



Weblogs and Other Social Software for Knowledge Work

Conversations with Dave Pollard

Consultant, Meeting of Minds

Prepared by Carol Butler, AOK Archivist

Note: The asynchronous nature of online discussion groups can be confusing, as the reader often encounters several unrelated messages between one question and its reply. The Star Series discussions at AOK are a rich resource for those of us interested in knowledgework. In appreciation for all that our guest moderators and fellow AOKers do to make these discussions so interesting, I attempt here to create an archival record that feels more like a face-to-face conversation. All contributions to this Star Series conversation are reproduced below in their entirety, but the order has been modified to create a smoother narrative. (An ancillary discussion of posting norms that took place during the same period is not included in this archive. A separate archive document will be created for that discussion.) – Carol Butler, AOK Archivist

More information about this and other Star Series discussions can be found at the AOK website (<http://www.kwork.org/Stars/stars.html>).

*About the Archives. A sentence or two from most messages has been highlighted in blue to make it easier to scan the document for a [quick overview of the entire conversation](#). Most messages contain 2 Subject lines. The first **subject line** was provided by an AOK editor, and appeared in the subject line of the message delivered to members; the last subject line was written by the person posting the message and appeared within the text of the message. Long signatures have been reduced to the **poster's name**.*

Date: Sun Mar 14, 2004 5:35 pm

Subject: PCM TOOLS: Welcoming Dave Pollard - Jerry Ash

From: Jerry Ash, founder and chief executive, Association of Knowledgework (AOK)

Subject: Please help me welcome Dave Pollard, Guest Moderator

STAR Series with Dave Pollard

Hi All.

Please help me welcome Dave Pollard, our 31st guest moderator of the STAR Series Dialogues. We heard from Dave several times during our February conversation with

David Gurteen and the two of them are a significant tandem -- David first focused us in on interpersonal knowledge management (I)PKM and Dave follows with a discussion of tools for personal communication (blogs and other social network tools).

[Dave Pollard](#) brings to us an interesting duality of his own -- on the one hand having spent several years as Chief Knowledge Officer for Ernst & Young Canada and Global Director of Innovation and Content Management in E&Y's Global CBK (Centre for Business Knowledge); on the other, having built a personal blog that is considered by many as a model of personal knowledge sharing. His transition from corporate to personal knowledge initiatives led him to part ways with E&Y over disagreement on the present and the future of knowledge biz. He's betting his career on that future by becoming an entrepreneur focused on the principles he will share with you over the next two weeks. [His new consultancies include Meeting of Minds which offers social networking \(SN\) applications, content management and personal productivity advisory services; and The Caring Enterprise Coach, which helps entrepreneurs establish and operate new collaborative enterprises.](#)

Dave, we thank you for committing your time to this space and look forward to a great two weeks. Everyone, without your participation this would not be a Dialogue. Please take advantage of this opportunity to engage in conversations with Dave Pollard.

Date: Sun Mar 14, 2004 5:49 pm

Subject: **PCM/SN: Dave Pollard Starts with the Questions - Jerry Ash**

From: **Jerry Ash**

Subject:

In his opening remarks <<http://www.kwork.org/Stars/pollard.html#Remarks>>, Dave outlined a model for a suite of integrated Personal Content Management (PCM) and Social Networking (SN) tools that he believes will become part of every knowledge worker's toolkit by the end of this decade. He then posed three questions that he'd like your reaction to:

* Will a corporate Intranet be needed at all when peer-to-peer sharing becomes so easy and powerful, and allows you to share across organizational boundaries, not just within them?

* Why has so little of the promise of collaboration, leveraging 'best practices' and communities of practice been realized?

*With such free and broad flow of knowledge, what about the 'competitive advantage' of knowledge, and what about information security, and the importance of trust?

Last week, Dave outlined eleven Principles of Knowledge Management that underlie his belief that good Personal Content Management and Social Networking tools are a precondition to effective KM. You can find these Principles here:

<<http://blogs.salon.com/0002007/2004/03/10.html#a659>> .

They provoke two further questions:

*How can we, as KM leaders, facilitate better business 'conversations', help identify and connect with the best available experts to solve critical business problems, and help knowledge workers learn to craft excellent stories and narratives?

*What else do we need to do to meet Peter Drucker's "greatest management challenge of the 21st century", which is also the ultimate challenge of KM: to improve the effectiveness of front-line Knowledge Workers?

Not only are these good questions, they are an indication that Dave Pollard won't let you sit idle while he "expounds" over the next two weeks.

What are your thoughts? Let the Dialogue begin!

Date: Tue Mar 16, 2004 3:24 am

Subject: PCM/SN: The Art of Narrative - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: The Art of Narrative

I'd like to thank Jerry for the invitation to moderate this extraordinary group this month, and for his kind words of introduction.

I'm hoping that Steve Denning, who popped his head into the discussion last week on the 'napkin' discussion, is still around. I'm *really* interested in finding out whether any organization is actively teaching its employees what Robert Fulford calls "the art of narrative", since I believe it's a critical precondition to good written knowledge transfer (and perhaps to oral knowledge transfer as well). The people I have worked with are almost all bright analytical thinkers but terrible story tellers, to everyone's detriment. Is this something we can, and should, learn? Who's doing it?

Postscript: In addition to Steve's book, a wonderfully thought-provoking book on stories is Thomas King's new book "The Truth About Stories". I've reviewed it, with some excerpts, in these two articles:

The Truth About Stories: <http://blogs.salon.com/0002007/2003/12/28.html#a570>

Our Story: <http://blogs.salon.com/0002007/2003/12/31.html#a573>

Date: Sun Mar 14, 2004 5:54 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: A Small Piece of the Pie? - Denham Grey

From: Denham Grey

Subject: PCM - a small piece of the pie ?

Welcome Dave,

Perhaps I'm a small minority that sees personal content management (PCM) as a very minor part of KM. It is easy to decry the utility and effectiveness of top down imposed 'knowledge spaces' and to concentrate on personal publishing - but this may not be the best long term solution to difficult knowledge work.

The difficult part of knowledge work and our challenge is not personal content organization, making thoughts explicit, building personal networks and publishing readable stuff - it is practicing dialog & creative abrasion, inviting critique, listening to others, wrestling with different assumptions and trying on a diversity of mental models.

The real challenge is: f2f or asynchronous collaborative work, developing common ground, a 'lingua franca', a learning agenda and joint purpose. High bandwidth conversations and immediate presence is the gold standard for knowledge exchange, but what we urgently need is ways to connect virtually so we can extend reach and include 'experts'. There seems to be a case for having an ecology of tools (IM, asyn discussions, VOIP, web presence display, collaborative writing, e-mail notification, RSS feeds) that support joint work and back-channel commentary.

Management may not (always) support KM decision support, but the enterprize could be more effective, aware, agile and dare I say it - 'intelligent', if these tools were adopted and adapted with empathy.

Looking forward to discussions on your principles.

Date: Mon Mar 15, 2004 5:56 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Big Piece When PCs Shunned - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: PCM/SN: A Small Piece of the Pie? - Denham Grey

Denham wrote:

- > Perhaps I'm a small minority that sees personal content management
- > (PCM) as a very minor part of KM. It is easy to decry the utility
- > and effectiveness of top down imposed 'knowledge spaces' and to
- > concentrate on personal publishing - but this may not be the best
- > long term solution to difficult knowledge work.

Denham: I agree that it **should** be a very small part of KM. But when I speak to front-line knowledge workers the large majority of them tell me that they minimize the use of their PCs and the resources available through them, because they just can't use them

effectively. Most claim they can't even find information in the existing Windows-based PCM systems, so they print out and manually file copies of everything they think has re-use value, and everything they want to send to someone (in order to manually annotate it). As long as most knowledge-workers are 'opting out' of using their PCs because of poor PCM systems, it seems to me that efforts to get KM working will be stymied.

- > The difficult part of knowledge work and our challenge is not
- > personal content organization, making thoughts explicit, building
- > personal networks and publishing readable stuff - it is practicing
- > dialog & creative abrasion, inviting critique, listening to others,
- > wrestling with different assumptions and trying on a diversity of
- > mental models.

Yes, it is the most difficult part, and the most important.

- > What we urgently
- > need is ways to connect virtually so we can extend reach and
- > include 'experts'. There seems to be a case for having an ecology of
- > tools (IM, asyn discussions, VOIP, web presence display,
- > collaborative writing, e-mail notification, RSS feeds) that support
- > joint work and back-channel commentary.

Absolutely -- [as long as that ecology of tools is 'one-click simple'](#). I'm old enough to remember when managers had secretaries make all their calls for them, and while partly that was a time-prioritization decision, it was also partly because 3-way conferencing and other elementary functions of the telephone were just too complicated for busy managers to learn. I am astonished, with the near-ubiquity of high bandwidth, personal PCs, and free connectivity software, that desktop videoconferencing hasn't exploded in popularity. I think that's mainly because 'room' videoconferencing was so cumbersome and complicated that it has scared people off. Simple is critical.

/-/ Dave

Date: Mon Mar 15, 2004 10:42 am

Subject: [PCM/SN: K Workers Too Busy?](#)

From: **John Barrett, principal, ITI Associates; editor, AOK EZine**

Subject: K Workers Too Busy?

Dave, welcome and I'm looking forward to the dialog.

Let me start out by saying I've been in the (I)PKM/PCM camp for a long time, focusing much of my efforts on helping teams and the individual team members collaborate and share. Some of you reading this post may recall that I always include one article about personal tools in each AOK EZine that I edit.

Having seen varying levels of success I would agree with a number of your principles addressed regarding some of the important difficulties that knowledge workers face today.

Let me also suggest that where success has been the greatest, the leaders (be it self directed, team, project or functional) have practiced good (I)PKM/PCM. If they set the right tone then many others will follow regardless of other difficulties.

All too frequently however I see everyone so heads-down and task focused that collaboration and sharing never enter their minds. This is not to say they don't cooperate if asked, but actively sharing and seeking to collaborate are left for when there is time (never). My question is, what can we do to address this? Who has some success stories?

With regard to your question "Will a corporate Intranet be needed at all when peer-to-peer sharing becomes so easy and powerful" -- in a number of situations the answer will be yes. I've done much work recently in the pharmaceutical industry and their intranets or portals provide access to rich and important sources of (authoritative) items important to complying with regulations and guidelines. I would suggest these need to be maintained, but should be enhanced with integrated access to sharing and collaboration tools.

John

Date: Mon Mar 15, 2004 6:02 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Importance of 'Sense of Urgency' - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: PCM/SN: K Workers Too Busy? -- John Barrett

John wrote:

> All too frequently however I see everyone so heads-down and task focused
> that collaboration and sharing never enter their minds. This is not to say they don't
> cooperate if asked, but actively sharing and seeking to
> collaborate are left for when there is time (never). My question is, what can
> we do to address this? Who has some success stories?

This reminds me of Stephen Covey's (I think) urgent/important 2x2 matrix, and I think you're right. [The greatest successes occur when there is a sense of urgency and a strong executive sponsor \(Kotter 101\)](#). Here's my best success story: When Andersen collapsed there was a mad scramble for their clients and their top people. E&Y did much better than average in this competition because they used 'applied KM' to address this urgent/important task. A team of researchers & analysts were assigned to 'war rooms' and worked nearly around the clock gathering competitive intelligence and information about Andersen's clients and people. As the top brass were debating which clients and people to

pursue, and how, these researchers were working in real-time bringing critical knowledge to bear on those decisions.

I've never seen this incredible success repeated -- the conditions just weren't exactly right again in E&Y. In fact one of the problems with KM is that the sense of urgency, and strong executive sponsorship, is nearly impossible to obtain and to sustain.

/-/ Dave

Date: Tue Mar 16, 2004 11:33 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Not as Important as Froup/Corporate/Team KM - Carl Frappaolo

From: Carl Frappaolo, EVP, The Delphi Group, Boston, U.S.

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 345

John:

I agree that a focus on (I)PKM/PCM is important, but not nearly as important as the focus on group/corporate/team KM. (Perhaps you are saying this as well - in which case I am vehemently agreeing with you.)

[We should never allow ourselves in the fervor over PKM/PCM to lose sight of the fact that KM is about collaboration and knowledge exchange more than anything else.](#) The best and brightest PKMers, if they are not prone to share, or given time and venues in which to share are virtually worthless, ineffective diamonds in the rough at best. Knowledge is only a valuable asset when it is shared and grown through interchange.

Your comment that corporate intranets need to be maintained is dead on. You asked for success stories. I am aware of one biotech company that had a great informal culture for sharing knowledge and lots of bright knowledgeable employees. Sharing and collaboration was occurring. But when management strategically applied a corporate intranet with just enough rules and guidelines for capturing lessons learned and new ideas, the speed of collaboration and the value leveraged from it increased dramatically.

My reservation with PKM is the focus on the personal aspect. KM should not be about what is in it for me, but what is in it for us - collaboration and sharing. Whether the community that supports KM is a corporation, a club or a CoP, is irrelevant. But, that community needs to exist, and to provide incentive, venue and facilitation to its members (PKMers).

Carl

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 1:41 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Chicken or Egg/Individual or Company? - John Barrett

From: John Barrett

Subject: Re: Not as Important as Group/Corporate/Team KM - Carl Frappaolo

Carl: Hello again, good to hear from you and thanks for the success example. [Note Carl Frappaolo was one of our previous STAR Dialogue moderators:
http://www.kwork.org/Stars/stars_01.html

I do indeed think we are almost vehemently agreeing. I say almost because I struggle with including the corporation as part of the direct focus. [When I see collaboration and sharing being done well it is always in the context of individuals, a team, or a community. The corporation while important from the sense of providing infrastructure as your example points out, seems to be secondary or "once removed."](#)

My perspective which aligns with what David G (Gurteen) offered last series <<http://www.kwork.org/Stars/gurteen.html>> and what a portion of what Dave P has set forth is that striving to be better at PKM is important. I believe PKM is one of the foundations for effective (I)PKM and just plan old KM.

John

Date: Tue Mar 16, 2004 11:14 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Relative Importance of PKM - Alic Macgillivray

From: Alice Macgillivray, KM Programs, Royal Roads University

Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 345

Welcome Dave.

I am interested in many of the topics you raise and will start with dialogue around the relative importance of PKM.

[When I read about PKM, I often sense very different perspectives on knowledge beneath the surface of the words used.](#) Similarly, very different types of work are sometimes being discussed. Take the BP example of erecting scaffolding. If I were a foreman and did not remember where I had filed the revised assembly instructions or the best practices from recent efficiencies, I would be wasting the company's money. Using my personal lexicon (I don't like to defend definitions as this usually compromises dialogue), this example is information, content and/or document management.

If I were facilitating a collaborative approach to better understand the potential of "social technologies," my thinking, approach and tools would be very different. To begin with, I would be focusing on human knowledge, with all its value-laden, personalized and contextualized messiness. I'd be going to people (much like the individuals Rob Cross has studied) rather than to repositories. I believe conversation and community (common themes in posts so far) would be critical. What would meaningful PKM look like in this context? Ignoring all previous definitions, here are two examples that make sense to me. The first has nothing to do with computers, which I believe is reasonable being as we

have been exploring knowledge for thousands of years. PKM could mean to personally reflect on one's beliefs, values and perspectives of what it means to know, connect, share, be part of a social structure, and attempt to do so at a distance from others. In the second example, PKM could use highly developed computer skills to scan the environment, become more connected and inspired, and synthesize/personalize learnings. I think some bloggers are among those leading the way with use of RSS and other technologies. I've met few individuals who are very skilled with reflective, interpersonal and technical approaches.

Perhaps some of the individuals who shun PCs or some forms of P"K"M are doing so as a personal or contextual preference, even if they frame their decisions in the context of what they know well.

Alice MacGillivray

Date: Mon Mar 15, 2004 5:47 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Managers Without Meddling - Brian Sarrazin

From: Brian Sarrazin, consultant, U.S.

Subject: Re: PCM/SN: Dave Pollard Starts with the Questions - Jerry Ash

Hi Dave and everyone,

As a new member here, I'm looking forward to my first STAR Series experience. So I hope I'm not jumping the gun with my following response to Dave Pollard's questions:

1. Intranet Need One could argue that Intranets aren't really *needed* now. Intranets promise benefits within two major categories: security and filtration (if we consider convenience the "air in the room"). These aims suit nicely the mindset of the "gods of Olympus," those managers (using linear thinking) who tightly control their worlds.

But Dave S. shows us how governance must rethink this approach, and this is where the battles will be fought. [Until Olympian managers can understand "control" in terms more like Mother Nature than City Hall, they will resist complex processes and emergent structure -- and resistance on this front is definitely futile.](#)

2. Unrealized Promise I suspect the unrealized promise has to do with half-hearted efforts due to perceived loss of control (see above) and no secure sense of future value (see below). I think these new tools require an all-in mentality. Until users feel like they will be left behind, they won't get on the bus. I hate to use the now-trite "tipping point," but we're probably heading for one.

3. Knowledge Advantage [If you see advantage only when knowledge is owned \(and if your business is structured that way\), this new world is very threatening.](#)

To see past the old approach, I find it useful to consider competitive advantage in terms of *time.* A great chunk of the value of "owned" knowledge derives from its time-based advantage, but private knowledge must be obtained (time- and) cost-effectively. Going forward, those open to free exchange will have greater access to, and integration of, knowledge than those who aren't (via shared R&D, absorptive systems, etc.). This will force openness upon all. This openness will smelt the true value of knowledge: service to time- based goals. It's not what you know, but how you use it: new knowledge, which then begets... etc. In this, time is the final frontier.

However, in the knowledge space, competitive advantage also derives from "distribution" control. I think this will remain, with user attention (as opposed to say, shelf-space) as the battleground.

The two further questions: 1. Better Conversations I believe the issue centers on "Who is talking, and who is listening?" I can't understand my wife when she speaks French, for example. (And some might accuse some of us of speaking a foreign language.) I hate to see "experts solving business problems" phrased like it's a true/false quiz. Successful CEO's rarely do well at subsequent gigs, for example. And our knowledge heroes are typically extreme specialists, with very narrow perspectives. An expert must immerse and fully appreciate a new situation, or conversely, a user must understand expert knowledge in all its nuance.

We can better understand one another (better stories and narratives) when we use language that better maps to experience. If we accept that linear thinking is simplistic, we must find an alternative. Conceptual mapping is the answer, in my opinion. Unrealistic? Check out Inspiration.com. Their biggest market so far is kids/teachers. Then rethink Valdis's InFlow and its ilk.

A real problem with concept maps is time, time to construct and absorb. But computers (brand new relative to language) can fix that, even today. Let's say I have a problem and have constructed a map of my understanding of it down to simple words (<http://www.visualthesaurus.com/online/index.html>). Now I want an "expert" view. My mapping software compares my map to hers (assuming shared dictionary) and issues a diagnosis of the difference by borrowing social network analysis math.

2. Management Challenge I think managers must become designers, like gods of Olympus but without the meddling. Construct the environments (carrots and sticks), tweak and modify as needed, but never control. Hey, if the Chinese government is willing to try it (Linux)....

Brian

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 8:04 am

Subject: PCM/SN: re. Managers Without Meddling - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: PCM/SN: Managers Without Meddling - Brian Sarrazin

Brian Sarrazin said:

- > The two further questions:
- > 1. Better Conversations
- > An expert must
- > immerse and fully appreciate a new situation, or conversely, a user
- > must understand expert knowledge in all its nuance.

This is an interesting and profound statement. You're almost suggesting that conversations have implicit 'contractual agreements' behind them, with commensurate responsibilities for both the 'buyer' and 'seller' of expertise. Brings a whole new meaning to 'caveat emptor'.

- > We can better understand one another (better stories and narratives)
- > when we use language that better maps to experience. If we accept
- > that linear thinking is simplistic, we must find an alternative.
- > Conceptual mapping is the answer, in my opinion. Unrealistic? Check
- > out Inspiration.com. Their biggest market so far is kids/teachers.

I find conceptual maps intellectually fascinating, but I wonder whether they are too complex and over-engineered for most knowledge-sharing needs. Stories are, after all, the ultimate expositions of 'linear' thinking. I don't think many knowledge requirements are that complicated, which is why short, contextual conversations are so popular.

Date: Tue Mar 16, 2004 11:22 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Knowledge (Money) Left on the Table - Fred Schoeps

From: Fred Schoeps, former KMer at IBM

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 345

(Jerry, thanks for the gentle nudge to rework my input to the conversation so as not to become an off-topic item.)

To: David Pollard:

Dave, you asked for thoughts and focus on three of your eleven principles outlined in: POLLARD'S PRINCIPLES OF KM, AND AN INVITATION TO JOIN AOK at your salon blogsite.

"I am hopeful that much of the AOK discussion will be about principles 4, 7 and 9, because even with best tools in the world, there will remain cultural and learning obstacles to effective knowledge work and effective knowledge transfer. I look forward to seeing you on AOK." -- David Pollard

Specifically these are: 4. Knowledge is Best Transferred by Conversations, 7. Conversations Rarely Include the Best Possible Experts and 9. Stories are Critical to Knowledge Transfer

I am both new and old to this space. New in reconnecting and old in that I have been deeply involved in KM for many years in several of my past lives -- including AOK volunteer work before setting it aside. For the last two years I've spent quality time on personal transformation and gaining a deep appreciation for what it takes to continuously create new possibilities and the requisite role communities and conversations play in personal and organizational transformation. With that said -- What about these three principles that have 'conversation' - talking together - at heart? Food for thought and possible action regarding #4 --

"Knowledge is Best Transferred by Conversations" -- Yes! Well said. The rub is as you yourself seem to have experienced is that such conversations are predicated by the types of conversations that come into existence - or don't - in an organization.

[Will a line organization invest in 'upgrading its conversations'?](#) From, say from caustic to generative? Odds are close to Zero -- 99% of the time -- when it's put that way. Why? Because of already existing conversations: "Feels weird. This is social worker talk not business talk -- who is this guy? Another spacecadet talking about fluffy stuff? Where's the beef? Where's the return?"

