

Another list I subscribe to is the "learning-org" list. I believe the learning organization movement and knowledge work are tightly intertwined. Here is an interesting posting I found that I thought would be valuable to our community. My thanks to Roy Greenhalgh and Naomi Stanford for sharing this.

Subject: Creating a Knowledge Sharing culture L021626

Date: Fri, 14 May 1999 11:27:36 +0100

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Hello

I attended an interesting meeting in London, UK yesterday organised by a research company called CREATE (<http://www.create-research.co.uk>). The meeting was to explore 3 aspects of Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Creation, namely:-

1. what are the Technical Platform issues?
2. issues in creating a Knowledge Sharing culture
3. what are the Knowledge Sharing Competencies?

We reviewed each topic from the viewpoint of 4 questions:-

- what works?
- why does it work?
- how does it work?
- what doesn't work?

I worked in the "Culture Club".

A table was presented to us that I thought LO'ers may find useful. (I recommend that you reset your browser's font to display fixed font, e.g. courier 10 so that the virtual columns are viewed as columns)

WHAT WORKS?

Rewarding and recognising,
Valuing intellectual assets,
Creating physical conditions,

Anderson consulting
Skandia
British Airways
(their new London HQ)

WHY DOES IT WORK?

Built into structures and
processes,
Integral to business
measurement,
Conscious continual learning,

BP Amoco
Unipart (***)
Boeing

My interest in KM started with modeling forestry decisions in South Africa on how to interpret soil profiles and evaluate their potential for tree growth in the mid '80s. Seems I have been talking KM for some considerable time, as I gave a conference address on the subject in 1988 and published my first KM article in 1989. My current interests are distance learning, psychographics, collaborative filters, ontologies, text mining and knowledge ecology. My Firm GreyMatter Inc. is a small KM consultancy located in Indianapolis but KM has not reached these parts yet. My work has taken me throughout the USA and Canada where I have helped firms capture and structure knowledge for helpdesk applications. I'm an associate with Smith Weaver Smith, a firm of independent consultants with an interest in change management.

Knowledge Management Practices

I would like to come at core KM activities from a slightly different angle, i.e., practices, which I understand to be more than an activity, as a practice includes the concept of collegiality, joint venture and social approval. It attempts to answer the question what does or should a knowledge manager do? My list of core knowledge practices then looks as follows:

1) Facilitate access & acquisition: supports exposure to ideas and creates awareness, this goes beyond pull and push to active involvement of people in determining and evaluating their current information needs. It would include some proactive pushing of ideas, contacts and papers not requested to increase awareness, encourage communal search and active mining. In partnership with knowledge structuring there is a responsibility to see the people & information are easy to find and there is provision for adequate feedback to empower learning.

2) Knowledge generation: here we look to dialog, annealing, inquiry, reflection, and synthesis. It is taking the information, making links, looking for patterns and using concept graphs to identify and close gaps. This is a social constructive process, best conducted in a community of practice where there is trust and reciprocity. In my books knowledge creation is more about making links, altering mindsets, changing beliefs and sharing useful patterns than data mining.

3) Mapping: this is close to what Randy called identify knowledge. Our approach places the focus on knowledge-related opportunities, boundary objects and leverage of knowledge processes (knowledge levels). Let me explain; a boundary object is a form or artifact that is passed from group to group. It requires some negotiation of meaning and serves to connect different departments, e.g. a purchase requisition or a customer order. Knowledge levels are where we take a step back and ask what knowledge do we have about knowledge? How can we judge, compare, validate and improve our knowledge activity. The KMCI has an entire project devoted to this aspect of structuring knowledge see their Metaprise web pages: <http://www.km.org/Metapriseproject.htm>

4) Knowledge structuring: developing terminology, shared meaning, ontologies, abstraction and editing to make it less context specific and protect privacy. We recognize the importance of translating even between mental models e.g. engineers & artists. Concept mapping and navigation aids, stories, templates and automatic clustering creep in here as well. Ontologies seek to create and share terminology and meaning within a group or organization. This may sound rather pedantic and trivial, but some of the largest KM breakthroughs come from having effective communication and a clear common idea & understanding of the complex concepts we deal with.

5) Knowledge sharing: this goes beyond passive content delivery to support for continuous learning, dialog, to surface assumptions, systems thinking to help elicit mental models, backboards to co-ordinate and collect and a pattern language to promote effective communication. Sharing knowledge means you have a duty to assist others to appreciate the meaning, to assimilate the concepts and to understand how these can be applied. There is an implied reciprocity and deeper level of engagement here than just publishing your words.

6) Empowering learning: this is different from knowledge generation although closely related. We look at learning histories, best practices, left hand columns, personal journals, project reviews and distance learning here, recognize the value of deep dialog and quality questions. Here is a paper I highly recommend that sets the landscape for learning: <http://www.aahe.org/pubs/TM-essay.htm> Here are my take-aways from this article

- Prior beliefs are impervious to 'teaching as telling'
- The meaning and sense we make is highly colored by prior experiences and emotional dispositions
- Learning is a whole person activity centered around inquiry
- Intelligence is not fixed at birth
- Stress & threats reduce learning
- Apprenticeship is a cohort activity & engagement
- We need to change from teacher-dependent to continuous learning communities FAST
- The key to powerful learning requires building connections between cognition & the workplace (situated learning)
- Deep learning is portfolio building, ownership, practice, seeking meaning, reflection and social negotiation.
- Ask powerful questions and practice empathetic listening.

Not a great difference from what Randy has given, but a shift of emphasis to community, negotiation, engagement and construction as the way forward.

What do you think?

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Next week's issue: "Neats vs. Scruffys" (as promised)

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