

EXECUTIVE BRIEF / KNOWLEDGE GRAPHS

Ontology vs. Knowledge Graph

Ontology defines what things mean. A Knowledge Graph connects what the organization knows.

ONTOLOGY	MEANING
KNOWLEDGE GRAPH	CONNECTED EVIDENCE
AI	INTERPRETATION + ACTION

The ontology provides the grammar. The Knowledge Graph expresses organizational knowledge using that grammar.

THE EXECUTIVE ISSUE

Graph without meaning	Connected facts retain inconsistent definitions and uncontrolled relationships.
Ontology without use	A precise model remains detached from operational data and decisions.
Technology-first design	A database choice becomes the project goal instead of solving a business problem.
Isolated graphs	Every use case creates a separate graph and recreates the same foundational concepts.
Unbounded scope	An attempt to model everything delays visible business value.

THE SEMANTOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

What ontology does

Ontology defines the kinds of things that exist in a domain, valid relationships among them and rules that guide interpretation.

What a Knowledge Graph does

A Knowledge Graph represents actual instances and relationships: a specific customer, its subsidiaries, locations, contracts, purchases and contacts.

Why they belong together

Ontology provides semantic integrity; the graph provides connected evidence. Together they support navigation, relationship analysis, impact assessment and AI grounding.

The right starting point

Begin with a visible business problem and the smallest meaningful domain. Establish enough ontology for reliable interpretation, then connect the data required for the use case.

A PRACTICAL WAY FORWARD

Begin with business consequence. Build only the meaning required to improve it. Reuse that foundation as the organization expands.

- 01 Start with the decision or question, not graph technology.
- 02 Define governed concepts before connecting large volumes of data.
- 03 Build one lighthouse use case on a reusable foundation.
- 04 Keep platform costs separate from semantic design.
- 05 Expand by reusing shared concepts and relationships.

SEMANTOLOGY

Enterprise Ontology · Knowledge Architecture · Semantic Engineering

Does your AI understand what your organization means?

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