And yet [decision makers in a business will invest when the conversation, the language is theirs, their 'business talk', their acceptable conversations that warrant their attention.](#) Talk about addressing the following questions doesn't 'feel weird' : "How much should we invest in keeping employees competitive and loyal?" "How are we doing in retaining and acquiring talent?" "How do we reduce/hold headcount expense?" "What company should we acquire to penetrate this market?" Smart companies know learning/working is becoming one; know people smarts not used is money left on the table; and money follows successful programs. Nothing new -- except when we forget what makes the wheels go round.

OK so what? What does that have to do with "Knowledge is best transferred by conversations"? A lot if principle #4 can either be integrated into existing programs as is - or translatable into the language of the business. Where are touchpoints? [This principle could be a powerful upgrade to a management program -- "enabling powerful conversations".](#) It could become part of an executive coaching program. Of course a great jumpstart would be an HBR article: ["Want to drive margin? Upgrade Your Conversations"](#).

Regards, Fred

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 8:09 am

Subject: PCM/SN: re. Knowledge (Money) Left on the Table - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: Knowledge (Money) Left on the Table - Fred Schoeps

Fred said:

"Knowledge is best transferred by conversations" A lot if principle #4 can either be integrated into existing programs as is -- or translatable into the language of the business. Where are touchpoints? This principle could be a powerful upgrade to a management program -- "enabling powerful conversations". It could become part of an executive coaching program. Of course a great jumpstart would be an HBR article: "Want to drive margin? Upgrade Your Conversations."

Maybe the word "conversations" is a little new-agey a term for the purposes of this discussion (and selling 'conversation-improvement' as a useful KM program). I didn't mean to limit the term to oral communications (sorry Alice), though I would say that from my observation almost all the most productive conversations conducted by people over age 25 are oral. The next generation has learned to use IM as an effective conversational medium, and are even skilled at carrying on multiple IM 'conversations' simultaneously.

What interests me is that these multiple conversations are almost inevitably sequences of one-on-one (2-person) dialogues. When a third person 'joins' a conversation between A & B with a reply by C to something A said, what follows is usually not a three-way conversation, but two quite distinct 2-party conversations, one between A & B (continuing) and a new one between A & C. I've witnessed the same dynamic in business meetings and even at cocktail parties. What looks like a 'group' conversation is actually a set of simultaneous and sequential 2-person conversations.

You can see the same dynamic in AOK discussions -- most comments are directed at one specific person, or are thrown out at large and result in one or more 2-person back-and-forth dialogues. Blogs have discussion threads that exhibit the same dynamic, with an occasional apology to the blog owner for carrying on a dialogue with someone else on 'their' blog.

So what? Your management program or HBR should look into **why* conversations always seem to decompose to 2-person conversations, and what this means in this day of big-boardroom business meetings and 'teaming' activities.* And what makes an **effective* 2-person conversation.* My speculation would be that we all have such dense and diverse mental models filtering what we say and hear (and language is itself imprecise, and our communication skills far from perfect), so that we need a lot of back-and-forth successive approximation exchange to really understand what the other person is getting at (with their question, if they're the knowledge-seeker, and with their answer, if they're the 'expert'). This density of imprecision of communication is such, I would

hypothesize, that *two* is the maximum span of participation we can manage in any one conversation.

It may be, then, that we *have* to give conversations time to permeate that imprecision. Maybe the best way to 'improve' them is to give people more practice with them -- by getting people *out* of large meetings and conferences where most people are silent, and by getting them away from their PCs and face-to-face people until/unless they've mastered IM conversation skills.

Date: Tue Mar 16, 2004 11:28 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. The Art of Narrative - Steve Denning

From: Steve Denning

Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] PCM/SN: The Art of Narrative - Dave Pollard

Dave Pollard asks whether I'm still around (I am). He writes: "I'm *really* interested in finding out whether any organization is actively teaching its employees what Robert Fulford calls "the art of narrative", since I believe it's a critical precondition to good written knowledge transfer (and perhaps to oral knowledge transfer as well). The people I have worked with are almost all bright analytical thinkers but terrible story tellers, to everyone's detriment. Is this something we can, and should, learn? Who's doing it?"

As to who's doing it, I can only speak for my own work and give you indication of the companies that I have been working with, in terms of teaching executives the art of narrative, and they include GE, IBM, Shell, Bristol Myers Squibb, Deloitte, Danfoss, McDonalds, Unilever, Nestle. Xerox, World Bank, UNDP, US Army, USAID, American Institute of Architects, California Workforce Association, The Brookings Institution, CIA, NSA, NIMA, NY State Government, and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This is without mentioning the executives from many organizations around the world who participate in the storytelling masterclasses that Dave Snowden and I hold from time to time (next one in London on May 11 - more details on my website at www.stevedenning.com). Nor does it include the many other firms that my fellow narrative practitioners are working with. So bottom line: there are quite a few companies now active in "doing it".

Is it something we can learn? Studies have shown that we are all storytellers and in fact we already spend much of our day doing precisely that. It's a huge component of the business news, a phenomenon that I track on a daily basis at <http://www.stevedenning.com/SIN-Archive.html>.

Dave Pollard suggests that people he has worked with are all terrible storytellers: my surmise is that if he were to put these same people in an informal social setting and just listened to what they are saying, he would see that they are actually very accomplished storytellers. But when he puts them in a formal organizational setting, they freeze up because their storytelling instincts have been trained out of them. They've been taught for

decades to present matters abstractly, and so sure, the stories they tell are just terrible. But the capacity is still there: it's just latent in organizational settings.

Can they learn? [My experience demonstrates that we can all upgrade our storytelling capacity very rapidly, once we start to understand why stories work and how they work and what are the narrative patterns associated with achieving different purposes in an organizational setting.](#) We learn that what makes a story work in an organizational setting can be very different from what makes a story work in a social or entertainment setting. (This is where I part company from Robert Fulford and his fascinating book, "The Triumph of Narrative", which is just great if you want to understand Shakespeare or James Joyce, but I'm afraid Fulford has no coverage or understanding of organizational storytelling.) We learn for instance that in an organizational setting, the narrative pattern associated with getting people into action is very different from the narrative pattern associated with transferring knowledge.

I provide a lot of material about the various kinds of organizational storytelling on my website and in my articles and books, but clearly people learn even faster from actually doing it. With a little bit of coaching and practice in a workshop, everyone finds that they can get much better at it very quickly. I've worked with several unlikely professions such as engineers and oil drillers and accountants and analysts, including individuals who are initially very skeptical, and there's no difference: they're all storytellers, once you get underneath the forbidding crust.

What are the main purposes that companies are using narrative for? From my clients, by far the biggest interest is in using stories to communicate complex ideas and spark action to implement them. That was the subject of my book, *The Springboard*, and it's still the area of greatest interest. Why? Because getting companies to change, whether for KM or for anything else, is still a universal problem in organizations today. Given the wrenching changes in the world economy, organizational change is irresistible if the firm wants to survive, but when you try to tell the managers and employees that they're going to have to stop doing everything they know and love doing and in future do everything differently, no one wants to hear that message and so the organization seems immovable. The reason for the interest in storytelling in this area is quite simple: nothing else works! The traditional methods just don't work at all.

There's now also emerging a broader interest in other uses to which narrative can be put, such as: . how do you get people working together? . how do you share knowledge? . how do you tame the grapevine? . how do you communicate who you are? . how do you transmit values? . how do you lead people into the future? These are all major leadership challenges for which the traditional methods, if any, don't work very well and for which narrative can be very effective - provided that you understand the relevant narrative pattern.

This broader use of narrative, along with the associated narrative patterns, is the subject of my forthcoming article, "Telling Tales" that will be published in *Harvard Business Review* in May 2004.

It's also the subject of my forthcoming book entitled "Squirrel Inc: A Fable of Leadership through Storytelling" which was discussed on this listserv last year and which will be published by Jossey-Bass on May 28, 2004. You can learn more about the book and download a few advance chapters from my website at <http://www.stevedenning.com/Squirrel.htm>.

Dave Pollard mentions written stories. [My work mainly concerns oral storytelling because when you're trying to pick up a big change-resistant organization by the scruff of the neck and hurl it into the future, merely sending a memo or an email won't get the job done. It's face-to-face, eyeball-to-eyeball communication with a great deal of feeling, interaction and presence that's needed.](#) Afterwards, once people have bought into the change and are on the same wavelength and have a minimal level of understanding and trust, then a great deal of communication that shares information and knowledge through both abstractions and narratives can take place in writing and by virtual means (as in this listserv).

But getting people on the same wavelength in the first place is a bigger challenge and for that, you have to actually **be there** with your entire heart and soul.

Dave Pollard asks: is this something we need to learn? Understanding the different narrative patterns can be helpful in making effective use of narrative. The form of a story to transfer knowledge has a particular pattern and if you understand this pattern, you are much more likely to be effective at it.

If you want to be a leader, wherever you sit in the organization, the answer is even clearer, since traditional methods don't work with the principal challenges of leadership. If leaders communicate solely through abstractions or analyses, the arguments lead to more arguments and an adversarial dynamic tends to set in. But if a leader is fully there for the audience, giving his or her all to them, authentically telling the truth as best he or she knows it, through oral storytelling, then the audience will be there for that leader. Storytelling helps leaders deal with listeners as co-participants, not merely as objects or underlings. Storytelling helps strengthen leaders' connectedness with the world. Isn't this what all leaders need? A connectedness with the people they are seeking to lead.

Steve Denning

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 8:17 am

Subject: **PCM/SN: Re. The Art of Narrative - Dave Pollard**

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re. The Art of Narrative - Steve Denning

Steve said:

> As to who's doing it [teaching the art of narrative], I can only speak for my

> own work and give you indication of the companies that I have been working
> with, in terms of teaching executives the art of narrative, and they include
> [long list snipped]

Thanks, Steve. This is encouraging. I'll sign up for one of the upcoming masterclasses.

> Dave Pollard suggests that people he has worked with are all terrible
> storytellers: my surmise is that if he were to put these same people
> in an informal social setting and just listened to what they are saying,
> he would see that they are actually very accomplished storytellers. But when
> he puts them in a formal organizational setting, they freeze up because their
> storytelling instincts have been trained out of them. They've been taught for
> decades to present matters abstractly, and so sure, the stories they
> tell are just terrible. But the capacity is still there: it's just latent in
> organizational settings.

Maybe I hang out in the wrong circles, but most of the people I know including teachers, surprisingly, cannot tell an engaging story in **any** setting. I ascribe that in part to the education system (both formal and on-the-job) which does not exercise or encourage it. I also ascribe it in part to the loss of conversational skills that our mute, TV-watching culture has produced, and to the pervasive attention deficit disorder that seems to afflict all of us nowadays.

> Can they learn? My experience demonstrates that we can all upgrade our
> storytelling capacity very rapidly, once we start to understand why stories
> work and how they work and what are the narrative patterns
> associated with achieving different purposes in an organizational setting.
> What are the main purposes that companies are using narrative for? From my
> clients, by far the biggest interest is in using stories to communicate
> complex ideas and spark action to implement them. The reason for the interest
> in storytelling in this area is quite simple: nothing else works! The traditional methods
just don't work at all.

If that's the case, then centralized knowledge (which is rarely narrative) is more or less useless -- which is exactly why I have given up on centralized knowledge repositories and 'shared' spaces, in favour of Personal Content Management and Social Networking (i.e. PKM).

> Dave Pollard mentions written stories. My work mainly concerns oral
> storytelling ... [to bring about major organizational or cultural change] you
> have to actually **be there** with your entire heart and soul.

This **has** been true in business but I'm not sure it is necessarily so. There are some very powerful stories out there that have wrought huge culture change in our history. Perhaps we just need to learn how written narrative could fit into the knowledge architecture, and

get rid of a lot of the crap that has comparatively little value.

Date: Tue Mar 16, 2004 7:05 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. The Art of Narrative - Steve Denning

From: Euan Semple, Director KM Solutions, BBC, London

Subject: Re. The Art of Narrative - Steve Denning

Firstly hello to the group!

Steve Denning wrote:

"...when you're trying to pick up a big change-resistant organization by the scruff of the neck and hurl it into the future, merely sending a memo or an email won't get the job done. It's face-to-face, eyeball-to-eyeball communication with a great deal of feeling, interaction and presence that's needed."

and Steve you also, rightly, pointed out that we all have an innate storytelling capability.

Rather than teaching people to do something pro-active with storytelling, isn't it more a case of getting them to shake off the feeling that they have to talk and act differently at work? How many of us have seen colleagues who when promoted to their first management job start acting, speaking and even dressing differently? They seem to feel the need to protect themselves with an invisible cultural armour which makes the rest of us feel intuitively uneasy when faced with these new behaviours. This tendency pervades so much of how we communicate within organisations and becomes a sort of institutionalised "management bollocks"

As David Weinberger says "conversations can only take place between equals". Most of the relationships which sustain organisations are built through conversations and when one person is dominating through position - or I would suggest through conscious story telling - the relationship changes.

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 8:21 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. The Art of Narrative - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re. The Art of Narrative - Euan Semple

Euan said:

> As David Weinberger [Note: Former STAR Series moderator
><<http://www.kwork.org/Stars/weinberger.html>>] says "conversations can only take
> place between equals". Most of the relationships which sustain organisations are built
> through conversations and when one person is dominating through position - or I would
> suggest through conscious story telling - the relationship changes.

Euan, welcome to AOK! This is a wonderful quote, which has huge implications not only for 'conversations' but perhaps also for knowledge transfer in general. Big organizations, with the most sophisticated KM 'installations', also tend to be the most hierarchical. So:

1. Instructions go *down* the hierarchy (usually in writing) 2. Factual information goes *up* the hierarchy (usually in writing) 3. Knowledge goes peer-to-peer (usually in oral conversations)

If this is true, it's insidious: [It may mean we use stories to *disguise* knowledge so it can actually be transferred downwards \(e.g. teacher to child\) or upwards \(e.g. jester to king\), without the cultural resistance that such transfers would normally run up against. ;-\)](#)

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 7:58 am

Subject: PCM/SN: re. Principle # 4: Conversation Takes Many Forms - Peter West

From: Peter West, Senior Consultant, Continuous Innovation, Stratford, Canada

Subject: PCM/SN: KM Principle # 4 - Comment: Conversation Takes Many Forms

Dave Pollard and fellow AOKers:

KM Principle # 4 states "Knowledge is Best Transferred by Conversations: The principal and most effective means of knowledge transfer in organizations is conversations, the best of which are oral and face-to-face, iterative and context-rich."

[It is important to remember that "conversation" takes many forms \(formal and informal\) - debate, discussion, dialogue, etc.](#) Choosing (Using) the right form in a given context (situation) is critical. In "Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together (Currency, 1999)", William Isaacs makes the following distinctions:

* "Discussion (thinking alone) ... the dominant mode of interaction in most professional settings ... is about making decisions ... discussion seeks closure and completion ... decide means 'to resolve difficulties by cutting through them' ..."

* "Dialogue (thinking together) is a conversation with a center, not sides ... Dialogue is about exploring the nature of choice. To choose is to select among alternatives. Dialogue is about evoking insight, which is a way of reordering knowledge - particularly the taken-for-granted assumptions that people bring to the table."

Form (e.g., discussion, dialogue, etc.) is one influencing factor in knowledge transfer. Other factors that impact the success of knowledge transfer include the motivation and capability of the "sender" to share knowledge, the capacity of the "receiver" to absorb and act on that knowledge, the conduciveness of the "environment", etc.

Best regards, Peter West

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 1:34 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: re. Principle # 4: Conversation Takes Many Forms - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: Principle # 4: Conversation Takes Many Forms - Peter West

Peter said:

- > Form (e.g., discussion, dialogue, etc.) is one influencing factor in
- > knowledge transfer. Other factors that impact the success of knowledge
- > transfer include the motivation and capability of the "sender" to share
- > knowledge, the capacity of the "receiver" to absorb and act on that
- > knowledge, the conduciveness of the "environment", etc.

This is an interesting start to a **model** for effective conversations. I would add to the factors:

-- objective of the conversation -- roles of the conversants (sender and receiver etc.)

I wonder if it would be possible to develop a 'decision tree' for different situations that would enable you to pick the best medium for the conversation, the right conversants (and number of conversants), and perhaps even a suggested 'script' or 'structure' for the conversation. Might be too prescriptive for ongoing use, but I think it would be useful for a course designed to teach effective business conversation skills.

Date: Thu Mar 18, 2004 8:26 am

Subject: PCM/SN: re. Conversation Takes Many Forms - Peter West

From: Peter West

Subject: Re: Principle # 4: Conversation Takes Many Forms - DavePollard

Dave and fellow AOKers,

Many interesting models exist for communication, knowledge transfer, and other forms of interaction - and it would be an interesting intellectual exercise to experiment with different representations.

When presented with an interaction challenge (e.g. a "resistant receiver"), I find it useful to revisit these models. They act as a "mental checklist" and "objectivity assessor." For example - have I carefully considered the importance of related knowledge?, the assumptions behind the receiver's questions?, the relationship between knowing and identity? (Note: These examples are taken from: Nancy Dixon, "The Neglected Receiver of Knowledge Sharing", http://www.iveybusinessjournal.com/article.asp?intArticle_ID=373 Ivey Business Journal, March/April 2002, p.35-40 http://www.iveybusinessjournal.com/archives/issue.asp?intIssue_ID=49).

Best regards, Peter

Date: Fri Mar 19, 2004 6:20 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Lack of Feedback Barrier to Knowledge Transfer - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: Conversation Takes Many Forms - Peter West

Peter said:

- > When presented with an interaction challenge (e.g. a "resistant
- > receiver"), I find it useful to revisit these models. They act as a "mental >checklist" and "objectivity assessor." For example - have I carefully
- > considered the importance of related knowledge?, the assumptions behind the
- > receiver's questions?, the relationship between knowing and identity? (Note: >These examples are taken from: Nancy Dixon [NOTE: Previous STAR Series >moderator <<http://www.kwork.org/Stars/dixon.html>>, "The Neglected Receiver of >Knowledge Sharing",
- > http://www.iveybusinessjournal.com/article.asp?intArticle_ID=373
- > Ivey Business Journal, March/April 2002, p.35-40
- > http://www.iveybusinessjournal.com/archives/issue.asp?intIssue_ID=49).

I'm also a big fan of Nancy's models -- she was the one who made me realize that every conversation must navigate through the thick 'fog' of different mental models that colour everything we *think* we mean and everything we *think* we hear. It is truly humbling to debrief with attendees of a well-articulated presentation and ask them to re-state what the main points were (especially if you were the author or presenter). Even when the response is a parroting back of the bullet points from the first and last slides, when you probe for the recipients' understanding of what those bullet point *mean*, you get wildly different answers and interpretations.

Every conversation is, in fact, an iterative stumbling towards coherence of meaning, or, as Eliot put it:

"Trying to use words, and every attempt Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure Because one has only learnt to get the better of words For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate With shabby equipment always deteriorating In the general mess of imprecision of feeling, Undisciplined squads of emotion."

Asynchronous and one-way communications, lacking the 'interaction' and feedback of immediate conversation, therefore have a huge barrier to overcome to achieve even a modicum of knowledge transfer. It's not surprising to me, then, that most such communications fail, miserably.

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 8:01 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Stories: Where's the Bridge to Innovation? - Bob Parden

From: Bob Parden, professor, Santa Clara University, California, U.S.

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 346

It seems to me that story telling is fine for best practices, which may or may not apply to a current situation. [I am concerned with new innovation, the development of yet untried problem solutions. Is there a bridge?](#)

Bob

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 11:15 am

Subject: PCM/SN: re. Stories for Innovation? - John Barrett

From: John Barrett

Subject: Re: Stories: Where's the Bridge to Innovation? - Bob Parden

Bob, [I am familiar with two different organizations that have linked story telling to innovation.](#) At DuPont they bring back former research scientists to share stories about how they made major discoveries. The focus is not on "best practices" but the rather how they came to connect the dots.

At a large pharma company they use a technique called "Interrupted Case Study." In this a team of researchers tells their story but at designed points they stop so that those in attendance can discuss ideas about how to solve certain issues or how they might proceed. The team then continues on to share what actually happened.

John Barrett

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 1:27 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: re. Stories for Innovation? - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: PCM/SN: re. Stories for Innovation? - John Barrett

John, replying to Bob Parden said:

> Bob, I am familiar with two different organizations that have linked
> story telling to innovation. At DuPont they bring back former research
> scientists to share stories about how they made major discoveries. The focus
> > is not on "best practices" but the rather how they came to connect the dots.
> > At a large pharma company they use a technique called "Interrupted Case
> Study." In this a team of researchers tells their story but at designed
> points they stop so that those in attendance can discuss ideas about
> how to solve certain issues or how they might proceed. The team then

> continues on to share what actually happened.

This is intriguing. Google suggests that the Interrupted Case Study method was pioneered at U.Buffalo as a method of teaching sciences. Since we all know that stories are subversive (<http://blogs.salon.com/0002007/2003/05/15.html>) [maybe the Interrupted Case Study methodology could provide a mechanism for fairly challenging stories](#) (perhaps addressing some of the concerns by AOK posters about their unverifiable veracity), as well as, as John suggests, using them as a springboard (OK to use that term in this context, Steve?) for innovation.

Date: Thu Mar 18, 2004 3:03 am

Subject: PCM/SN: 'Ivory Tower,' a KM Fable - Keith De La Rue

From: Keith De La Rue, KnowHow, Telstra, Australia

Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 346

To Dave Pollard and Steve Denning -

Dave - You asked about storytelling. I had the opportunity last year to co-author a module of a KM training course for the major professional Accountant's organisation in Australia - CPA. Our module, "Knowledge management processes and practice", covered a number of practical steps for capturing knowledge from a group of experts and transferring it to others within an organisation. As part of this, [I wrote the story "The Ivory Tower", a KM fable, putting all the issues involved into a feudal setting.](#) A copy of this can be viewed on my web site at <http://delarue.net/what.htm>. Each section of this story was interspersed into the module, prefacing the explanation of each KM "process" discussed. The underlying story is completely based on my experience over the previous three years of my work in this field.

