaitzan and Russia.

Its affiliated companies include Planet Regional, which was established in 1993, has offices in Athens, Salonica and Patras, focuses on regional development and had revenues of €587,000 for 2000; Planner, which was established in 1993, has offices in Athens, Salonica and Patras, focuses on small and medium enterprises and had revenues of €352,000 for 2000; MDR, which was established in 2000, has offices in Athens and focuses on real estate; and Goverplan, which was established in 2001, has offices in Athens and focuses on policy advice.

The field of activities of Planet Ernst & Young extends to enterprises, organizations and agencies in both the public and private sectors. The company offers four core sets of services: management consulting services, information technology services, project and construction management services, and development consulting services (Table 6.1).

The case study in this chapter presents the knowledge management (KM) initiative of Planet S.A. The case study does not cover the postmerger period during
which the new company consolidated the KM infrastructures of Planet S.A. with those of Ernst & Young in South-east Europe. The case study aims to provide a full, real-life example of an application of the Know-Net KM solution. The Know-Net implementation of Planet reported here was carried out during the 1998-1999 period.

6.1.2 Why Manage Knowledge in Planet?

When one of our consultants shows up, the client should get the best of the firm, not just the best of that consultant.

C. Paulk, CIO, Andersen Consulting

The global management consulting firms have been in the forefront of applying KM practices internally. They have embarked on large-scale, multi-year KM projects that attempt to cover both technical and organizational aspects. The efforts undertaken can provide the basis for drawing crucial inferences that could be extremely useful for similar KM efforts in any industrial setting (Apostolou and Mentzas, 1999). Tables 6.2 and 6.3 summarize the internal efforts of some consultancies as well as the exploitation paths of the developed competences.

Planet was a company that produced and sold knowledge. The company had been growing at a significant pace since its establishment. It was therefore imperative for Planet to invest in capturing and organizing newly acquired knowledge. The company’s long-term KM goals included the establishment of concrete knowledge management and measurement systems, and the development of new capabilities and competences.

The following sections describe the KM initiative in Planet, following the stages and steps of the Know-Net method and presenting the application of the Know-Net tool as they were described in the previous chapters.