[Note: "The Ivory Tower" fable can be read at: <http://www.kwork.org/Library/biz.html>]

Steve - I discussed this storytelling style with you previously - it is shamelessly borrowed from Douglas Hofstadter, but on a less grand scale. I would be interested to know your thoughts on this.

I have mentioned this story here before. Since putting it on my website, I have been interested to see a number of links created to it, including one from a discussion forum on farming in developing nations. I sincerely hope they were looking at it as allegory, and not an agricultural text....

An outline of the CPA Program Knowledge Management segment can be viewed on their web site at:

http://www.cpaaustralia.com.au/08_education/01_cpa_program/8_1_3_13_outline_knowledge.asp

Regards, Keith

Date: Fri Mar 19, 2004 5:58 am

Subject: PCM/SN: On the Bridge to Innovation - Debra Amidon

From: Debra Amidon, founder & CEO, Entovation International and previous STAR Series Dialogue moderator

Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 347

Dear Jerry et al:

Enjoying these conversations and a wealth of insights flowing! Although some of the early work was done by Fernando Flores and Dan Kim, Snowden and Denning deserve a lot of credit for positioning story-telling on the knowledge conversation map! We have all gained from their interventions. There is little of additional value I can supply except to agree with most of the analysis and to suggest that these findings are international in scope.

Two offerings:

(1) [When the E100 leadership met in New York City for their Roundtable, the conversation among leaders \(e.g., Hubert Saint-Onge, Leif Edvinsson, Karl Wiig, Edna Pasher, Doug Macnamara and more\) was captured on a film funded by American Express.](#) Some excerpts are available - <http://webcsc.mty.itesm.mx/videos/e100/>. Those who have interest will enjoy the analysis at the beginning...but also some of the conclusions reached in the end. Since that time, the group has 'continued the conversations' with meetings in Helsinki - <http://www.dipoli.hut.fi/tietokoulutus/km/> - and most recently in Monterey, Mexico - <http://www.knowledgesystems.org/e100mty/index.html#monterrey>. Now, the Group heads for Barcelona, Spain, in September in conjunction with Forum 2004 - <http://www.barcelona2004.org/eng/>. Indeed, the spheres of influence of these knowledge conversations is beginning to have quite an impact.

[NOTE: E100 is a diagonal slice of world KM and innovation leaders. Get a quick view of who and where they are on Debra's Global Knowledge Leadership Map <<http://www.entovation.com/momentum/entovation-100.htm>>. The list (now over 100) includes some of AOK's past and future STAR Series Dialogue moderators. E100 events bring these thought leaders to some high-level discussions around the world.]

(2) Of course, [I most identify with John Barrett's post on the 'bridge to innovation' with illustrative examples.](#) You may know about Dupont's Land of Oz - <http://www.entovation.com/gkp/dupont.htm> - that was the internal mechanism for conductivity - both electronic and face-to-face. You can find a few other examples in the Global Knowledge Primer - <http://www.entovation.com/info/index.htm>. My own introduction was recorded with interviews with Ray Stata, the Chairman and CEO of Analog Devices. The following are excerpts published originally in June issue of

Knowledge, Inc. and published as a case study published in the chapter "Innovation as a Value System" in *The Ken Awakening 1997* (pgs. 68-72).

[NOTE: Here are some of the excerpts:]

"Analog Devices Invests in Intellectual Assets

"When you hear about chief executives trying to transform their organizations, you can expect them to be under financial duress or in the midst of some other organizational crisis. One corporate leader who considers transformation to be an ongoing effort, who isn't waiting for a crisis, is Ray Stata, Chairman and CEO of Norwood-based Analog Devices. The company, which has invested heavily in the development of its intellectual capital, has consistently demonstrated strong financial performance.

"Indeed, Analog Devices may now be stronger than ever. The firm. Which designs and manufactures integrated circuits that are employed in signal processing applications, saw sales increase 22 percent to \$942 million in fiscal year 1995. Net income rose 60 percent to \$119.3 million. Financial for the first half of 1996 - profits climbed 70 percent to \$40.1 million in the first quarter and 53 percent to \$44 million in the second - suggesting that the company will have another stellar year.

"Such performance gains can be largely attributed to the company's conscious efforts to develop a shared vision and common language that facilitates continuous learning.

"As an illustration of how Analog has developed its common language and framework, he explained that all six members of his executive management team had initially participated in a week-long course sponsored by CQM. 'The value was one of total participation,' he says, explaining that all of the managers explored what they could do for continuous learning which included both incremental and breakthrough improvements.

"It's clear that cross-functional collaboration is valued at Analog. The responsibilities that the finance manager had assumed, in this case, ordinarily might have been confined to the chief information officer or even the human resource professional. In developing a common language, however, the company appears to have generated respect for the complementary competencies that exist internally. In this way, the team of expertise is harnessed toward a common strategic vision as a collective of knowledge. Each contributes - from its own perspective - to the value of the whole."

Analog Devices, which has focused on the nature of its conversations' and the collaboration between various functional groups, offers a strong example of what can be achieved. Just look at the numbers.

Always in your Network, Debra

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 8:54 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Storytelling - KM or Communication Technique? - Mark McElroy
From: Mark W. McElroy, Co-Director, KMCI; CEO, Macroinnovation Associates
Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 346

Hello All:

Thanks to Steve Denning for again providing a clear and crisp summary of the role of storytelling in organizations. Some of what he said troubles me, though.

First, I wonder if we shouldn't be thinking of storytelling not so much as a KM technique, but as a communications technique. In Steve's account of the role and value of storytelling, he says "by far the biggest interest [in the use of storytelling] is in using stories to communicate complex ideas and spark action to implement them." He later adds, "Storytelling helps strengthen leaders' connectedness with the world. Isn't this what all leaders need? A connectedness with the people they are seeking to lead."

[What troubles me is the presumed truth of claims made by way of storytelling. What, for example, if the message in a well-told story happens to be false?](#) Indeed, couldn't we say that well-told stories are just as effective at helping us to share falsehoods as they are truths? Or are all the messages in stories always true? Of course they can't be. But how are those of us on the receiving end of effectively-told stories (especially from a PKM point of view) supposed to know the difference? What does the storytelling trade have to say about this?

For me this raises the point I made earlier, which is that storytelling is perhaps best viewed as a communications technique and not as a KM, or even a knowledge transfer, technique. For until the storytelling side of the house provides us with a basis for discriminating between true and false stories, or stories with true or false morals or assertions, to use stories as an effective "knowledge" sharing or transfer technique is to invite the possibility that what is being shared is in fact false -- a good basis for ineffective action, not the reverse.

I'd appreciate hearing what Steve and others may have to say about this.

Regards, Mark

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 11:17 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Storytelling - re. KM or Communication - Euan Semple
From: Euan Semple" <blaven@m...>
Subject: Re: Storytelling - KM or Communication Technique? - Mark McElroy

Mark W. McElroy wrote:

>For until the storytelling side

- > of the house provides us with a basis for discriminating between true
- > and false stories, or stories with true or false morals or assertions,
- > to use stories as an effective "knowledge" sharing or transfer technique
- > is to invite the possibility that what is being shared is in fact false
- > -- a good basis for INeffective action, not the reverse.

I agree completely Mark and I guess this concern was behind my previous post. [Arguably the most effective examples of institutional storytelling are propaganda](#) - look at the way the nazis consciously employed effective storytelling techniques to construct the horrendous narratives we are all so familiar with.

I would rather encourage the more amateurish but personal and egalitarian practice of open and enthusiastic sharing of anecdote. Making it OK to share personal, cultural, contextual colour to business communication. This encouragement to do what comes naturally is in contrast to an explicit effort to teach techniques which could so easily be misused.

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 1:48 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Storytellers Anonymous - Joe Firestone

From: Joe Firestone

Subject: Re: Storytelling - KM or Communication Technique? - Mark McElroy

Mark's post again raised the question of false stories. I did this earlier in my answer to Steve's long post, but in a somewhat less direct way. There I said:

"And here I point out that the trouble with stories is that they do "lead" us to conclusions, and that when we tell a story and then suggest a conclusion, people tend to accept that conclusion uncritically, even though it may have little to do with the story. That is, stories tend to get us to suspend judgement, in order to "indwell" in the story, so that we come to an empathic (rather than a content-based and critical) understanding of the story, as we learned to do as children at our mother's knee. What we really need to do instead, is to view the story as an introduction to a knowledge claim and keep our critical faculties sharp so we can "capture" that knowledge claim and compare it to its competitors."

So one of the things I was saying there is that stories formulate and present, in a persuasive way, the storyteller's knowledge claims. They may communicate the storyteller's own beliefs, or perhaps a cultural viewpoint, or perhaps a conscious lie of the storyteller, but whether or not they communicate organizational knowledge we cannot say without access to the organizational track record of the knowledge claims given in the story and our own evaluation of these claims.

During a discussion of the significance of language for the development of human knowledge Popper had this to say (in Karl Popper and John Eccles *The Self and Its Brain*, 1977):

"I may perhaps add here that two things seem to me decisively important about language. One is that it allows for criticizability; the other is that it gives rise to the need to criticize because of story-telling. With the invention of language there also comes the invention of excuses, of false excuses, and of false explanations produced in order to cover up something not quite right that one has done, and so on; and with this arises the need to distinguish truth and falsity."

In saying the above, my purpose is not to express opposition to the use of story-telling in KM, or to attack the character and intentions of our story-tellers. (Indeed, human story-telling lies at the root of much creativity and innovation, and we should certainly support and cultivate it as Steve Denning, Dave Snowden and many others of us are now doing.) It is simply to look at story-telling from a broader perspective. Let's not assume that story-telling is useful for knowledge processing. Instead, let's ask, how is it useful for knowledge processing and therefore of concern to KM? The KLC framework provides an approach to answering that question.

-- Does story-telling help us to recognize and clearly formulate knowledge gaps (i.e. problems) that are relevant for improving organizational business processes? I guess here I'd argue that story-telling is not so important for recognizing such gaps though it may be very important for explaining them to others.

-- Is story-telling useful for acquiring information from outside our organizations? Perhaps story-telling is not as useful as "story-listening", but we can probably agree that stories may be important here.

-- Is story-telling useful for individual and group learning? Let's postpone answering this question until we've asked the rest of our questions, since individual and group learning is itself based on KLCs.

-- Is story-telling useful for Knowledge Claim Formulation. Absolutely. It may help us to get a grip on the meaning and implications of our knowledge claims when we wrap them in stories. And stories may suggest entirely new knowledge claims to us by stimulating us to combine ideas in fresh ways.

-- Is story-telling useful for Knowledge Claim Evaluation? Here, I think the answer is mixed. Sometimes it can be useful in comparing competing knowledge claims, by and-large, I don't think that stories are very useful for performing logical analysis, or for analytical criticism, or for comprehensive and close comparisons of competing knowledge claims. I think I would have to say that this is the area of knowledge processing activity in which stories are least helpful. Unfortunately this is the area of knowledge processing which most distinguishes it from information processing (See Chapter 3 of the Key Issues in The new Knowledge Management).

-- Is story-telling useful in Knowledge and Information Broadcasting? Here again, I think the answer is a resounding yes. Anytime we want to spread the news about new

knowledge claims that have survives testing and evaluation, stories are a very useful vehicle.

-- Is Story-telling useful for Searching and Retrieving? I think the application here is minimal. Don't you?

-- Is Story-telling useful for Teaching new knowledge? Sure. Any of us who have done any teaching know that we're always looking for a good story to spice things up. On the other hand certain things we have to teach are not well-supported by story-telling. And these things involve formal knowledge, tight criticism, methodology, and other things that require disciplined thinking, rather than insight.

-- Is story-telling useful for Knowledge Sharing? Again, of course it is. When we're with our peers and we want to explain something to them it's always helpful to have a wonderful story that can make our point for us. On the other hand, formal knowledge, or any knowledge that requires precise cognition to acquire is not well-served by story-telling.

Returning now to individual and group learning, it's clear from what I said earlier that story-telling is very useful for much of it, but less useful for Knowledge Claim Evaluation in individual and group learning.

So what is the bottom line? From the KLC perspective, [story-telling is very helpful in most areas of knowledge processing, but it has shortcomings in Knowledge Claim Evaluation, Individual and Group Learning, Searching and Retrieving, Teaching and Sharing](#). So, I think that while we should use stories and learn to tell them skillfully, we should all also take out a membership in story-tellers anonymous, and pledge that we will not get drunk on the success of our stories, but instead will cultivate a critical attitude toward them on the part of ourselves and others.

Regards, Joe

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 1:33 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: True (or False) Stories - John Barrett

From: John Barrett

Subject: Stories Important to PKM (True)

[I can see no logic in why using a story or narrative to share information or knowledge should be more, or less, likely to include false data or assertions](#). If someone wants to deceive, lie or obscure the truth, it can just as easily be done with statistics on a PowerPoint as in telling a story.

If the point is that a "false" story can create more damage, then that may be the case if we believe that stories are more apt to get people to actually become engaged and take action.

I think the fundamental truth about stories is that they lubricate the flow of information and knowledge from the teller to the receiver and enable the receiver to more effectively construct additional knowledge. To get us back to the topic, isn't that a rather basic form of PKM?

John

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 2:16 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: re. True (or False) Stories - Joe Firestone

From: Joe Firestone

Subject: Danger in Stories?

John,

You said:

"I can see no logic in why using a story or narrative to share information or knowledge should be more, or less, likely to include false data or assertions. If someone wants to deceive, lie or obscure the truth, it can just as easily be done with statistics on a PowerPoint as in telling a story."

It's not the story that's more or less likely to include false data and assertions. It's that when stories are told, listeners approach them by suspending their critical faculties in order to get into the story and empathize with the story's characters. The trouble is not in the stars, it is in us, and if we want to use stories effectively and safely we need to approach them with our critical faculties intact and without the suspension of disbelief.

John also said:

"I think the fundamental truth about stories is that they lubricate the flow of information and knowledge from the teller to the receiver and enable the receiver to more effectively construct additional knowledge. To get us back to the topic, isn't that a rather basic form of PKM?"

Yes, so long as the additional knowledge is constructed through an evaluation of the story. When it is not, the story can still stimulate additional knowledge, but it is likely to be of lower quality.

Regards,

Joe

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 1:57 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. The Art of Narrative - Euan Semple

From: Euan Semple

Subject: Re. The Art of Narrative - Dave Pollard

Chris Corrigan has a very interesting and pertinent post on stories and organisations today from which this:

"Complexity and diversity in participation threatens the organization's identity because it pokes holes in the large assumptions that the powerful pieces of an organization can sometimes hold over everyone else. These power stories could be societal and cultural myths or beliefs as well, and they could inhibit a huge set of opportunities and potentials.

By inviting a large diversity of people into the shared meaning-making storyspace, we invite challenge to the myths and a much more dynamic process of social and organizational truth telling that makes organizations or societies very robust. And I think that is a very good thing. It's good for democracy, it's good for productivity, it's good for engagement. People recover their agency, groupthink becomes a thing s of the past, minds are opened and passion AND responsibility is engaged."

http://www.chriscorrigan.com/parkinglot/2004_03_01_archive.html#107955580271234087

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 8:31 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Storytelling ... And Asking For a Story to be Told - Bruce Karney

From: Bruce Karney, Knowledge Management Consultant, HP Services, California, U.S.

Subject: Storytelling ... And Asking For a Story to be Told

Everyone has "teaching stories" to tell, and it would be great if we were more effective storytellers.

However, what I've seen is that [failure in knowledge transfer often starts because the "seeker" doesn't know how to ask for the right story to be told, or how to ask in a way that motivates the storyteller to share his/her knowledge.](#)

To address that problem, I've created a document called ["How to Ask Others to Share Knowledge"](#) and disseminated it within my part of HP.

The specific context is e-mail requests sent to a large number of people, something that happens frequently here. The heart of it consists of 10 Rules of Asking Others to Share Knowledge, listed below.

1. Make the subject line very specific; use 5-10 words, not 2-3. 2. Identify yourself by name, role and organization. 3. Identify the problem briefly and clearly. 4. Explain why solving the problem is important to the reader. 5. Explain exactly what kind of help you want from them. 6. Specify your deadline. 7. Tell what you know (and how you learned it), and what you don't know. 8. Ask for suggestions about who else to ask and what else to do. 9. Tell what you will do to share what you learn more broadly. 10. Explain how those who help you will be rewarded or recognized.

If anyone would like a copy of the entire 6-page document (which includes examples), just e-mail me at bruce.karney@h...

Cheers, Bruce

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 1:30 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: re Storytelling Template - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Storytelling ... And Asking For a Story to be Told - Bruce Karney

Bruce said:

- > However, what I've seen is that failure in knowledge transfer often
- > starts because the "seeker" doesn't know how to ask for the right story
- > to be told, or how to ask in a way that motivates the storyteller to
- > share his/her knowledge.
- >> To address that problem, I've created a document called "How to Ask
- > Others to Share Knowledge" and disseminated it within my part of HP.

Bruce: [Your 10-point document is a very useful template both for development of stories and, more broadly, for the conduct of 'knowledge conversations'.](#)

I think, though, it needs to be enriched to cover conversations with *other* objectives i.e. where the roles are not 'seeker' and 'expert' and the objective is not 'answering a question'. I'd also be interested in what response you got to your document. [Did senior people think you were presumptuous telling them how to structure their Q&As?](#)

Date: Thu Mar 18, 2004 12:35 pm

Subject: PKM/SN: More About My 10 Rules - Bruce Karney [+Jerry Ash]

From: Bruce Karney

Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 347

Regarding my posting yesterday on "10 Rules..." Dave Pollard wrote: ----- I think, though, it needs to be enriched to cover conversations with *other* objectives i.e. where the roles are not 'seeker' and 'expert' and the objective is not 'answering a question'. I'd

also be interested in what response you got to your document. Did senior people think you were presumptuous telling them how to structure their Q&As? -----

Dave, my memo was designed to deal specifically with the problem of badly written requests of the type "Help me with this problem" or "I need information about something." I'm not sure what additional or different problem you think it should be expanded to solve.

I got only 2 bits of explicit feedback on the document when I posted it to our "Knowledge Briefs" site (both positive), and of course this is not unusual. When you post something to a repository it's like planting daffodils in a garden you won't be able to see in the spring. The squirrels may eat them all, or maybe they'll all bloom, but you'll never know.

The "lack of feedback issue" is why I offered to provide the complete document to AOKers, but only if they e-mailed me. That way I can find out how many people read it, and perhaps also gain something myself from their comments. So far I've received 10 requests, and one person volunteered to share information from a study he's conducting on a related topic.

Regarding "senior people" -- [my belief is that senior people NEVER expose their ignorance on a topic they are supposed to know about by asking a question to a large distribution list. So, they're not the audience for my advice](#), and I'd be surprised if any executives at my company have read it.

Cheers, Bruce Karney

[From Jerry Ash: I just thought everyone might be interested to know that I broke an AOK "practice" when I included Bruce's email address in his original posting. I usually remove individual email addresses because I want the "conversations" to be shared with the group -- not spun off outside this "meeting space." So you see, there were 10 responses, some volunteered to share their own information and the rest of us missed out on the fun! :-)-- not that we are lacking in posts to read!]

Date: Fri Mar 19, 2004 8:18 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Appreciating Potential Reader's Needs - Steve Else

From: Steve Else

Subject: Re: Appreciating the Potential Reader's Needs in Knowledge Sharing

[I found Bruce Karney's 6-page document to be highly practical and thus valuable.](#) With his recommendations for e-mail requests for information or "knowledge," he places himself in the shoes of busy people who working hard to manage their inboxes and still get some work done. He provides examples of e-mails that follow the guidelines he provides and I am struck with how much better I might have requested help before, had I followed his advice, and how much more likely I would have been in getting timely and constructive responses.

Looking at the other side of the equation -- attempting to share knowledge in e-mails, I have also experienced disappointments that might have been reduced with a similar set of practical guidelines. I think our current discussion of blogs and social networks begs consideration of this side of the e-mail knowledge sharing question.

Without going into great detail, advice I have received from individuals after attaching what I found to be great articles or presentations to a short e-mail note include:

1. Why didn't you clearly and succinctly highlight the relevance of your e-mail and attachment to the reader? 2. Why didn't you highlight and explain some key material or indicate which slide or slides deserve particular attention and your justification for your thinking? 3. Why didn't you include some logical action recommendations based on your e-mail or attachment? The reason this last question is particularly important is that it reveals that readers are overwhelmed with FYI fodder and are in fact interested in the applicability, if at all relevant, to something they are working on.

I am sure there are many more things one could say on this topic (particularly Joe Firestone :-), but I thought the other side of the equation to Bruce Karney's recommendations reinforces the importance of considering the reader -- whether you are the one asking for information/knowledge or offering it.

Regards, Steve

Date: Fri Mar 19, 2004 12:37 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: re. Appreciating Potential Reader's Needs - John Barrett

From: John Barrett

Subject: Re: Appreciating Potential Reader's Needs - Steve Else

Steve, I think the "advice" you received warrants some discussion. I am aware of one organization that established similar rules to be more "efficient." What they found quickly was that efficiency did improve as the volume of articles being circulated dropped dramatically. Many found it too onerous or time consuming to comply while others did not feel they had the expertise nor wanted to be the filter.

Anyway, the rules were rescinded and it left to the recipient to decide if the information was of value.

My approach is from somewhat of a marketing perspective. I include enough verbiage in what I send to hopefully make it obvious why the recipient might be interested.

So the question is, how do we improve efficiency without eliminating sources of good ideas and knowledge?

Regards,

John Barrett

Date: Fri Mar 19, 2004 12:47 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: re. Appreciating Potential Reader's Needs - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: PCM/SN: Appreciating Potential Reader's Needs - Steve Else

Steve said:

- > advice I have received from individuals
- > after attaching what I found to be great articles or presentations to a
- > short e-mail note include:
- > > 1. Why didn't you clearly and succinctly highlight the relevance of your
- > e-mail and attachment to the reader?
- > > 2. Why didn't you highlight and explain some key material or indicate which
- > slide or slides deserve particular attention and your justification for your
- > thinking?
- > > 3. Why didn't you include some logical action recommendations based on your
- > e-mail or attachment? The reason this last question is particularly
- > important is that it reveals that readers are overwhelmed with FYI fodder
- > and are in fact interested in the applicability, if at all relevant, to
- > something they are working on.

This certainly resonates with my experience. I've found in fact that the mere act of 'attaching' something to an e-mail message (a) lowers the likelihood of getting a response at all, and (b) clearly annoys people, and only partly because opening it is another 'click'. [We actually put together some 'guidelines for effective e-mail communication'](#) that were principally focused on appreciating the potential reader's needs, in one of E&Y's internal newsletters. [Although they were widely read and discussed, nobody used them, and some people actually *resented* the suggestion that their e-mails were less than perfect.](#) Any speculation on why this happened? If we can figure out how to make e-mail communication more effective, we might find it's a way to make all conversations more effective, and hence a means to improve knowledge sharing.

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 7:54 am

Subject: PCM/SN: But, Does Storytelling Happen Virtually - Christy Conte

From: Christy Conte, KPMG Toronto, Canada

Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 346

Hi, everyone,

What a great time for me to have joined the group. I have a particular interest in narrative at the moment. First, thanks to both Dave for the Thomas King reference ("The Truth

about Stories") and to Steve for "Squirrel Inc." and his web link. I'm responsible for elearning content here at KPMG and am particularly interested in using stories to communicate information that is ordinarily perceived as deadly dry. I'm also involved in change management here and am playing with ways of using story in that context.

Steve said something that I'd like to follow up on:

"...It's face-to-face, eyeball-to-eyeball communication with a great deal of feeling, interaction and presence that's needed. Afterwards, once people have bought into the change and are on the same wavelength and have a minimal level of understanding and trust, then a great deal of communication that shares information and knowledge through both abstractions and narratives can take place in writing and by virtual means (as in this listserv)...;"

[How much storytelling do you think can happen in virtual synchronous/asynch forums?](#)
Can anyone provide interesting examples of where this has been accomplished? What are the necessary pre-conditions for succesful online narrative experiences?

George Gadanidis at the University of Western Ontario (ggadanid@uwo.ca) is hosting a symposium in June on narrative in mathematical enquiry (June 11-13, "Online mathematical investigation as a narrative experience"). Although it's more academic than organizational in focus, I think there will be many useful parallels that I hope to relate to the communication and learning challenges faced by knowledge workers in an accounting firm.

Cheers, Christy

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 11:19 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Virtual Storytelling - Euan Semple

From: Euan Semple

Subject: Re: But, Does Storytelling Happen Virtually - Christy Conte

Christy Conte wrote

- > How much storytelling do you think can happen in virtual synchronous/asynch
- > forums? Can anyone provide interesting examples of where this has been
- > accomplished? What are the necessary pre-conditions for succesful online
- > narrative experiences?

[I would argue that the better written weblogs achieve this end.](#)

I have experienced amazing learning and interchange of ideas through blogging and have also established some very firm online friendships. In some way the open nature of blogs, the ownership of them by the writer (to a degree not known in newsgroups and even e-mail) and the more thoughtful frequency of interchange that they generate allows them to

truly convey meaning and understanding in a way I have not experienced in any medium before.

Date: Thu Mar 18, 2004 3:18 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Pollard's Principles and TNKM - Joe Firestone

From: Joe Firestone

Subject: Re: Pollard's Principles and TNKM

Dave,

I'll comment on your principles of KM.

"Pollard's Principles of Knowledge Management

1. KM should be about Front Line Worker Effectiveness: The key 'value proposition' for KM must be improving the effectiveness (not the efficiency) of knowledge workers (defined by Drucker as 'anyone who knows how to do their specialized job better than anyone else in the organization including their boss' -- i.e. almost everyone on the front lines of the organization)."

We all have our ideas about what the value proposition(s) of KM should be. Mark and I think that the value propositions of KM are:

-- Enhances ability to satisfy demands for new knowledge -- Enhances rate and quality of organizational learning and innovation (sustainably so), and -- Enhances organizational capacity to adapt -- Enhances corporate governance by elevating Knowledge Processing to the level of a fiduciary issue

The difference between our value propositions and yours are very striking. Of course, we agree with the notion that KM, and all other forms of management as well are about enhancing organizational performance, and that insofar as such performance is connected to improving front-line worker effectiveness, that all forms of management are ultimately about that too. But, I think, the problem of specifying KM's value proposition as distinct from that of other forms of management, one needs to get more specific in stating its value propositions. Ours are concerned with learning, innovation, adaptation, and risk. Other forms of management address other values.

You said next:

"In other words, don't worry about what 'knowledge' or 'knowledge work' is -- as long as what you're doing improves front line knowledge worker effectiveness, it's KM and you're on the right track."

So, when a line manager praises the performance of one of his knowledge workers, you would call that KM? And when the President of the United States announces an annual

pay raise for all Federal workers, you would call that KM provided it improves effectiveness? Also, if we don't know what knowledge work is, how can we know whether we are improving knowledge worker effectiveness? Can we know what a knowledge worker is, without knowing what knowledge work is? And can we know what knowledge work is, without having some idea about what knowledge is?

Let's move on to principle 2.

2. "There is an Urgent Need to Improve Front Line KM & IT: If you talk to knowledge workers, they will almost unanimously tell you that they desperately need help in improving their work effectiveness, and that little of what KM & IT have provided thus far has been useful to that end."

I'm sure workers need help in improving their work effectiveness, and they also may believe that KM and IT have provided little that is useful in that direction. But, please note, KM is not IT, and is arguably not directly responsible for either its failures or successes. And as for KM itself, it is only indirectly responsible for worker effectiveness.

What it is responsible for is enabling their efforts at problem-solving and integrating their knowledge into their organizations. I suspect that if KM did its enabling well, workers might perceive that it has improved their effectiveness, but they would be mistaken. KM is not directly responsible for that, and shouldn't be evaluated on that basis. They and their line managers are responsible for their front-line effectiveness, and only they can improve it. Knowledge Managers must leave something for them to do, and focus instead on enabling them to improve their knowledge processing.

3. "Knowledge Workers Don't Know How to do Knowledge Work: Knowledge workers perceive a crisis of information overload, and feel they do not have the time nor the skills to manage information effectively."

Knowledge workers may indeed need to know how to do knowledge work better. But managing information effectively is not the same thing as managing knowledge effectively. And I really don't agree that e clarify anything by using the words "knowledge" and "information" interchangeably.

4. "Knowledge is Best Transferred by Conversations: The principal and most effective means of knowledge transfer in organizations is conversations, the best of which are oral and face-to-face, iterative and context-rich."

I agree that knowledge sharing is often best accomplished through conversation, but I think the way you've stated the point is an over-statement. Some knowledge is best transferred through electronic broadcasting. Some is best transferred through formal instruction. Some is best transferred through passive media. Some is best transferred in formal facilitation environments. We need a mix of techniques of knowledge sharing and we need to study which techniques are best for which types of knowledge.

5. "Everyone Learns, Organizes and Processes Information Differently: Taxonomies, tools and processes that force people to use a different model for doing these things than the one they use naturally, will be resisted."

I couldn't agree more with this principle. Our systems should adapt to our styles of problem solving. IT tools need to accommodate to our different styles if they want to carry the label KM tools.

6. "Most KM & IT Tools are Unintuitive and Over-Engineered: Simpler is better. If you have to teach people to use tools they're probably too complicated. Best are tools and processes that emulate the natural 'information behaviour' and artefacts of workers i.e. mimicking their physical workspace (desk), the physical media (paper), and the processes (conversing, subscribing, stacking, shuffling, filing documents, highlighting, annotating, writing in and crossing out with a pencil) they intuitively use to acquire, process and disseminate information."

Of course, IT tools that are simpler for knowledge workers to use are more complex for software developers to produce. But I certainly agree that our KM/IT tools need to support our "natural" problem-solving behavior and not impose a training burden upon us that is not native to the subject matter addressed by the tool.

7. "Conversations Rarely Include the Best Possible Experts: The risk and cost of misuse (theft, hacking, inappropriate use) of knowledge pales in comparison with the risk and cost of not using the best available knowledge. That includes not knowing who the best experts are (inside & outside the organization), and relying on lesser expertise."

Yes.

8. "Management Doesn't Want or Need KM Decision Support: Executives are hired and paid top salaries because they supposedly have the skills, experience, judgement and instincts to make near-optimal decisions quickly. They pride themselves on their ability to make decisions with imperfect information. They use their selected inner circle of advisors as a sounding board. They (mostly) don't use KM systems. KM is not for them, it's for the Front Line Knowledge Worker. A major KM challenge is that management is paying for it, but they don't use it themselves -- a hard sell."

From my perspective KM doesn't provide decision support, it enables knowledge workers, including top executives to solve their own problems so they can make better decisions. Of course, these efforts at enabling may involve KM interventions that produce IT infrastructure and tools that support problem solving and retrieval of existing knowledge and information. You say top executives don't use such tools now, but surely this is due to the fact that so-called KM systems really don't provide problem-solving tools that support the workflows, cognitive maps, and thought processes of top executives. So, it's the usual problem: if you want your application to serve top managers you must design it so it supports their use cases. We haven't done that yet so KM is still a hard sell.

9. "Stories are Critical to Knowledge Transfer: More than just examples, stories are a language for translating knowledge between our personal, unique, unfathomable mental models. A good narrative is almost inherently more effective, clearer and more persuasive than a good exposition or a good analysis. If we can teach knowledge workers to tell, and write, good stories, we can massively increase the value of stored knowledge."

Certainly we can massively increase the value of stored knowledge claims. Story-telling doesn't address the question of which knowledge claims may reasonably be called knowledge.

10. "Humans are Inherently Poor Collaborators: You can't just blame poor tools for the lack of progress in virtual and asynchronous collaboration in business, and the failure of team and community knowledge tools and 'spaces' to get much traction -- at least beyond the short life and limited purpose of specific projects. Business by nature is undemocratic and uncollaborative: The hierarchy exists to reinforce that instructions flow down, work is done by individuals according to those instructions, and the results are reported back up. There is little room (and often little perceived need) for consensus building or any of those warm fuzzy things we are taught to do in Teamwork 101. In fact, most teams exist principally to dole out tasks to their members and aggregate the status and results of that individual work. Even inherently collaborative tasks like editing are usually done sequentially by individuals. If it's really important to improve collaboration and teamwork in organizations (i.e. if it's not just a smokescreen by management to make the organization appear more democratic), we're going to have to fundamentally change the way businesses are organized and operated. You might even have to change our human culture (or at least fire all the males)."

Yes. But why is this a KM principle?

11. "Much of What We Do at Home is Also Knowledge Work: The commercial applicability of tools developed to improve knowledge worker effectiveness could also be leveraged for home use. Example: If you want to move videoconferencing out of the stone age, figure out how little Janey in Seattle can use it to chat and play with Grandma in Florida (and remember principle 6)."

Yes. But why is this a KM principle?

After stating the KM principles you said:

"My argument for focusing KM first and foremost on improving (and simplifying) the Personal Content Management and Social Networking tools available to knowledge workers follows directly from these principles. Without good tools we cannot support effective processes and bring about productive behaviour change."

"Inherent, too, in all these principles is the need to stress quality over quantity -- we need fewer, simpler-to-use tools with fewer, intuitive functions, and less, better-quality, more useful content."

I agree that PCM and Social Networking tools available to workers should be upgraded. What that will do is to provide a stronger infrastructure for more effective KM, but I don't think it is enough. Social network integration, improved collaboration, and improved personal content management don't automatically translate into enhanced knowledge processing. So what is it we do need? To illuminate that question, the TNKM approach has its own principles, which are, as you might suspect, a bit more fulsome in number than Dave Pollard's.

In a recent thread on TNKM at KnowledgeBoard.com, Mark, in answer to a question, offered the following 25 points to clarify what TNKM is about.

"Here in 25 points is what we mean by The New KM:

1. Action in organizations is just knowledge in use
2. Effective action is good knowledge in use
3. Good knowledge is ideas that tell us about the way things really are
4. We can share knowledge about the way things really are, but we must make it first
5. In organizations, we should all share and make knowledge about the way things really are so we can all take effective action
6. (The New) Knowledge Management can help us do that
7. Nobody can be sure about the way things really are
8. But we can try to get close to the truth
9. Truth is about the way things really are
10. To get close to the truth, everyone in an organization must be able to see and hear what others are saying so that they can decide if it's true (this is transparency)
11. Private or secret knowledge should not be shared, but people should share knowledge about what should be private and secret, and why it should not be shared
12. Managers in organizations must make decisions about what others should do, but they may not stop their employees from disagreeing with them or telling others why they do
13. If employees disagree with their managers, they should still do their jobs unless they think what they're doing is wrong or illegal
14. Boards of Directors in organizations should control Knowledge Management because making sure that the knowledge used by employees is good knowledge is their job
15. Boards of Directors should not let managers make knowledge only by themselves
16. Everybody in organizations should help make good knowledge, even though only managers can make final decisions (this is inclusiveness)
17. Boards of Directors should make the rules should for making good knowledge
18. Good knowledge should be about the way things really are, not just what managers think
19. Good knowledge should be about the way things really are, not just what groups or communities think

20. Good knowledge should be about the way things really are, not just what individuals think
21. We should make good knowledge by testing and evaluating our ideas
22. Good knowledge is ideas about the way things really are that do not die when we test them
23. Bad knowledge is ideas about the way things really are that do die when we test them
24. Making good knowledge is ethical
25. Not making good knowledge is unethical"

And I followed with:

"Mark did his valiant best and, all-in-all, a wonderful job of trying to specify the new KM in 25 points and plain English. However, the call for simplicity he was trying to accommodate, leaves important elements and qualifications to be filled in. The world is not simple. Neither is TNKM, and the more we simplify both, the more we risk foregoing an understanding that is close to the truth. Here are some more tenets of TNKM, which I hope will add even more to your understanding.

26. There is a difference between physical knowledge and physical information.
27. There is a difference between mental knowledge and mental information.
28. There is a difference between cultural knowledge and cultural information.
29. The difference between knowledge and information is not that one is mental and the other cultural or physical, but that one (information) has not survived testing and evaluation, while the other (knowledge), has.
30. To test and evaluate knowledge claims for closeness of approach to the truth, and thereby create cultural, objective knowledge from information, one should perform fair comparison of competing knowledge claims.
31. The nature of knowledge can't be understood outside of its context of self-organization and emergence.
32. Making knowledge that organizations can use is about solving problems, learning, and then spreading the resulting knowledge, so those who need it can use it or change it.
33. The new KM is partly about clarifying the character of mental knowledge in the context of the other types of knowledge, and the broader social and environmental context in which we live.
34. The new KM is about determining and measuring the direct impact of KM interventions on making and spreading knowledge, on the quality of knowledge, and indirectly on other aspects of the organization.
35. It is important to specify, measure, and audit how we make and spread knowledge in organizations
36. It is important to learn how to classify KM activity so we can better describe KM interventions.
37. The new KM is about measuring KM benefits on scales that allow us to compare monetary and non-monetary benefit.
38. The new KM is about a methodology called K-STREAM™ for implementing KM projects and programs.
39. The new KM is about creating sustainable innovation.

40. The new KM has a normative vision called the Open Enterprise. It requires allowing all to participate in: recognizing and formulating problems; arriving at new ideas to solve these problems; and criticizing, testing, and evaluating competing ideas about how to solve problems. It also requires honesty in reporting problems, new ideas, and criticisms and openness in making these reports accessible.

41. The OE is the form of organization most likely to maximize sustainable innovation and minimize risk.

42. In the IT sphere, (the new) KM needs applications that will support the Open Enterprise by providing fair comparison of competing knowledge claims and other key aspects of openness in recognizing and formulating problems, coming up with new ideas to solve them, and tracking the performance of these ideas in the face of testing, evaluation, and criticism. One such application is the Enterprise Knowledge Portal (EKP)

43. Finally, TNKM is about formulating and implementing policies that will create the OE by reinforcing the tendency of individuals to self-organize around recognizing and formulating problems, creating new ideas, and testing and evaluating them against each other and older ideas. This method is called the Policy Synchronization Method (PSM) because it calls for policies that reinforce what people are naturally doing to solve problems rather than imposing new patterns of behavior on them."

And Mark followed with an additional principle on the OE before I posted items 40-43 with our posts crossing in the mail..

"40. The new KM is about creating 'Open Enterprises' whose knowledge production and integration systems are transparent to, and inclusive of, their stakeholders, and whose openness enhances their capacity to learn, adapt, innovate, solve problems, be accountable, and perform to the best of their ability."

Dave, I think these principles provide a very different orientation than your own in some ways while approaching closely in others. One thing is clear though, TNKM, is not focused on social networking analysis and improved Personal Content Management, even though we would certainly agree that these would come into play in important ways in getting to the Open Enterprise.

Regards, Joe

Date: Thu Mar 18, 2004 8:41 am

Subject: PCM/SN: KM Principles - General vs. Guiding - Peter West

From: Peter West

Subject: PCM/SN: KM Principles - General vs. Guiding

Dave, Joe and Fellow AOKers:

In response to "(Dave) Pollard's Principles of Knowledge Management," Joe provides 43 "points" related to The New Knowledge Management (TNKM).

It may be helpful to distinguish between "general" and "guiding" principles.

* General Principles - These tend to be domain-specific and significant in number. I would expect that we could establish an extensive list of general principles that apply to KM - another intellectually interesting exercise that some may wish to pursue (and build upon the work of many others).

* Guiding Principles - These tend to be context-specific and limited in number. In the paragraph that precedes the list KM principles, Dave (Pollard) describes them as the "principles underlying my belief that Personal Content Management (PCM) and Social Networking [SN] applications are critical to the survival of KM ..." For added clarity, Dave might have used a more specific title (e.g., Guiding Principles for PCM/SK-based KM).

Best regards, Peter

Date: Thu Mar 18, 2004 12:05 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: re. Pollard's Principles and TNKM - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: Pollard's Principles and TNKM - Joe Firestone

Joe said -- a *lot* -- including:

- > Mark and I think that the value propositions of KM are:
- > -- Enhances ability to satisfy demands for new knowledge
- > -- Enhances rate and quality of organizational learning and innovation
- > (sustainably so), and
- > -- Enhances organizational capacity to adapt
- > -- Enhances corporate governance by elevating Knowledge Processing
- > to the level of a fiduciary issue
- > The difference between our value propositions and yours are very striking.

Yes, they are. My experience at E&Y (and others in leading knowledge organizations have told me their experience has been similar) is that your KM value propositions, which were also E&Y's for many years, simply have not been realized, despite the efforts of a lot of bright minds and the expenditure of millions of dollars. And it's not just a matter of not being able to measure this 'value' -- users tell us bluntly that KM has not delivered on any of these promises, and they're not convinced it can or will.

- > If we don't know what knowledge work is, how can we know if we are
- > improving knowledge worker
- > effectiveness?

If the user, i.e. the knowledge worker's 'internal customer' says that the knowledge worker is doing great work, then to me the argument about whether it qualifies as 'knowledge work' is not terribly important.

Joe, I also read through your (and Mark's) list of principles, and find them sensible and comprehensive. I don't sense any fundamental disagreement with what I'm saying, but rather a different way of articulating it. Do you see a different agenda for action coming out of these principles than what I've proposed?

Date: Thu Mar 18, 2004 1:02 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Social Network Enablement and The Future of KM - Joe Firestone

From: Joe Firestone

Subject: "Social Networking, Social Software And The Future Of Knowledge Management"

Dave,

In your blog on "Social Networking, Social Software And The Future Of Knowledge Management" you said:

"In most organizations KM is epitomized by the corporate intranet, the extranet, community-of-practice tools, sales force automation tools, customer relationship management tools, data mining tools, decision support tools, databases purchased from outside vendors, and sometimes business research and analysis. In other words, it's certain specialized technologies and information processing roles, with a thin wrapper of 'knowledge creating' and 'knowledge-sharing' processes.

Most of the organizations that have implemented KM bemoan their people's inability to find stuff, the lack of demonstrable productivity improvement, the complexity of the technology, and the absence of significant reusable 'best practice' content."

I agree with this characterization, except that I would replace the word "epitomized" with the phrase "perceived as epitomized". The difference is that whatever the perception may be, these tools are not KM tools, either singly or in combination. And their identification as KM tools has been due to a failure among KM practitioners to clearly specify the key concepts and scope of our discipline and its precise relationship to various tools and techniques associated with it, by those who seek the "halo effect" of KM.

Some of us have been warning for at least 5 years now, that continued failure to carefully specify the central concepts and scope of KM as a discipline would lead to its discredit due to just the sort of misperception you've described. But throughout this period, "practical" people have contended that theory wasn't necessary and that what we should

be doing is to get on with the use of the “practical” techniques and tools of KM, without bothering to consider whether they are, in fact, KM tools and techniques at all.

Again, I disagree with the view that you expressed in another of your blogs advising people not to worry about what they mean by “knowledge” and “KM”, but to be concerned only with the impact of their interventions on the effectiveness of knowledge workers. It is exactly this sort of view that has led “practical” people to identify the above tools and techniques with KM, and to bring KM into disrepute due to people's association of it with the results of interventions using them. KM should be associated with the performance of policy and program interventions that reflect a careful conceptualization of what it is and what kinds of interventions it really involves. It should not be associated with interventions that use the latest “flavor of the month” IT fad in thoughtless ways, while labeling such interventions KM.

You then said:

Now along comes Social Networking and Social Software, also with its adherents from academia, consultancies, and IT. Beneath the torrent of hype and theory, it may reveal an important truth about KM, business, and how we learn: Social networks can provide the essential context needed to make knowledge sharing possible, valuable, efficient and effective.

What are 'social networks'? They are the circles in which we make a living and connect with other people. . . . If we were to 'reinvent' KM as, say, Social Network Enablement , what would change?”

I believe in the importance of social networks and social software. The foundation of much of KMCI thinking on KM is a complex adaptive systems framework that emphasizes the transactional and social networking character of the organizational system. We believe that its is in the context of such networks that organizational behavioral processes, including the knowledge processes of knowledge production and integration (including knowledge sharing), arise. In addition I also agree with you that “Social networks can provide the essential context needed to make knowledge sharing possible, valuable, efficient and effective.”

In spite of my agreement on these two points however, I don't agree that KM should be “re-invented” as “Social Network Enablement”. I'll explain the reasons why I think your suggestion goes too far below, beginning with a consideration of your analysis of what would change. You say:

“Intranet as connector and link harvester: The intranet would become a people-to-people connector instead of a content repository. It would become a 'link harvester', scanning all traffic across it and dynamically identifying connections to people and their knowledge. New tools would be needed to allow such functionality.”

This change is certainly positive, and when someone has a problem, it is useful for acquiring information, to be able to identify the people who are propagating knowledge claims and who be able to provide you with other valuable knowledge claims if you make contact with them. [But upgrading our ability to acquire information is only a first step in generating new knowledge and solving problems. Furthermore to be really useful for making new knowledge, our knowledge claim “harvesters” need to go beyond merely identifying connections to people. They also need to harvest the knowledge claims and meta-claims about their performance that are associated with the people and their previous activities.](#) Without being able to access the content of knowledge claims and the record associated with their continued use we don't have what we need for good Knowledge Claim Evaluation, and without good Knowledge Claim Evaluation we cannot have effective KM. In my book, *Enterprise Information Portals and Knowledge Management (EIPKM)*, KMCI Press/Butterworth-Heinemann, 2003, I've outlined the requirements and architecture for the Enterprise Knowledge Portal (See, Chapters, 5,6, 10 - 11, and 13), an IT application that would provide the sort of “intranet” functionality needed. You say next:

“Decentralized content, with blog as surrogate for the individual: Content would shift from centralized, shared databases to personally- or team-owned databases, journals and stories, where the owner(s) provide essential context. (See my post on [The Weblog as Filing Cabinet](#)). Each individual's subscribable, personally- indexed Weblog would be a surrogate for the individual when s/he's not available personally.”

Again, while you're on the right track here, [blogs are too low in functionality to fit the requirements of KM.](#) The kind of surrogate we need to support knowledge production and knowledge integration is an “avatar”, an intelligent agent representing the individual to the organization. The avatar would not only maintain the individual's sharable content, but would also maintain cognitive map representations of the knowledge claim networks expressed by the each of us. The knowledge claim networks would also record the metaclaims about the knowledge claim networks that we had expressed in previous work. It goes without saying too much, I hope, that the content maintained by the avatar would provide all of the context for knowledge claims we could possibly ask for.

Avatars would not only represent individuals to their social networks, they would also be in constant communication with those networks. Their analytical functions, combined with those of other avatars and with widely distributed Artificial Knowledge Managers in the organization, would analyze and produce models of the patterns of knowledge claim networks and meta-claims of teams, groups, communities, and the organization. The results of these analyses would be available to every avatar and every individual to provide context for their own decision making, which in the end would be based on their own cognitive maps and values and their interpretations of their organizational roles and obligations. Again, I've described the requirements and architectural considerations for such avatars in my *EIPKM* book (Chs. 6, 10-11, and 13).

Avatars would also provide the ultimate functionality, for “having it your way”, as you've advocated in another blog. That is, the individual's own cognitive map, always

maintained and updated by the avatar could be used as the navigational interface for the individual. What the avatar represents, of course, could be immediately edited by the individual, if he/she thinks the avatar is mistaken in its representation.

You then said:

“Decentralized security, organizational boundaries blurred: Organizational boundaries become irrelevant. It doesn't matter whether the person you are sharing with is a work colleague, a supplier, customer, friend or advisor, an individual or a team, inside or outside the company. You share what you know with those you trust, the same way regardless. Security would be provided at the individual level, not managed by the enterprise. The same way employees know what hard-copy documents can be shared with whom, they set up subscription access to their blog categories correspondingly.”

I very much agree here and also think that such security capabilities are envisioned in my EKP construct (see chapters 10-11 of EIPKM).

“Greatly enhanced weblog functionality, emphasis on access: Today's blogs are not nearly enough to fully enable social networks. They need much more connectivity functionality. A user should be able to call up a visual of their own network, or the network of expertise corresponding to a particular subject. The tool that does this would operate much like a search engine except it would retrieve people (and links to people) instead of documents. It would also have to aggregate various means of access to those people: e-mail, voice-mail, video and whiteboard, meeting scheduling, IM, weblog subscriptions and commenting, and new means of access just being developed. And it would need some mechanism to create a 'biography' of the user by automatically summarizing the total content of their weblog.”

I agree as far as you go. But, as I've indicated above, I think we need to go further. The visuals must be of knowledge claim and meta-claim networks, which, of course would include social networks, workflow networks, and any other knowledge claim networks expressed in the organization in question.

“Enhanced organizational change functionality: The exhaust from the increased connectivity could be browsed and canvassed to identify organizational change opportunities. Popularity indexes could pre-sage emerging business issues needing management attention, and could be used as a key part of the performance evaluation and reward process, and to identify de facto organizational thought leaders and potential strong recruits. It could incorporate Tipping Point functionality to propagate important ideas, Power Law analysis to identify and spell employees suffering from 'network overload', and perhaps even new "Network Traffic Analyses" to identify communication logjams and disconnects. Intriguing, and perhaps a bit scary.”

All useful, but again, not enough, and not enough precisely because it doesn't deal with knowledge claim networks and their associated meta-claims explicitly. Especially, in this last change, you are not talking about KM but offering a hypothesis about the anticipated

effect of social networking enablement, completely apart from its effects on knowledge processing.

In contrast to your spec for SNE software, the EKP construct I've specified in my book is Social Network Enablement Software Plus. That is, the "Plus" includes support for all of the areas of Knowledge Processing specified in the KLC framework, including and especially Knowledge Claim Evaluation. In addition it supports the main activities of KM identified in our KM Framework as well. So my contention is that KM needs Social Network Enablement Software Plus. And that an important part of the Future of KM will be the development of a real EKP, rather than the EIP applications that have misappropriated that label today; or, alternatively, the same application using another name such as a Distributed Knowledge Management System (DKMS), or a Knowledge Base Management System, or an Artificial Knowledge Management System. The name is ultimately not important, but the functionality for supporting problem formulation, knowledge production, knowledge integration, Knowledge Management and knowledge use, is.

You then went on:

“Four important unanswered questions: 1. What role can Social Network Enablement and social software play in enhancing individual and organizational learning?”

Social network enablement and social software can provide a stronger foundation for more intensive and connected social interactions. However, this may not have a uniformly beneficial effect on knowledge processing and its outcomes. Much depends on the underlying social psychological preconditions in the organization receiving such software. If mistrust and division, are present to begin with, SNE software may produce greater integration within conflicting groups and factions and may lead to an increase in inter-group conflict within an organization. Moreover, it is not clear what impact either decreased or increased conflict would have on knowledge processing. Much would depend on the initial state of conflict in an organization and the context of the SNE intervention. I think one thing is fairly certain, however, the impact of SNE and social software on knowledge processing will be beneficial in some respects and harmful in others, and it will be one of the concerns of Knowledge managers to track the impact.

" 2. How do you measure and reward contributions to a network (a) by full-time knowledge workers (people in the organization, like researchers and help desk staff whose sole value is contributing to the network) and (b) by network 'players' outside the organization?"

This is an interesting question, but it is not clear that it is a KM question. Isn't it a Social Network Management (SNM) question? Also, the question implies the desirability of introducing a formal incentive system to “reward contributions” to a social network. But this assumes that it is desirable to reinforce participation in the network beyond the reinforcement provided by participation itself. This may be unwise, because it involves a managerial imposition of a perceived desirable outcome on the network. Enabling the

network with software is one thing; manipulating the incentives to participate in it is another. If we want to take advantage of natural tendencies to self-organize, we should avoid the second.

"3. How do organizations equip and foster networks without unduly controlling their actions and membership and therefore crushing them?"

Very carefully. And the real question is how do Managers, Knowledge and otherwise, equip and foster networks without impairing the organization's ability to adapt and remake itself by incenting or imposing behavior that the organization taken as a pattern would not incent? I think the answer to this question, is that managers should equip and foster networks, and then do whatever else is necessary to enable people to use them. After that, managers must trust to people themselves to use their social networking tools to do their jobs including solving the problems that occur in the course of doing them.

"4. How do we capture summaries and abstracts of organizational conversations that occur in other than written form (voice-mail, teleconferences and meetings), so that the blog record of networks is complete?"

We wait for the technology that makes it convenient to do this. Until then, we do what we can with what is in the written record.

Of these four unanswered questions, only the first of them relates to either knowledge processing, or KM directly. I think this illustrates where too great a focus on Social Network Enablement and Social Software will take us, namely away from KM and into Social Network Management. One of the continuing problems is KM is that of "Conceptual drift". Since the foundations of KM as a discipline are relatively undefined and we are in disagreement over what we mean by Knowledge, KM, and the distinctions between Data Management, and Information management and KM, as well as distinctions among a number of other basic concepts, we find ourselves subject, from time-to-time, to claims that KM "really is", or should be "reinvented as": (take your choice): Quality Management, CRM, Data Warehousing, Organizational Learning, Collaboration Management, Library Management, Information Management, Human Resource Management, Communities of Practice, and now Social Network Enablement. I think such advice is incorrect, and, thus far, at least, always based on a very superficial account of the nature of KM. In fact, it is because those who offer such proposals do so without a careful analysis of "knowledge" and "Knowledge Management" that their ideas often initially seem plausible.

Even though I don't agree with your suggestion that we should re-invent KM, I do think that Social Network Analysis is important for KM, and Social Network Enablement and Social Software are important trends that we should incorporate into KM interventions as appropriate and necessary. But as with every other KM intervention alternative, tool, or technique, both before and after we undertake projects that use SNE, we should try to assess what the impact of our intervention will be or has been, as the case may be. And to do this, what we really need, on an urgent basis, is a better network of concepts,

indicators, and metrics that will allow us to talk more precisely about the direct impact of our interventions on knowledge processing and Knowledge Management, as well as their indirect impact on other organizational outcomes, for which better metrics may already exist.

I'll end by saying that I hope you don't consider this or other posts I've offered in this AOK session as hostile to you or your work. Actually, I'm very favorable to Social Network Analysis as a perspective and I think you've done a great job with your blogs and the contributions you've made here. I've offered my posts, because in many respects, my views are different from yours and both of us may benefit by exchanging communications on these differences. I've tried not to use any ad hominem or unsupported assertions in what I've written, in hopes that you would see this in the way I intend it, as an attempt at discussion.

Best,

Joe

Date: Fri Mar 19, 2004 12:45 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. Social Network Enablement and The Future of KM - Dave

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: Social Network Enablement and The Future of KM - Joe Firestone

Joe said:

> Some of us have been warning for at least 5 years now, that continued
> failure to carefully specify the central concepts and scope of KM as a
> discipline would lead to its discredit due to just the sort of
> misperception you've described. But throughout this period, "practical"
> people have contended that theory wasn't necessary and that what we
> should be doing is to get on with the use of the "practical" techniques
> and tools of KM, without bothering to consider whether they are, in
> fact, KM tools and techniques at all.
>

I think that's a fair statement, and [you're probably right that in our endeavor to get something done, we've been too enamoured of tools and haven't really looked deeply at what's important in KM and how it can best be accomplished.](#) Part of the reason for that, I think, is that the deep opportunities in KM in each organization are somewhat unique, and understanding them and then achieving the organizational and behavioural changes needed to implement them are extremely difficult.

In my case, for example, I found that what was needed in E&Y in Canada was very different from what was needed in E&Y in the US. There was absolutely no executive tolerance for different KM 'solution sets' in different member firms of E&Y, for political

and cultural reasons. So we get either 'practical' or 'lazy' and fall back on tools. One of the lessons I was taught in Consulting 101 is that tools are sometimes more effective ways of bringing about process change, and through that, culture/behaviour change, than trying to change behaviour through less coercive means like training. So why I don't apologize for my interest in next-gen Social Networking & PCM tools as an 'enabler' for KM, I would agree with you both that this 'isn't enough' and that the current crop of tools, blogs included, are still way too crude to get the job done.

> Joe also said:

- > This [how do you measure and reward contributions to a network] is an interesting question, but it is not clear that it is a KM
- > question... The
- > question implies the desirability of introducing a formal incentive
- > system to “reward contributions” to a social network. But this assumes
- > that it is desirable to reinforce participation in the network beyond
- > the reinforcement provided by participation itself. This may be unwise,
- > because it involves a managerial imposition of a perceived desirable
- > outcome on the network. Enabling the network with software is one thing;
- > manipulating the incentives to participate in it is another. If we want
- > to take advantage of natural tendencies to self-organize, we should
- > avoid the second.

In theory this is right. In practice, however, you need some mechanism to measure and assess the 'value' that the network is providing to its members, and to intervene in cases where it is not providing the value you (management) thinks it should. [I'd like to believe in the utopian ideal of communities of practice as purely self-organized, self-managed systems that will 'look after themselves', but my experience has been that they don't](#) (again for political and cultural reasons that differ in each organization). Management needs to promote, facilitate, encourage, prod, galvanize actions in *real* CoPs, and in order to decide what actions are needed to make a CoP work better, it needs to measure its value, effectiveness, and level of current use. That's why I posed the 'practical' question 'how do we measure and reward', though 'encourage' might have been a better word than 'reward'.

Date: Fri Mar 19, 2004 7:56 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. Social Network Enablement and The Future of KM - Joe

From: Joe Firestone

Subject: Exchange on SNE

Dave,

You said:

One of the lessons I was taught in Consulting 101 is that tools are sometimes more effective ways of bringing about process change, and through that, culture/behaviour

change, than trying to change behaviour through less coercive means like training. So why I don't apologize for my interest in next-gen Social Networking & PCM tools as an 'enabler' for KM, I would agree with you both that this 'isn't enough' and that the current crop of tools, blogs included, are still way too crude to get the job done.

Please don't apologize for your interest in SNE and PCM. I think both are important for upgrading the quality of interaction in organizations in general., so the last thing I would want to see is a decline in interest in these areas and the tools associated with them. My point is simply, that they're not specifically KM tools, but have more general significance as a foundation for process improvement.

> Joe also said:

- > This [how do you measure and reward contributions to a network] is an interesting question, but it is not clear that it is a KM
- > question... The
- > question implies the desirability of introducing a formal incentive
- > system to 3reward contributions2 to a social network. But this assumes
- > that it is desirable to reinforce participation in the network beyond
- > the reinforcement provided by participation itself. This may be unwise,
- > because it involves a managerial imposition of a perceived desirable
- > outcome on the network. Enabling the network with software is one thing;
- > manipulating the incentives to participate in it is another. If we want
- > to take advantage of natural tendencies to self-organize, we should
- > avoid the second.

In theory this is right. In practice, however, you need some mechanism to measure and assess the 'value' that the network is providing to its members, and to intervene in cases where it is not providing the value you (management) thinks it should.

Dave, the SNE and PCM tools should help people to better perform their everyday work and to do so through higher quality interaction with others in and outside of their organization. If it does that, then organizations already provide performance incentives that should be enough to motivate using the tools. If it doesn't, then I don't think you don't want them using the tools because you've providing a tool-using incentive over and above their other incentives, do you?

I'd like to believe in the utopian ideal of communities of practice as purely self-organized, self-managed systems that will 'look after themselves', but my experience has been that they don't (again for political and cultural reasons that differ in each organization).

I don't think I mentioned CoPs in my statement. [I agree that CoPs may not self-organize, self-manage and "look after themselves". But if they don', why should managers provide incentives to make this happen?](#) Either the CoPs that are enabled by SNE and collaborative tools prove valuable to people when they try them out or they don't. Should we provide incentives for people to participate in CoPs that are not valuable to them?

Management needs to promote, facilitate, encourage, prod, galvanize actions in *real* CoPs, and in order to decide what actions are needed to make a CoP work better, it needs to measure its value, effectiveness, and level of current use. That's why I posed the 'practical' question 'how do we measure and reward', though 'encourage' might have been a better word than 'reward'.

I can agree with promote, if promotion is restricted to educating about the CoPs and tools for participation in them. I can also agree with facilitate. But I think I stop somewhere in "encourage" and am definitely opposed to "prodding" and "galvanizing" as counter-productive. As far as measuring is concerned, I'm all for that. I think we need to know as much as can about the impact of our KM interventions.

Best, Joe

Date: Fri Mar 19, 2004 8:01 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: re. KM Value Propositions etc. - Joe Firestone

From: Joe Firestone

Subject: KM value propositions and related matters

Dave,

In response to my statement:

- > Mark and I think that the value propositions of KM are:
- >
- > -- Enhances ability to satisfy demands for new knowledge
- > -- Enhances rate and quality of organizational learning and innovation
- > (sustainably so), and
- > -- Enhances organizational capacity to adapt
- > -- Enhances corporate governance by elevating Knowledge Processing
- > to the level of a fiduciary issue
- >
- > The difference between our value propositions and yours are very striking.

You said:

Yes, they are. My experience at E&Y (and others in leading knowledge organizations have told me their experience has been similar) is that your KM value propositions, which were also E&Y's for many years, simply have not been realized, despite the efforts of a lot of bright minds and the expenditure of millions of dollars. And it's not just a matter of not being able to measure this 'value' -- users tell us bluntly that KM has not delivered on any of these promises, and they're not convinced it can or will.

Dave, I'm afraid this is going to get us back into the importance of conceptualization and measurement again. My view is that the millions that have been spent on KM have not been spent on it, but rather on Information Management. This has occurred because our "best and brightest" believed that they could do KM and have a positive impact on Knowledge Sharing without being very clear about the nature of either "knowledge" or "Knowledge Management" and how they are different from information, information management, quality management, content management, collaborative management, etc.

"Let's not worry about it, they said. No one in the last 2500 years has been able to solve the problems of epistemology, so let's not discuss them. Let's get away from theory. Let's be 'practical' and just take all of these new tools and techniques and call them KM and see if they work". But the consequence of this attitude is that:

(1) we're not very clear on when something we're doing is KM in contrast with knowledge processing, or information management, or information processing, or collaborative management, or content management, or many other kinds of management, or just good ole business activity, so how can we (or our users for that matter) tell whether "KM" has had any impact?

(2) we're not very clear about whether we're sharing "information" or "knowledge", so:

(a) how can we tell whether our knowledge sharing programs are successful? (b) how can we tell whether or not our lack of success is due to our sharing falsehoods (poor practices) and representing them as knowledge (best practices)?, and

(3) we're not very clear about how we measure the impact of Km, so how can we tell whether it, in the presence of competing activities has a positive or negative impact. Let's say, for example, that KM has had a positive impact during a particular time period, but an ERP intervention had a negative impact, if we're not even sure what KM is, how can we disentangle those two. And, if the same enterprise is fooling with KM, ERP, Data Warehousing, CRM, Quality Management, and God knows what else, all in the same time period, and we're not even sure what KM is how can we possibly say anything about its impact.

In another current post, you named a number of tools that you said "epitomized" KM in organizations today. And, of course if those were really KM tools I'd agree that projects using them would certainly not deliver the value propositions I listed, and I'd say let's reinvent KM as something else because it's just not working. But, that's just the point, I think that's the old KM, not the New KM.

I think the New KM is different because it does offer clear notions of "knowledge" and KM, can distinguish between KM and other forms of management, can distinguish knowledge from information, has a clear conceptual idea of what KM impact is, is developing metrics, is developing project and program methodology, does know the difference between IT applications that support key knowledge and KM processes and those that don't, and has a normative vision to fulfil KM's value propositions. So my

intention is not to persuade people to replace KM with something else, but rather to persuade them that experience with KM has taught us a few things about the foundations of our field and now we're ready to come back with different ideas, different tools, different techniques, and much better results. People may or may not accept this view but win or lose, we will doing KM, and not Social Network Enablement.

- > If we don't know what knowledge work is, how can we know if we are
- > improving knowledge worker
- > effectiveness?

If the user, i.e. the knowledge worker's 'internal customer' says that the knowledge worker is doing great work, then to me the argument about whether it qualifies as 'knowledge work' is not terribly important.

Dave, your statement of the KM value proposition implies that the distinction is important. If so, then my question holds as stated. If not then you won't mind me restating your value proposition as: "improving worker effectiveness". Stated this way, it's very clear that this value proposition is not related to Knowledge Management, but to Management, more generally, and you and I are not talking about KM anymore at all, so we have no disagreement..

Joe, I also read through your (and Mark's) list of principles, and find them sensible and comprehensive. I don't sense any fundamental disagreement with what I'm saying, but rather a different way of articulating it. Do you see a different agenda for action coming out of these principles than what I've proposed?

I do see many commonalities in our concerns, including a concern about openness, and enabling effective bottom organization in the enterprise. But I don't see an emphasis on our version of the Open Enterprise coming out of your principles, or an emphasis on fair comparison in Knowledge Claim Evaluation, or a strong emphasis on metrics, or an emphasis on knowledge process audits, or an emphasis on Boards of Directors viewing Knowledge Processing, KM, and Risk Mngement as fiduciary areas that they must supervise directly.

Best, Joe

Date: Thu Mar 18, 2004 12:39 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Response to Dave re: Meddling (and to Mark and Joe) - Brian
From: Brian Sarrazin.

Subject: Response to Dave re: Meddling (and to Mark and Joe)

Brian Sarrazin said:

- > The two further questions:
- > 1. Better Conversations
- > An expert must immerse and fully appreciate a new situation,
- > or conversely, a user must understand expert knowledge in all
- > its nuance.

Dave Pollard said:

- > This is an interesting and profound statement. You're almost
- > suggesting that conversations have implicit 'contractual agreements'
- > behind them, with commensurate responsibilities for both the 'buyer'
- > and 'seller' of expertise. Brings a whole new meaning to 'caveat
- > emptor'.

Dave,

I'm not saying *shift* the risk. Rather, I'm saying let the buyer be *aware.* Eliminate the risk. The essence of a contract is agreement on terms, a "meeting of the minds." Through conversational give-and- take -- "Do you mean?" "What I'm saying is..." -- we get closer, but it requires us to use terms we may or may not agree upon. For example, when you look at the sky you call what you see blue (unless you live in Ann Arbor) as do I, but we can't know that we are seeing the same thing. We seek to understand terms using terms!

I do not think we should look for KM solutions in narrative (Spaulding Gray) but in reality shows (Donald Trump?). That is, let users *see* experts (or anyone) make decisions, with a running commentary (like surgery at Med School). Referents then gain meaning through linkage to events and to things.

Also, I think Mark is correct in his true/false concerns. To the extent that narrative offers drama (making the dry more interesting, Christy) it becomes Cable News, unduly influencing, and thereby not knowledge, but *persuasion.*

And to rebut, concept maps may be as simple or as complex as needed. Granted, "best practices" in K-12 lack shared syntax, but the journey has begun. And I believe we either learn how to use concept maps now, or our grandkids will teach us.

Comments on more recent posts: 1. Blogs are yet another linear stream of information. They are like topics in a discussion forum, new thoughts after old. Comments help, but they could only ever raise blogs to the level of conversation, which I've argued (weakly, I admit) is ineffective for conveying knowledge and only slightly better for conveying information. The interesting part is *between* blogs, using RSS/XML and Trackback. Sound arguments have been made that blog entry networks can/will (do?) reflect knowledge. The problem of time-to-absorb will limit any value.

2. Joe and Mark offer a list of over 40 points to illustrate "The New KM." I'd like to offer some feedback: (A) The issue is not "how things are" but how they *will be,* usually in the very next instant. This is a most important distinction. Knowledge is: that power over

the future which derives from information. It has degree, that is, there is no such thing as perfect knowledge. Knowledge has two types: predictive power and power-over, such as muscular knowledge. (B) Therefore, I see no value in the following distinction, even if it were true: "29. The difference between knowledge and information is not that one is mental and the other cultural or physical, but that one (information) has not survived testing and evaluation, while the other (knowledge), has." (C) Apologies, but I find your list painful to read. Perhaps there's an audience for statements like, "15. Boards of Directors should not let managers make knowledge only by themselves," but I would argue it ain't Boards of Directors.

Brian

Date: Fri Mar 19, 2004 6:06 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Brian's Comments on Principles - Joe Firestone

From: Joe Firestone

Subject: Comments on principles

Hi Brian,

You said:

2. Joe and Mark offer a list of over 40 points to illustrate "The New KM." I'd like to offer some feedback: (A) The issue is not "how things are" but how they *will be,* usually in the very next instant.

A little qualification: how things are: is meant to include our predictive statements as well.

This is a most important distinction. Knowledge is: that power over the future which derives from information. It has degree, that is, there is no such thing as perfect knowledge. Knowledge has two types: predictive power and power-over, such as "muscular knowledge",

Please clarify. is there any power over the future if the knowledge is false? Do you agree knowledge can be false? You say knowledge has degree and there is no perfect knowledge. Does that mean that you think that knowledg can't be true? Please clarify your last sentence in much more detail. What do you mean by "muscular knowledge" and why do you say that is not predictive?.

(B) Therefore, I see no value in the following distinction, even if it were true: "29. The difference between knowledge and information is not that one is mental and the other cultural or physical, but that one (information) has not survived testing and evaluation, while the other (knowledge), has."

I'm not sure it's useful for me to respond until I understand better what you mean by "knowledge", but what I've said above is that **our beliefs and statements shouldn't be called knowledge unless they've passed our tests and evaluations**. What's your objection to that? Even if you believe that knowledge is about prediction only, you should be willing to agree with what I've said. It's just that all your tests of beliefs and knowledge claims would relate to whether they've predicted accurately.

(C) Apologies, but I find your list painful to read. Perhaps there's an audience for statements like, "15. Boards of Directors should not let managers make knowledge only by themselves," but I would argue it ain't Boards of Directors.

I'll leave this one to Mark.

Regards, Joe

Date: Fri Mar 19, 2004 12:41 pm

Subject: **PCM/SN: Knowledge/T or F?: U.S. Minorities Will Triple?**

From: **Brian Sarrazin**

Subject: True or False: U.S. Minorities will triple in 50 years?

Brian said: Knowledge is: that power over the future which derives from information. It has degree, that is, there is no such thing as perfect knowledge. Knowledge has two types: predictive power and power-over, such as "muscular knowledge",

Joe said: Please clarify. is there any power over the future if the knowledge is false? Do you agree knowledge can be false? You say knowledge has degree and there is no perfect knowledge. Does that mean that you think that knowledge can't be true? Please clarify your last sentence in much more detail. What do you mean by "muscular knowledge" and why do you say that is not predictive?.

Joe,

I find it helpful to consider knowledge a probability curve. Sometimes its value is zero and sometimes one, but generally a true/false dichotomy is simplistic and it is almost *always* misleading -- but then, so is a p-curve approach. Knowledge derives from information, which addresses the past, which is where true/false more rightly applies. But all too often, the information we value is of the point-in-time variety. I believe we should emphasize process information, but that we don't because we don't know how.

Did you see yesterday's Census Bureau news? Here's their press release headline:

Census Bureau Projects Tripling of Hispanic and Asian Populations in 50 Years; Non-Hispanic Whites May Drop To Half of Total Population

How does that strike you?

Incidentally, where did I say muscular knowledge "is not predictive"? Predictive power is when your knowledge does not imbed in a present process, power-over is when it does.

Brian

Date: Sat Mar 20, 2004 8:05 pm

Subject: FW: [AOK_K-Net] PCM/SN: Knowledge/T or F?: U.S. Minorities Will Triple?

From: Joe Firestone

Subject: Re: Knowledge/T or F?: U.S. Minorities Will Triple?

From: Joe Firestone

Subject: More exchanging about "knowledge"

Brian said: Knowledge is: that power over the future which derives from information. It has degree, that is, there is no such thing as perfect knowledge. Knowledge has two types: predictive power and power-over, such as "muscular knowledge",

Joe's R1: Please clarify. is there any power over the future if the knowledge is false? Do you agree knowledge can be false? You say knowledge has degree and there is no perfect knowledge. Does that mean that you think that knowledg can't be true? Please clarify your last sentence in much more detail. What do you mean by "muscular knowledge" and why do you say that is not predictive?.

Brian's R1: I find it helpful to consider knowledge a probability curve.

Joe's R2: "Knowledge is a probability curve" is a knowledge claim. is that statement a probability curve? If it were a conscious belief in your mind would it be a probability curve?

Brian's R1: Sometimes its value is zero and sometimes one, but generally a true/false dichotomy is simplistic and it is almost **always** misleading -- but then, so is a p-curve approach.

Joe's R2: Consider the statement "knowledge is a probability curve" again. When is its value zero and when is its value one, and when is its value somewhere between zero and one?

Brian's R1: Knowledge derives from information,

Joe's R2: What do you mean by this statement?

Brian's R1: which addresses the past, which is where true/false more rightly applies.

Joe's R2: Do universal generalizations address the past, the present, or the future?

Brian's R1: But all too often, the information we value is of the point-in-time variety. I believe we should emphasize process information, but that we don't because we don't know how.

Joe's R2: Please provide an example of process information as distinct from non-process information..

Brian's R1: Did you see yesterday's Census Bureau news? Here's their press release headline:

Census Bureau Projects Tripling of Hispanic and Asian Populations in 50 Years;
Non-Hispanic Whites May Drop To Half of Total Population

How does that strike you?

Joe's R2: It strikes me as a conditional projection based on a statistical generalization that will be saved from falsity because it is carefully qualified as is the habit and procedure of the US Census Bureau. Is it knowledge? It's the Census Bureau's knowledge. But from my point of view it is a knowledge claim. that is further from the truth than competing knowledge claims that might be developed using the Bureau's resources if they were only open to alternative methodologies.

Brian's R1: Incidentally, where did I say muscular knowledge "is not predictive"? Predictive power is when your knowledge does not imbed in a present process, power-over is when it does.

Joe's R2: Sorry, since you said that one type was predictive and the other type was "power-over" I naturally assumed that your power over category was not predictive. I think you're saying that all knowledge is predictive, but that some knowledge can be used to make predictions that require human actions to be brought about, while other knowledge can be used to make predictions which are conditional on circumstances that are beyond human control. Is that right?

Joe

Date: Sat Mar 20, 2004 8:13 pm
Subject: PCM/SN: Knowledge Oligarchies - Mark McElroy
From: Mark McElroy
Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 349

All:

Brian and Joe wrote as follows:

- > (C) Apologies, but I find your list painful to read. Perhaps there's
- > an audience for statements like, "15. Boards of Directors should not
- > let managers make knowledge only by themselves," but I would argue it
- > ain't Boards of Directors.
- > > I'll leave this one to Mark.
- > > Regards,
- > Joe

The significance of the statement quoted above is [that a fiduciary duty arguably exists among those charged with the governance of an organization to see to it that the quality of knowledge practiced in their system is the best it can be](#). In publicly traded companies, the governance function is the Board of Directors. Not sure why Brian would disagree with that -- perhaps he'll tell us.

The problem is that (a) most boards recognize no such fiduciary duty re: knowledge and therefore fail to carry it out, and (b) most organizational knowledge is produced only by managers with little to no opportunity for others to either participate in its production or critique it -- without inviting risk of retribution or charges of 'insubordination,' that is. Thus, most organizations are practicing knowledge oligarchies, whose oligarchs often go unchecked, and whose mass of workers are largely disenfranchised from the knowledge production process to the great disadvantage of their stakeholders.

Regards,

Mark

Date: Mon Mar 22, 2004 11:55 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. Knowledge Oligarchies - Brian Sarrazin

From: Brian Sarrazin

Subject: Re: PCM/SN: Knowledge Oligarchies - Mark McElroy

Mark said:

- > The problem is that (a) most boards recognize no such fiduciary duty re:
- > knowledge and therefore fail to carry it out, and (b) most organizational
- > knowledge is produced only by managers with little to no opportunity for
- > others to either participate in its production or critique it -- without
- > inviting risk of retribution or charges of 'insubordination,' that is.

Mark,

Ah, here's the source of our disconnect. [You have a rather dark view of public companies, or perhaps I'm optimistic](#). Do you have or know of data to support this?

Brian

Date: Tue Mar 23, 2004 10:06 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Some Examples of Bad KM - Mark McElroy

From: Mark W. McElroy

Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 352

Brian:

You wrote:

"Ah, here's the source of our disconnect. You have a rather dark view of public companies, or perhaps I'm optimistic. Do you have or know of data to support this?"

Sure. Enron, Worldcom, Martha Stewart, Adelphia, Tyco, Imclone, Andersen. Need I continue?

What I have said before is very simple. [Action in business is nothing more than knowledge in use.](#) That goes for illicit action, as well. What we need in business, then, are quality control systems for knowledge. [That means divesting management of its monopoly on knowledge production, and it falls to the board or the governance function to do so.](#)

We can accomplish this by increasing the transparency and inclusiveness of knowledge processing in organizations via policies and programs of specific kinds. In other words, we can -- and should -- increase the degree of openness that accompany knowledge making and sharing processes in organizations. This can have the effect of increasing the degree of exposure and criticism applied to knowledge claims as they are being developed and before they get put into practice, if not only afterwards.

In other words, the quality control system I speak of is the organization itself and its members, which under the influence of the right mix of policies and programs can function as a sort of knowledge processing system that continuously tests and evaluates knowledge claims as a precursor to action. And the participants in such systems is everyone in the organization, not just its managers.

Note, as well, that quality-controlling knowledge not only has impact on discouraging illicit knowledge, but also has impact on innovation. When we energize whole firms in the knowledge production process, we enhance its capacity to learn, innovate, and to solve problems too.

Regards,

Mark

Date: Sun Mar 21, 2004 6:38 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Norms for Postings - Dave Snowden

From: Dave Snowden

Subject: Re: Digest Number 348

I've watched the conversations about 10 rules (Pollard) and now 25 Rules (Firestone) with some interest.

What I find curious is the need to say that there is a right way, or that one statement has more value than another. It would be nice if people started to realise that different things can be right on wrong in different contexts. To take two examples:

1 - (from Dave) Knowledge is Best Transferred by Conversations", well some knowledge is, informal learning etc, but other knowledge is better written down and some knowledge can only be transferred through imitation and practice

2 (from Jo) "Private or secret knowledge should not be shared", well most of time I would agree, but there are contexts (for example a major crisis or threat) when the boundaries of acceptable privacy would at least shift if not require violation.

Context is to my mind one of the most important aspects of KM - it determines the nature of knowledge discourse, the mechanisms (or appropriateness) or validation of claims etc etc.

Now - with some trepidation may I raise an issue about norms for postings within the group. I'm not sure how many more times I can face reading through lengthy statements informing us what the "New KM's" perspective is on more or less any and all subjects. There are two very lengthy ones in this digest. Jerry - maybe you should give Mark and Joe a week of their own to get it out of their system. I'm not trying to suppress conversation here, but just try and stimulate some sort of norm in the group - the sheer length of some postings is getting me to point of deleting AOK postings without reading them. I'm sure I've violated the norms of behaviour in a group such as this from time to time and I hope people would point it out to me when I do.

Dave Snowden

Date: Sun Mar 21, 2004 12:22 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: re. Norms for Postings - Joe Firestone

From: Joe Firestone

Subject: Rules, Norms, and Other Matters -- Reply to Dave Snowden

Dave,

You said:

I've watched the conversations about 10 rules (Pollard) and now 25 Rules (Firestone) with some interest.

What I find curious is the need to say that there is a right way, or that one statement has more value than another. It would be nice if people started to realise that different things can be right on wrong in different contexts.

I agree that various principles (and BTW, there were 44 TNKM tenets not 25), can be right or wrong in certain contexts. In fact knowledge claims are always true or false in specific contexts. Even universal generalizations are only applicable under certain contextual conditions. But the point of my post was both to comment on Pollard's Principles of KM and to show that the TNKM take on KM was very different. Actually, the context of the exchange on KnowledgeBoard, that produced the 44 TNKM tenets was one in which someone asked to express as simply as we could what TNKM was about. So we produced the 44 tenets as a way of hitting the high spots, which meant deliberately taking certain of the tenets out of context, knowingly distorting them and hoping we would not do more harm than good in this way. I'm sure David Pollard's Principles are, similarly, oversimplifications of his positions. I comments on them in hopes of his responding with the clarifications and qualifications that supply more of the context of his thinking. I think he did accomodate us somewhat in his reply, but that his principles do merit a lot of further discussion.

To take two examples:

1 - (from Dave) "Knowledge is Best Transferred by Conversations", well some knowledge is, informal learning etc, but other knowledge is better written down and some knowledge can only be transferred through imitation and practice

As I recall I think I made a similar point.

2 (from Jo) "Private or secret knowledge should not be shared", well most of time I would agree, but there are contexts (for example a major crisis or threat) when the boundaries of acceptable privacy would at least shift if not require violation.

I agree with you that sometimes boundaries need to be shifted. But I think you're not reflecting the context of Mark's statement in your own and therefore are distorting what he said. Mark said (in the quote I pesented):

"10. To get close to the truth, everyone in an organization must be able to see and hear what others are saying so that they can decide if it's true (this is transparency) 11. Private or secret knowledge should not be shared, but people should share knowledge about what should be private and secret, and why it should not be shared."

So, your quote was doubly taken out of context. Since Mark qualified his tenet in 11 in the way that he did, if one followed it one would have the opportunity to identify "when the boundaries of acceptable privacy" had shifted. Also, tenet # 11 is a qualification of tenet #10 which (in the context of some of the earlier tenets) is a strong assertion of the need for transparency.

What Mark was attempting in these tenets was to express a general norm of the Open Enterprise and to emphasize that transparency is of the utmost importance; but that no human enterprise can be completely open in every respect. Innovation can be chilled by excessive openness, as well as by excessive secrecy. Clearly, the problem in most organizations today is excessive secrecy, which goes beyond the boundaries of protecting privacy and valuable IP, and creates isolative, mistrustful, problem solving clusters that are never integrated, or integrated only hierarchically. The Open Enterprise normative model seeks that balance of openness and privacy that will facilitate distributed and self organizing problem solving within an organization. That's what points 10 and 11 together are attempting to communicate. However, communication using the method of presenting tenets to summarize TNKM seemingly produced a distorted result here, at least for Dave. I'm happy to have the opportunity to place the point in a larger context.

Context is to my mind one of the most important aspects of KM - it determines the nature of knowledge discourse, the mechanisms (or appropriateness) or validation of claims etc etc.

Again, I quite agree.

Next , Dave said:

Now - with some trepidation may I raise an issue about norms for postings within the group. I'm not sure how many more times I can face reading through lengthy statements informing us what the "New KM's" perspective is on more or less any and all subjects. There are two very lengthy ones in this digest. Jerry - maybe you should give Mark and Joe a week of their own to get it out of their system. I'm not trying to suppress conversation here, but just try and stimulate some sort of norm in the group - the sheer length of some postings is getting me to point of deleting AOK postings without reading them. I'm sure I've violated the norms of behaviour in a group such as this from time to time and I hope people would point it out to me when I do.

Since I'm responsible for many of the long postings in the past week, it's perhaps not surprising that I find myself in disagreement with Dave on this point. I think a major problem with many list serves is that the norm of short posts has been firmly established, and as a result only the most superficial discussion of issues takes place and the discussions also tend more and more to reflect the dominant world view in the particular list serv community in question. How can we have serious discussions of the issues such as the SECI, Cynefin, or TNKM perspectives with only short posts. How can we seriously discuss the uses of story-telling with brief posts. How could Pollard's 10 principles be discussed, or the question of whether SNE is primarily about KM, or more

generally, about organizational behavior and integration. In short, I think that a norm of short posts to the group would change the nature of group interaction in a drastic way and make the group much less valuable as a forum for examining issues that are important to KM.

BTW, on another subject, and in part stimulated by my son Jonathan Firestone, Dave Pollard, Olaf Brugman, and Denham Grey, I've inaugurated a new blog called "All Life is Problem Solving". You can find it at:

<http://radio.weblogs.com/0135950>.

Best, Joe

Date: Mon Mar 22, 2004 12:00 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. Knowledge/T or F? - Brian Sarrazin

From: Brian Sarrazin

Subject: Re: Knowledge/T or F?: U.S. Minorities Will Triple?

Joe said (regarding the Census projection):

- > But from my point of view it is a knowledge claim. that is further from the >truth than competing knowledge.
- > claims that might be developed using the Bureau's resources if they were only
- > open to alternative methodologies.

Joe,

Thanks for engaging the question. Our minds are far apart, I think. [I find your use of terms "knowledge claim" and "truth" very difficult to understand.](#)

What I see in this Census stuff is a dedicated group trying hard to assemble projections based on interrelated processes, complexity, but forced to boil it all down to "expected to triple" pablum. To my mind, this summary is worse than meaningless, it is misleading. But, it is required by our language, constrained by time.

Brian

Date: Sun Mar 21, 2004 12:24 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: PKM Article Consistent with Pollard's Rules - John Barrett

From: John Barrett

Subject: Individuals hold key to knowledge

[Another article about PKM that is consistent in many aspects with some of Dave P's rules:](#)

<http://www.idg.com.hk/cw/readstory.asp?aid=20040315008>

John

Date: Wed Mar 17, 2004 1:55 pm

Subject: **PCM/SN: Lessons on K Transfer from Blogs - Dave Pollard [+Jerry Ash]**

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Lessons on Knowledge Transfer from Blogs

There's a lot of interesting threads going on here, so I'm hesitant to start another discussion, but my topic is supposed to cover blogs and their role as PCM/SN tools, so I wanted to share what I've learned from a year of fairly intensive blogging. [Here are three lessons I've learned about KM from blogging](#); I'll leave it to others to speculate whether they apply, and if so *what* they imply, in corporate knowledge domains:

1. [People don't look at archives, so you have to say what you have to say clearly, often, and at the right times, and not be afraid to repeat yourself](#). I have an unusually sophisticated archive for a blogger -- you can search all 650+ articles by keyword, or browse a fairly detailed table of contents. But very few people avail themselves of these archive search tools. On two occasions recently I reposted charts or tables from previous articles I'd written last summer, and this time they generated major buzz (over 1000 extra readers each), where the first articles hardly caused a ripple. Timing is everything.

2. [People don't 'save' discussion threads](#) (blogs have them beneath each posted article) -- you learn what you learn from these written conversations, capture it in your head or store it in some other format, and 'throw the thread away'. Sometimes a discussion thread has more useful content than the article that provoked it. A huge amount of information transfer (though perhaps not *knowledge* transfer) occurs by e-mail and IM, and I'm not aware of any successful cases of archiving these 'transient' conversations. Question is, could they be 'mined', and reconfigured in some automatic way to make the pertinent information easy to identify and retrieve? I know people who keep thousands of e-mail messages 'just in case', but confess that they can count on one hand the number of times doing so proved valuable.

3. [If you want to reach your audience, you need to provide multiple 'push' & 'pull' access routes to the knowledge you want to communicate](#). One of the great things about blogs is you can see exactly who's reading what, how, and for how long. People access my blog 6 ways -- through:

(a) their own blogrolls (lists of favourite blogs) and Favorites/Bookmarks folders ('pull' access - about 1,000 readers/week), (b) my site index and detailed tables of contents ('pull' - about 100 readers/week), (c) e-mail and RSS subscription ('push' access - about 1,000 readers/week), (d) through links in personal e-mails I send out to people I think might be interested in a particular article ('push' - from zero to 100 readers/week), (e) by

'buzz' -- word of mouth from others' posts ('push' - from 1,000 to 5,000 readers/week), and (f) by serendipitous search via Google and other search engines ('pull' - about 2,000 readers/week).

Much of my blog's readership, and its ability to build a steady readership, is due to methods (e) and (c) -- **neither** of which has a true analogue in most corporate intranets. Most intranet content, to my knowledge, relies mainly on analogues of methods (b) and (f), which are the least reliable methods to build an audience. If I stopped using/allowing **any** of these access techniques to my 'content', my readership would drop by **more** than the numbers listed above, because these access methods reinforce each other (e.g. serendipitous readers sometimes become regular readers). The challenge, of course, is to provide enough different access channels to content, and to 'market' it aggressively and creatively, without adding to user complexity and information overload.

[From Jerry Ash: Bless you Dave. I was about to email you behind the scenes to worry about the fact that previous STAR Series have spent a lot of time on Storytelling. Never wanting to throw cold water on hot energy, though, I am only hoping that we can find some room in here for stones not yet turned. :-)]

Date: Thu Mar 18, 2004 2:49 am

Subject: **PCM/SN: Re. Intranets - Alice Macgillivray**

From: **Alice Macgillivray <**

Subject: Re: Intranets

Dave: Your original list of questions included the topic of intranets. I have worked with two organizations recently that did not have intranets, and were functioning well. Both were relatively small (though geographically distributed) and had strong oral cultures. Both did a lot of problem-solving and reinvention (most healthy, but with room for better re-use of information).

I also recently met individuals (whom you probably know) who use a wiki in place of a host of tools including an intranet. In a recent piece about on-line tools and social capital, [Stowe Boyd wrote "Wikis are like blogs, but more so." He contrasts them with "non-social solutions - such as traditional content management solutions, portals and newsletters...."](#) The intranets with which I am familiar seem to have much more in common with those 'traditional solutions' and document access than with tools intended to help to weave social fabric. What are your thoughts?

Date: Thu Mar 18, 2004 12:11 pm

Subject: **PCM/SN: Re. Intranets - Dave Pollard**

From: **Dave Pollard**

Subject: Re. Intranets - Alice Macgillivray

Alice said:

> I also recently met individuals (whom you probably know) who use a wiki in >place of a host of tools including an intranet. In a recent piece about
> on-line tools and social capital, Stowe Boyd wrote "Wikis are like blogs,
> but more so." He contrasts them with "non-social solutions - such as
> traditional content management solutions, portals and newsletters...." The
> intranets with which I am familiar seem to have much more in common with
> those 'traditional solutions' and document access than with tools
> intended to help to weave social fabric. What are your thoughts?

I think you have to break 'centralized KM tools' down into three categories: (1) Knowledge dissemination & archiving tools -- including most parts of most intranets, most databases, e-newsletters, feeds and PCM tools like weblogs; (2) Collaboration tools -- like CoP 'spaces', teamspace (like Lotus QuickPlace) and wikis (3) Social networking tools -- like directories, Ryze/LinkedIn/Orkut etc, that connect people to people rather than to knowledge

Since most of us are left-brained, I think there's a tendency to build intranets to 'hold' the stuff from the legacy systems i.e. type (1) tools, and only later to start thinking about the possibility of leveraging intranets for collaboration and networking. I've been at several conferences (mostly sponsored by collaboration tool vendors) that were set up to discuss How to Collaborate Virtually, but always seem to end up discussing Why Don't Virtual Collaboration Tools Work. And there's a lot of moaning going on about why first generation Social Networking tools don't work.

[My hypothesis is that collaboration isn't human nature, and that it's hard enough to get people to truly work *together* in real time/real space \(as distinct from doling out tasks and then listening to 'report-outs' that always seem to reflect one dominant person's views rather than real consensus\); so it's not surprising that *virtual* collaboration tools aren't perceived to work well.](#)

I think the problems with Social Networking tools will be much easier to solve, because they're design problems (over-engineered, non-intuitive, too complex, not integrated) rather than cultural. In fact I'm hugely excited about the possibilities for improved knowledge sharing, F2F and Virtual, with some simple, powerful Expertise Finder, Network Builder, and Simple Virtual Presence tools now being developed by some companies that really 'get it'. 'It' is all about enabling effective conversations.

Date: Thu Mar 18, 2004 2:54 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Knowledge Transfer & Blogs - Denham Grey

From: Denham Grey

Subject: Knowledge transfer & blogs

[My experience with blogging has not been quite as prolific or positive as Dave's:](#)

Find it difficult to maintain deep conversations when pithy comments are 'scrolled' away from the blog landing page.

'Travelling' to different places to offer an opinion or argue a point, has large drawbacks and costs. The 'conversation' is distributed, it is difficult to reconstruct, and revisiting past gems can be very time-consuming - if you can locate them.

A collection of permalinks does not give coherence or provide an easy context for later reading.

Blog authors control the pace, focus and content to a large extent, way too often great feedback takes a back-seat to the next meme that finds the blog author.

Very interested to hear why others believe blogs are so useful for knowledge transfer.

Date: Thu Mar 18, 2004 5:34 am

Subject: PCM/SN: re. Knowledge Transfer & Blogs - Euan Semple

From: Euan Semple

Subject: Re: Knowledge Transfer & Blogs - Denham Grey

I am afraid you are going to have to explain a bit more to get a fuller response Denham:

- > Find it difficult to maintain deep conversations when pithy comments
- > are 'scrolled' away from the blog landing page.

Not sure I understand why pressing the space bar to scroll down through a blog is hard.

- > 'Travelling' to different places to offer an opinion or argue a
- > point, has large drawbacks and costs. The 'conversation' is
- > distributed, it is difficult to reconstruct, and revisiting past
- > gems can be very time-consuming - if you can locate them.

Is clicking on "comment" travelling to a different place? If you find gems then blog them - that is what blogs are for.

- > A collection of permalinks does not give coherence or provide an
- > easy context for later reading.

Surely blogs were originally all about giving links a context?

- > Blog authors control the pace, focus and content to a large extent,
- > way too often great feedback takes a back-seat to the next meme that
- > finds the blog author.

This is no different from face to face conversation - some people don't listen and if you find talking to them (or reading them) unrewarding then don't give them the traffic.

Yours Euan

Date: Thu Mar 18, 2004 12:07 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: re. Knowledge Transfer & Blogs - Denham Grey

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: PCM/SN: Knowledge Transfer & Blogs - Denham Grey

Denham said:

- > My experience with blogging has not been quite as prolific or
- > positive as Dave's:
- > > [examples of the problems]
- > > Very interested to hear why others believe blogs are so useful for
- > knowledge transfer.

I'm with you, Denham. I really enjoy blogging, but as a means of: (1)personal content management, (2)personal learning (nothing quite like an audience of 5000 readers a week giving you immediate and candid feedback on your ideas) and (3)1-to-n dissemination of news and new ideas (via RSS feeds),

not as a means of one-to-one knowledge transfer [neither push nor pull]. In fact whenever I get into a discussion of any substance with anyone on my blog I immediately ask for their Skype (free global VoIP telephony) address and 'phone' them -- I can accomplish more that way in 10 minutes than in hours of written back-and-forth.

But over the next couple of years you're going to see vast improvements in blogs: Their functionality will be incorporated into integrated Personal Content Management and Social Networking applications that will make it simple to identify and engage relevant experts and community members and, once engaged, 'move' the dialogue from one online medium to another (VoIP, IM, discussion group, Simple Virtual Presence video etc.) This will finally realize the promise of such tools to facilitate knowledge transfer. The technology is really quite simple and not dependent on further innovation -- we just need to get the functionality bundled and ubiquitous. We're just shy of that 'tipping point' -- the point FAX machines were at when they were only available in a minority of businesses.

Date: Fri Mar 19, 2004 6:09 am

Subject: PCM/SN: re. Knowledge Transfer & Blogs - Euan Semple

From: Euan Semple

Subject: Re: Knowledge Transfer & Blogs - Denham Grey

So much of the activity around knowledge management descends into limiting definitions of what arcane phrases like "knowledge transfer" mean and the definitions are then used to limit possibilities.

All I know is that since writing a blog the quality of my experience of the web has increased exponentially as I am now pointed to interesting and well written articles by fellow bloggers who I have learned to trust by following their blogs for some time. I have also been able to connect with, get to know and meet face to face some of the finest thinkers and writers about the web in a way in which would not have been likely by any other means. Instead of having to wade my way through lengthy and complex documents I am able to synthesize the views of a number of bloggers who have read the material and benefit from their efforts. I also have a reason to think more clearly about my own understanding in order to be able to express it in an increasingly public place.

Given that much of knowledge management has thus far been about over engineered or over priced IT systems to manage documents or endless conferences and online forums debating the finer points of what knowledge means - blogging feels like progress.

Date: Thu Mar 18, 2004 9:32 am

Subject: PCM/SN: KM Discussion in General - Sheila Oranch

From: Sheila Oranch, president, Azta Inc., Milford, Maine, U.S.

Subject: KM discussion Re: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 347

Hi there.

You mostly haven't heard from me much, although I've had some correspondence with Jerry. Mostly I read and draft virtual remarks while I'm working on an article.

The thread on storytelling has finally triggered my need to stick my nose in, although I don't have time now to do it justice. A moving truck will appear at our door shortly, and most of our stuff will go away for a couple of weeks. More on that later.

Here is a concept bubble that may tint the current discussion. For working purposes, let us suppose that the popular wisdom about non-verbal communication is approximately correct. For example, as published in 1971 by Mehrabian- the psychologist who gave the 93% figure that is so often quoted. Ask and I'll send you a Word bibliography of most of the studies.

So given that maybe 10% of communication depends on the actual content of what is being conveyed, when you build a virtual community by telephone and email (or blog, etc.) what are you missing? Even with icons and cute phrases, most of the emotional nuances are lost. You develop superficial relationships, unless you are an extraordinary writer and your audience consists of extraordinary readers with the same sets of context, meaning and values.

Take a sharp turn now, and consider the book "The Tipping Point" by Malcolm Gladwell. Without referencing any work on Memes or systems, Mr. Gladwell wrote a comprehensive survey of how concepts and behaviors move through a social system. He also noticed and researched that the maximum number of direct relationships the "average" person can maintain is 150. Exactly that. Beyond that number, a supposed community falls apart (or spins apart from centrifugal force?).

Take these points plus several others embedded in what I would have called "the new economy" if the term had not been co-opted by venture capitalists, and consider the impact on KM.

The second wave industrial company structures (ref. Toffler's "The Third Wave") upon which most of today's companies were built, do not allow for communities of interest because they are intrinsically hierarchical and class conscious. Class is determined by job title and salary, not family. So you have small communities, or clusters, of social acquaintances or working colleagues, who stay within the safe boundaries.

[Until KM professionals open some windows to true multi disciplinary planning, not much will be able to change.](#)

More later. I'm being carried away by a strong man.

Sheila Oranch

Date: Thu Mar 18, 2004 12:58 pm

Subject: [PCM/SN: re. KM Discussion in General - Dave Pollard \[+Jerry Ash\]](#)

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: KM Discussion in General - Sheila Oranch

Sheila said:

- > The thread on storytelling has finally triggered my need to stick my
- > nose in, although I don't have time now to do it justice. A moving truck will
- > appear at our door shortly, and most of our stuff will go away for a couple
- > of weeks. More on that later.

Aha! Now there's how to use a story to get your attention!

- > When you build a virtual community by telephone and
- > email (or blog, etc.) what are you missing? Even with icons and cute
- > phrases, most of the emotional nuances are lost. You develop superficial
- > relationships, unless you are an extraordinary writer and your audience
- > consists of extraordinary readers with the same sets of context, meaning and
- > values.

Well, that's an interesting statement. I've been blogging for a year, on a wide variety of mostly impersonal matters, and in the last month I have had the opportunity to meet in person with two readers of my blog for the first time. When we met (we had not even conversed by telephone) for the first time, it was as old, dear friends. I had no hesitation in inviting them to stay at my home (one lives in Vancouver, the other in PEI, so they were far from home). We talked for hours as if we had known each other forever.

- > The second wave industrial company structures (ref. Toffler's "The Third
- > Wave") upon which most of today's companies were built, do not allow for
- > communities of interest because they are intrinsically hierarchical and
- > class conscious. Class is determined by job title and salary, not family. So
- > you have small communities, or clusters, of social acquaintances or
- > working colleagues, who stay within the safe boundaries.
- >> Until KM professionals open some windows to true multi disciplinary
- > planning, not much will be able to change.

I don't think hierarchy has dissipated at all in the information economy. In fact, with the 'businessing' of every job, and the loss of worker loyalty and employer responsibility, I would argue there is less trust up and down the hierarchy in today's businesses than there has been since the 'Robber Baron' era of the late 19th century which gave rise to the union movement. Unquestionably that lack of trust is an enormous obstacle to knowledge sharing within organizations, and might account for why, per some recent studies, people share knowledge more generously *between* organizations than *within* them. Even peer-to-peer within organizations there is an implicit competition that undermines collaboration and trust, and almost certainly as a result, lessens knowledge sharing.

[From Jerry Ash: Bravo Dave! My wife and I have been building friendships in Cyberspace for years and we have had exactly the same experience as you whether with the professional friends we have earned with AOK or the Boston Terrier group or the culinary lists Michele participates in for fun. Pixels don't have to be any more "impersonal" than any other means of communication and you don't have to have degrees in journalism to "relate" online. You just have to be human. I have worked very hard these three AOK years to make this a human space, sharing my feelings and encouraging others to do the same; writing in first person, not third in all our communications, even the EZines. So, how am I doing? Is anyone getting the idea that virtual here is a model of personal communication/relationship?

P.S. The other day a new member got a big kick out of my routine signature which begins: "Always at your fingertips,": she thought it was "cute," and I thought that was wonderful!]

Date: Thu Mar 18, 2004 12:42 pm

Subject: **PCM/SN: Knowledge and Tools - Peter West**

From: **Peter West, Senior Consultant, Continuous Innovation, Stratford, PEI, Canada**

Subject: Knowledge and Tools

At their current points of evolution (humans and tools), there appears to be an inverse correlation between the complexity of knowledge/social interaction and the utility of tools - the more tacit the knowledge (and/or the more complex the social interaction) the less effective the tool. History reminds us that we have always used tools (a term I now use to broadly encompass business/social - technologies, processes, structures, etc.).

Currently, the best tool for Personal Content Management (PCM) is your brain - creating and/or transferring (via Social Networking, for example) just-in-time "content" are the real challenges. The social, emergent and context-sensitive nature of knowledge (and learning) present significant challenges for tool builders/users. It is interesting to note that other thought leaders (e.g., Allee, Bennet, Cross, Firestone, McElroy, Senge, Snowden, Stacey, Krebs, Weick, and others) are focusing on these aspects of knowledge. I especially like the representations (and associated tools) promoted by:

* David Snowden: - "content management (what I can write down); narrative management (what I can say); context management (what can be neither written down or said)" - associated tools - storytelling, narrative databases, expert locator systems, interdependent communities, social network stimulation

* Verna Allee: - business as a living network, a whole-system view of value, value exchanges - associated tool - value network analysis

Best regards, Peter

Date: Fri Mar 19, 2004 8:13 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Takeaways from a 'Firehose' of Words - Fred Schoeps

From: Fred Schoeps

Subject: I love and hate blogs, email, intranets etc.

As a lurker -- any comments from other lurkers? I'm trying to sort through a firehose of words...

If I were to net out my takeaways from this first round of correspondence:

--> Bloggers are good for some and not so good for others. I love bloggers and hate bloggers -- they bring another dimension of fun and creativity into my life -- I really don't care if they happen to transfer knowledge or information -- they extend me as a human being -- including the opportunity to correspond about my thoughts, my know-how.

--> I now have access to a bunch of lists to test out in reality -- they were clearly generated by caring and dedicated folks. I'm glad that for every point there is someone with a counterpoint -- both will work or both fail given the circumstances. What is clear to me is that I get to choose either, neither or both!

--

> Intranets are good for some and not so good for others. Intranets are redefining themselves as we speak driven by the creative genius of people throughout the world -- who are free from KM-speak. It only matters what we say here to the extent those of us who are truly influencing the intranet builders and the dreamers can add value to their creations. The market will define intranets in context of perceived value. I love intranets - - the whole business is connected and experimenting with connectedness that never was possible before. And yes it represents another channel for knowledge to flow.

eConnectedness! Let it all keep coming -- the good, the bad and the ugly. I love e-mail and hate e-mail -- I can hide out behind e-mail and I gain connectedness -- I correspond more and talk less -- not always good; I spend time writing stuff that can be said in much less time and much more effectively.

I do look forward to when I can send an e-voice & picture message instead of e-mail... or an e-video for that matter (asynch and synch) as cheaply as an e-mail. Being e-face to e-face will eliminate some of our debates and add new ones. The beginning use and experimentation is happening now. The eight year olds today will be as comfortable with voice/picture/video messaging as the 16 year old who is experimenting today with letting the world look into her live via webcams. Once critical mass is reached it will be yet another set of appliances -- just something to have in the living room -- and in the office.

Time will tell what role e-mail, bloggers, IM, webcasts, cell phones, etc., will play in the future -- In the meantime current tools add wonderful dimensions to connectedness. With IM the passing of written notes around a class now is open to the world! The 'PDA Generation' just does it! It happens to be around; it is cool; and until the next hot product hits the scene -- fulfilling better the underlying need they live with it. The iPod is a harbinger of connectedness to music -- in the future you can just imagine... lurking on a grand scale when I can download talk as readily as music. Maybe I'll listen to a great story.

All this stuff does provide the opportunity to become a better communicator -- now if we also have opportunities to experience being with great people, working on great teams, becoming more confident in writing and speaking, building self-esteem and some of that other people stuff -- integrity, courage, trust, generosity, etc., etc. -- KM will become more real.

Sheila Oranch -- thank you for the levity! Peter West - I'd like request a conversation (phone) about conversations. (If it is appropriate to make such a request through you Jerry...)

[NOTE: I've sent Peter your phone number. - Jerry]

Regards, Fred

Date: Fri Mar 19, 2004 12:43 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: The Conversing Company - John Barrett

From: John Barrett

Subject: The Conversing Company

It seems like a fair amount of the discussion posts focus or refer to conversations as a significant piece in knowledge transfer. I've just finished a quick read through a paper called the "The Conversing Company," which happened to be highlight in last week's KnowledgeBoard eNewsletter.

When presented in 2001 it may have been somewhat ahead of it's time, but in light of our current discussion seems very appropriate today. It has numerous references and citations and can be found at

<http://www.knowledgeboard.com/community/zones/sig/innovation.html>.

In it the author, Alan Stewart, references work he did with E&Y KM Leaders in Sydney in 2000. Dave, did you happen to be involved?

John Barrett

Date: Sat Mar 20, 2004 8:02 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Lesson Learned, Week One - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard <dave.pollard@sympatico.ca>

Subject: POLLARD'S LESSONS LEARNED DURING WEEK ONE OF AOK

[NOTE: Dave has summarized lessons learned in the hope that we focus on these points during the second week of the STAR Series. Week Two always seems to go by rapidly because posts need to be processed and responded to by Friday. Let's make the most of it!
- Jerry]

Pollard's Lessons Learned:

PCM & SN won't completely replace the need for central repositories, but the content that belongs in those central repositories should be straight-forward (no need to have a lot of context to apply it), brief, well-organized and filtered, low in volume, and probably top-down generated. In process-driven organizations, where a lot of people are doing the same thing over and over, this will have considerable value (at least until the process is automated). In innovation-driven organizations, where every job & situation is unique, it won't, and in these latter organizations conversations, enabled by PCM & SN, will continue to be the principal means of knowledge transfer.

Hierarchy may play an important role in inhibiting knowledge transfer through conversations, since according to David Weinberger "conversations can only happen between equals". This may be the critical role of (mis)trust in knowledge sharing: we

don't trust our bosses not to steal, misuse or use the knowledge we give them, and we don't trust our subordinates to know what we mean and how to use our knowledge appropriately.

Once PCM & SN has been instituted, the job of KM will be diminished, but it won't go away.

Perhaps the two critical skills we need to teach knowledge workers are (a) how to craft and tell good stories, and (b) how to conduct effective conversations (oral & via IM).

We need to study particularly how conversations iteratively produce knowledge transfer, how the conversants' personal mental models, knowledge behaviour and learning style affect the conversation's structure, progress and effectiveness.

We need to study whether multi-party conversations (including those in meetings and 'team' collaboration activities) are really 2-person dialogues, and what that means for how meetings and team activities can be made more effective (or if they should be minimized).

We need to study whether and how to 'capture' conversations (including e-mail and IM threads) so they can be mined usefully and effectively.

We need to see whether the value of stories, which is currently realized mainly in oral presentations, can be extended to written stories as well, and if so how we need to 'tweak' story-telling skills and story structure for the written medium.

And we need to take a very sober look at how individuals 'process' knowledge and learn, and at how little actually permeates the 'fog' of our different mental models, to make sure our expectations from KM are reasonable and that consequently we don't over-engineer KM tools, programs and processes.

Leading KM practitioners need to get off their hobby horses and roll up their sleeves and *use* some of the PCM and SN tools out there. As rudimentary as blogs are, mine has completely reformulated my thinking about KM, expanded my networks and my thinking, and enabled new, deep friendships. Every KM practitioner should be out there keeping a blog and using Orkut and shouting loudly how these tools need to be improved (not a difficult job if we can get some consensus). But you can't knock 'em until you've tried 'em.

Date: Fri Mar 19, 2004 7:58 pm

Subject: **PCM/SN: Technology and Stories - Steve Denning**

From: **Steve Denning**

Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] technology and stories

[NOTE: This is a long but worthy post. I am experimenting with placing long posts at the bottom of each day's flow so people won't have to scroll through so much text to view the shorter messages. That doesn't mean you should indiscriminately scroll. For example, in this post, Steve Denning makes an offer (in topic number THIRTEEN) to give a free workshop to the group Dave Pollard describes as "associates who can't be taught to tell stories." Steve wants to prove him wrong!

Meanwhile, my thanks to all who invest a substantial amount of their time to share substantial thoughts.] - Jerry

Congratulations to Dave Pollard for sparking such an energized debate. Various interventions have explicitly or implicitly asked for responses, which I supply here.

1. BLOGS: [While blogs are a great way to tell one's story, with unlimited space and with potentially an infinite audience, I'm afraid I'm skeptical whether they are likely to make much contribution to knowledge management at an organizational level.](#) Most, but not all, blogs I've visited tend towards the "Dear Diary" variety, with a tinge of (sometimes charming) self-indulgence, narcissism and self-absorption. Maybe I've visited the wrong blogs, but I'm not alone in noting the phenomenon. (In fact, I get the occasional complaint about my own blog-like site at <http://www.stevedenning.com/SIN-Archive.html> that "there's nothing about you personally," but that's not my objective. My explicit aim is to look at the business news through the lens of storytelling, not to talk about me.)

I find it hard to see how the outpourings on blogs will be compatible with "The Apprentice"-like environments of big corporations in which most people work, where the task is to appear as cooperative with the boss as possible, while avoiding being the victim of the next round of downsizing or outsourcing. Blogs are great as an outlet for personal expression, and certainly cheaper than a psychiatrist, and perhaps may help one find other geographically dispersed soul mates. They've proven their power in politics by linking together geographically dispersed individuals of similar persuasion to effect political change (e.g. in pulling down Trent Lott and pushing up Howard Dean). But for knowledge management in an organization? I'm not sure.

Some would argue that there is a small category of blogs which become, for a period at least, the authoritative source on a particular subject, e.g. some questionable factoid of a political campaign. Could this kind of blog become useful in a corporate context? There was in fact a case study in the Harvard Business Review (September 2003) where a blogger got going, and then started saying things that the management didn't quite appreciate: what to do? Although only one of the four management "experts" advised explicitly to close down the blog, the three others essentially suggested various ways of co-opting the blogger into the management agenda. Therein lies the problem. The free-flowing dynamic of the blog is at odds with the discipline and focus of the large

organization, and given the blog's potentially infinite circulation, it is likely to be seen more as a threat than a promise by the powers that be, if not "tamed" and "brought under control," at which point, it may of course cease to be of interest to anyone except the management.

2. WIKIS: Wikis seem more likely to be productive, because a Wiki is a blog built for a community; it's like a community drawer rather than a personal drawer. And it has different rules for participation. It's no longer just a threaded discussion group; Wikis have the interesting feature that, if a viewer doesn't think something is said right, it's the viewer's job to re-say it correctly - the viewer can't just comment on it or criticize it. The attempt to build gigantic encyclopedias with Wikis on the web is promising at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page. In principle, it should be possible to use this technology in an organizational context, as a way to build a knowledge base, though I personally haven't seen any examples to date.

3. INSTANT MESSAGING: The potential of instant messaging to keep members of a community in constant touch is perhaps underestimated in this conversation so far, perhaps because of the age of the contributors to this listserv. If you talk to a teenager today growing up digital, and you only use email, she'll think you're a dinosaur because email doesn't really support the sense of extended presence.

4. RSS FEEDS: RSS feeds should in principle be useful, as a way to have content streamed automatically to individuals for a particular purpose. The actual examples that I've seen are however less helpful than I would have expected, as the coverage is not as systematic as I had hoped and the format not always congenial. But the potential is there, at least for information. I'm doubtful how much knowledge will be streamed.

5. JOE FIRESTONE'S POSTINGS ON NARRATIVE AND KNOWLEDGE: I won't give here the detailed response that Joe's lengthy and helpful postings deserve. I'll just make two points.

First, Joe concludes that story is essentially good for pretty much everything except the weighty task of Knowledge Claim Evaluations. In this I would agree with him: analysis is a better tool than narrative for evaluating the truth of some supposed piece of knowledge. Narrative has many strengths, but sorting out the wheat from the chaff isn't one of them.

Second, Joe's underlying assumption seems to be that "knowledge" is the gold standard and that nothing else is worth a damn. I find this assumption more problematic. In the world of, say, the physical sciences, where what was true yesterday is almost certainly going to be true tomorrow, this is a sound approach. But in the world of human affairs, tomorrow may not look at all like today, and in organizations, the principal issue is what to do tomorrow, about which there can be no certain knowledge. It's in dealing with tomorrow that an approach rooted in yesterday's verified knowledge, and constrained by yesterday's axioms, and dominated by analytical thinking that flows from that knowledge and those axioms, has been shown to be so lacking. Narrative is often a better way of exploring possible futures and their implications, and certainly needs to be part of the

toolkit. Verified knowledge is obviously part of the picture but it isn't the whole ballgame when it comes to innovation in human affairs.

6. **DETECTING THE FALSE NARRATIVE:** I agree with John Barrett that there is no reason why narrative should be more likely to be false than abstractions, and so I disagree with others who advise against using narrative because it might be false. If anything the presumption should be the opposite: narratives are typically specific to individual situations and can usually be verified in various ways. Abstractions are typically more general and are more difficult to verify. We may believe that all swans are white because no one we know has ever seen anything but white swans, but then one day we may find that there's another upside-down part of the world where swans are black. In human affairs, generalizations are even more difficult to prove than narratives and even more likely to be false.

7. **THE OBJECTIVE OF THE CONVERSATION:** Dave Pollard suggested as part of the model for an effective conversation, we should add "the objective of the conversation". I wonder whether this isn't a bit heavy handed and might run the risk of limiting the natural dynamic as to where the conversation might eventually lead by providing artificial boundaries. Perhaps it might be better to indicate "a starting point" for the conversation, rather than an objective.

8. **INTERRUPTED CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY:** Dave Pollard and Bob Parden talk about the use of the interrupted case study as a springboard for innovation. I agree entirely with the principle: the trick in innovation (which is about implementing new ideas, rather than inventing them) is to get the potential implementers themselves to create the story of their implementation. The interrupted case study method is a good way of doing this, provided that one has the hierarchical power to organize it for the people who will need to implement. Where one lacks such hierarchical power, and unfortunately this is often the case with radical innovations and the innovator is someone crying alone and unheard in the corporate wilderness, then the springboard story is a more practical option: it essentially uses the same mechanism to get the listeners to create their own version of the story.

An additional "narrative" method to get managerial buy-in to innovation involves getting the management team to enact out future strategies in a simulated theater improv event, with different executives playing the roles of the firm, the competitors, the customers, the regulators and so on, in a roll-out of future strategies. This has proven effective in getting a resistant group of managers to "get it". It also uses the same springboard mechanism: the participants create the story. But again it requires the necessary hierarchical power to set up such an exercise at the highest level of the organization.

9. **FRIENDSHIPS AND LEARNING ON THE WEB:** Euan Semple writes of the amazing learning and interchange of ideas that can take place on the Web. I agree, and have had similar experiences, but I would note that these encounters typically happen between like-minded people with the same interests. What I haven't seen on the Web is

success in persuading anyone to change any of their fundamental opinions. For this, in my experience, to have any chance at all, you need to "be there."

10. NARRATIVES AS PROPAGANDA: Euan Semple also writes that "the most effective examples of institutional storytelling are propaganda". Here I would have to disagree. These examples might be notorious, but because they are identified as propaganda, they are almost certainly going to be ineffective. The more effective narratives are those that aren't identified as 'propaganda' or even 'stories' at all: they fly under the radar and are seen simply as instances of a person telling you about something interesting that happened last week. "Let me tell you about it!" What ensues is not seen as "telling a story," but rather hearing about something interesting. It's very low key and allows the listener to make up his or her mind what is the meaning of what they hear. It's the opposite of propaganda.

11. IS EXPLICIT STORYTELLING BAD? Euan Semple also writes that we should just let people tell stories as comes naturally "in contrast to an explicit effort to teach techniques which could be so easily misused." It would make sense to let people tell whatever stories they feel like telling if this were effective in achieving their objectives, e.g. getting people to accept a new idea. Experience shows however that this is usually not the case. If you put people in a room together, they will certainly start telling stories to each other, but they will not typically tell springboard stories. The stories they tell will usually have a negative tinge to them, as they will be about unusual or difficult experiences, and will be told with a lot of context. By contrast, the narrative pattern of a springboard story is a positively oriented story that is told in a minimalist fashion. The pattern is something that can be easily learned but it doesn't usually happen spontaneously.

In practical terms, the issue boils down to whether we are going to be intelligent about our storytelling or not. Refusing to learn what works and what doesn't work in this field isn't all that smart - in fact, it's the antithesis of knowledge management. Refusing to do it because of the risk of misuse is a bit like saying we won't give people hammers or allow them to fly in planes because hammers and planes can be used as weapons rather than for their intended, constructive use.

12. CAN FICTIONAL STORYTELLING WORK IN AN ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT? My own experience is that fictional storytelling in an organizational context is risky, in part because it's in danger of being easily parodied and in part, because it may not be taken seriously. It's not that I'm against fables, since my forthcoming book, "Squirrel Inc," is itself a fable. But in the tough skeptical environment of a big organization, a fable may work wonders with the champions but can turn off the skeptics. Inside an organization, it's much safer to stick to stories about business examples that have actually happened in real life. It's hard to argue with an actual example and if it's a plausible, authentically true story, that genuinely reflects what actually happened, it's less likely to generate anti-stories.

13. FINALLY, CAN DAVE'S NON-NARRATIVE ASSOCIATES BE TAUGHT TO TELL STORIES? Dave Pollard says that his circle of associates comprise people who can't be taught to tell a decent story. My gosh, Dave! That's certainly as dismal a story as I've heard for a long while. Indeed, in all my world travels, I've never come across such an unpromising group before, and so I'd really like to meet them and have a shot at showing that you are wrong - I believe they can be taught to tell a story. So, Dave, if you can get the group together, I'll be happy to offer to them a free workshop and buy you a dinner if I am unable to upgrade their storytelling skills to the point where they are able to tell a respectable story. I feel on safe ground here, since as Larry Prusak once said: "dogs sniff each other; human beings tell stories: it's as basic as that." We are a storytelling species.

Steve Denning

Date: Sat Mar 20, 2004 8:09 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. Technology and Stories - Joe Firestone

From: Joe Firestone

Subject: Amplifying my views on story-telling -- response to Steve

Steve, I find your commenst on Blogs very well thought out.

Among other comments, you said:

5. JOE FIRESTONE'S POSTINGS ON NARRATIVE AND KNOWLEDGE: I won't give here the detailed response that Joe's lengthy and helpful postings deserve. I'll just make two points.

First, Joe concludes that story is essentially good for pretty much everything except the weighty task of Knowledge Claim Evaluations. In this I would agree with him: analysis is a better tool than narrative for evaluating the truth of some supposed piece of knowledge. Narrative has many strengths, but sorting out the wheat from the chaff isn't one of them.

To have your agreement on this greatly increases my confidence in my reasoning about it.

You also said:

"Second, Joe's underlying assumption seems to be that "knowledge" is the gold standard and that nothing else is worth a damn. I find this assumption more problematic. In the world of, say, the physical sciences, where what was true yesterday is almost certainly going to be true tomorrow, this is a sound approach. But in the world of human affairs, tomorrow may not look at all like today, and in organizations, the principal issue is what to do tomorrow, about which there can be no certain knowledge. It's in dealing with tomorrow that an approach rooted in yesterday's verified knowledge, and constrained by

yesterday's axioms, and dominated by analytical thinking that flows from that knowledge and those axioms, has been shown to be so lacking.

My assumption is not that knowledge is the only thing that "is worth a damn". It is that "knowledge" is biologically unavoidable, and that it is developed through a process of problem recognition, developing tentative solutions, and then eliminating the errors in them. The only question is how well we will do the job of performing these three activities.

I think that story-telling is very useful for developing tentative (and alternative) solutions. It is a very old and honored human technique for doing that. But once the stories are told, and even if they are wonderful stories, we still have the task of trying to eliminate the errors in them; of trying to make the stories as strong as they can be so, that the knowledge they carry does not fail us. The physical sciences and the world of human affairs are not different when it comes to the need for critical evaluation of the stories we tell in both spheres. If anything, criticism is more necessary in the area of knowledge claims about human affairs, so that we don't act on what are obviously false knowledge claims.

Moreover, regarding your critical comments about analytical thinking and yesterday's verified knowledge, I, don't believe that knowledge claims can be "verified" in the sense I believe you have in mind. I do believe, however, that knowledge claims can be criticized and that we can distinguish among them according to how well they meet out tests and criticisms. I also think, that even though analytical thinking in the social sciences has been far less successful than in the Natural Sciences, the lack of such thinking and uncritical reliance on intuition and authority has had even worse results. And that we see those results around us in the corporate world and in Government every day. So while, I believe in intuition, in story-telling, in unfettered imagination, and in artistry, I also believe in analysis, in logic, in rationality, and in criticism. All of these are our faculties and they are all equally human.

Narrative is often a better way of exploring possible futures and their implications, and certainly needs to be part of the toolkit. Verified knowledge is obviously part of the picture but it isn't the whole ballgame when it comes to innovation in human affairs.

As indicated just above, I don't think error elimination is the whole ball game in any field. Inquiry is a mix of the creative and the evaluative, and so is innovation. I think one problem with KM as a field these days is that it is out of balance. There is tremendous emphasis on novel techniques and experiences for generating knowledge claims, but very little concern and emphasis on how claims, once generated, will be tested and evaluated. This is a great mistake, and in calling for its correction I am not denigrating story-telling, collaborative spaces, mind mapping, communities of practice, or any of the techniques we currently value because they free up our thinking. What I am calling for is the recognition that the results of using these and other techniques stops short of Knowledge Claim Evaluation, and that our task in solving problems is not done until we've completed that activity as well.

6. DETECTING THE FALSE NARRATIVE: I agree with John Barrett that there is no reason why narrative should be more likely to be false than abstractions, and so I disagree with others who advise against using narrative because it might be false. If anything the presumption should be the opposite: narratives are typically specific to individual situations and can usually be verified in various ways. Abstractions are typically more general and are more difficult to verify. We may believe that all swans are white because no one we know has ever seen anything but white swans, but then one day we may find that there's another upside-down part of the world where swans are black. In human affairs, generalizations are even more difficult to prove than narratives and even more likely to be false.

I don't think abstractions are true or false. Abstractions are concepts. We use them in statements. The statements that include them are true or false. And stories are not free of abstractions, even if they are about specific events. When stories are told we must be aware of the generalizations that are implicit in the stories and we must be aware of the abstract concepts that these stories contain. You said there was no reason to believe that narratives are more likely to be false than abstractions. I would not put it that way. I think the comparison is between narratives and more formal knowledge claim networks that express theories containing abstractions. And I think that while it is true that narratives are not more likely to be false than theories in theory, it is also true that in practice we are likely to treat theories differently than we do narratives. When we use theories we are likely to compare them against each other, to view them as competing, and to criticize them in an effort to see which is the stronger. But when we have narratives, we are likely to use them to try to sell and to provide support for a point of view we favor, and we are not likely to use them to test and to evaluate and to determine whether our point of view can survive our evaluations.

You also said:

In practical terms, the issue boils down to whether we are going to be intelligent about our storytelling or not. Refusing to learn what works and what doesn't work in this field isn't all that smart - in fact, it's the antithesis of knowledge management. Refusing to do it because of the risk of misuse is a bit like saying we won't give people hammers or allow them to fly in planes because hammers and planes can be used as weapons rather than for their intended, constructive use.

I quite agree. The remedy is not to prohibit story-telling or to refuse to learn about. It is to learn more about it and to subject narratives to Knowledge Claim Evaluation.

You also said:

We are a storytelling species.

With which I also entirely agree, but I must add that we are a criticizing species as well. And as I pointed out in an earlier post, the evolution of language was accompanied by the

evolution of story-telling, which, in its turn, was accompanied by the evolution of criticism, so that we could eliminate the errors in our stories.

Best, Joe

Date: Sat Mar 20, 2004 8:25 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Responding to Steve Denning on Blogs, Wikis etc. - Euan Semple

From: Euan Semple

Subject: Re: Technology and Stories - Steve Denning

Gosh - thanks for the long post Steve.

In answer to 1, 2 and 4

> 1. BLOGS: While blogs are a great way to tell one's story, with unlimited
> space and with potentially an infinite audience, I'm afraid I'm skeptical
> whether they are likely to make much contribution to knowledge management at
> an organizational level. Most, but not all, blogs I've visited tend towards
> the "Dear Diary" variety, with a tinge of (sometimes charming)
> self-indulgence, narcissism and self-absorption. Maybe I've visited the
> wrong blogs, but I'm not alone in noting the phenomenon. (In fact, I get the
> occasional complaint about my own blog-like site at
> <http://www.stevedenning.com/SIN-Archive.html> that "there's nothing about you
> personally," but that's not my objective. My explicit aim is to look at the
> business news through the lens of storytelling, not to talk about me.)
> > I find it hard to see how the outpourings on blogs will be compatible with
> "The Apprentice"-like environments of big corporations in which most people
> work, where the task is to appear as cooperative with the boss as possible,
> while avoiding being the victim of the next round of downsizing or
> outsourcing. Blogs are great as an outlet for personal expression, and
> certainly cheaper than a psychiatrist, and perhaps may help one find other
> geographically dispersed soul mates. They've proven their power in politics
> by linking together geographically dispersed individuals of similar
> persuasion to effect political change (e.g. in pulling down Trent Lott and
> pushing up Howard Dean). But for knowledge management in an organization?
> I'm not sure.

I think you have been reading the wrong blogs and I would have to disagree with this Steve. Take a look at the blogroll on my own blog The Obvious?

<http://www.theobviousblog.net/blog/> and you will find posts which are far from "self-indulgence, narcissism and self-absorption". Yes there are probably more blogs of the "dear diary" sort than there are of real substance but is this different from the conversations or storytelling in organisations – much of which is pretty innane.

You say "the task is to appear as cooperative with the boss as possible". Thankfully this isn't the prevailing culture in all businesses. Having a voice and an opinion is something we encourage our apprentices to have and blogs are a powerful vehicle for that.

- > Some would argue that there is a small category of blogs which become, for a
- > period at least, the authoritative source on a particular subject, e.g. some
- > questionable factoid of a political campaign. Could this kind of blog become
- > useful in a corporate context? There was in fact a case study in the Harvard
- > Business Review (September 2003) where a blogger got going, and then started
- > saying things that the management didn't quite appreciate: what to do?
- > Although only one of the four management "experts" advised explicitly to
- > close down the blog, the three others essentially suggested various ways of
- > co-opting the blogger into the management agenda. Therein lies the problem.
- > The free-flowing dynamic of the blog is at odds with the discipline and
- > focus of the large organization, and given the blog's potentially infinite
- > circulation, it is likely to be seen more as a threat than a promise by the
- > powers that be, if not "tamed" and "brought under control," at which point,
- > it may of course cease to be of interest to anyone except the management.
- >

You say "The free-flowing dynamic of the blog is at odds with the discipline and focus of the large organization" but aren't most organisations the sum of the conversations that take place within them and isn't the "free-flowing dynamic of the blog" something that creative, flexible and effective organisations should aspire to?

- > 2. WIKIS: Wikis seem more likely to be productive, because a Wiki is a blog
- > built for a community; it's like a community drawer rather than a personal
- > drawer. And it has different rules for participation. It's no longer just a
- > threaded discussion group; Wikis have the interesting feature that, if a
- > viewer doesn't think something is said right, it's the viewer's job to
- > re-say it correctly - the viewer can't just comment on it or criticize it.
- > The attempt to build gigantic encyclopedias with Wikis on the web is
- > promising at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page. In principle, it should
- > be possible to use this technology in a organizational context, as a way to
- > build a knowledge base, though I personally haven't seen any examples to
- > date.

We have many examples of wikis being used very effectively to share knowledge amongst project teams. I find it strange that having been sceptical of free flowing blogs you seem more inclined to the complete anarchy of wikis!

- > 7. THE OBJECTIVE OF THE CONVERSATION: Dave Pollard suggested as part of
- > the
- > model for an effective conversation, we should add "the objective of the
- > conversation". I wonder whether this isn't a bit heavy handed and might run

- > the risk of limiting the natural dynamic as to where the conversation might
- > eventually lead by providing artificial boundaries. Perhaps it might be
- > better to indicate "a starting point" for the conversation, rather than an
- > objective.

I agree completely - this is like having a party and insisting that everyone talk about cars all night. It is why online discussion groups that are too rigid in their definitions tend to wither pretty quickly.

- > 9. FRIENDSHIPS AND LEARNING ON THE WEB: Euan Semple writes of the amazing
- > learning and interchange of ideas that can take place on the Web. I agree,
- > and have had similar experiences, but I would note that these encounters
- > typically happen between like-minded people with the same interests. What I
- > haven't seen on the Web is success in persuading anyone to change any of
- > their fundamental opinions. For this, in my experience, to have any chance
- > at all, you need to "be there."

I would agree Steve but my experience is that through my referrer list I have noticed being pointed to by people who I would have fundamentally disagreed with. I have gone back and read their blogs and in some cases then engaged in an e-mail debate with them. Whether or not any of this has changed any of my fundamental opinions - maybe not but it has broadened my perspective on a number of topics. David Weinberger recently wrote a piece for Salon on "echo chambers" http://www.salon.com/tech/feature/2004/02/20/echo_chamber/index_np.html which relates to this issue.

- > 10. NARRATIVES AS PROPAGANDA: Euan Semple also writes that "the most
- > effective examples of institutional storytelling are propaganda". Here I
- > would have to disagree. These examples might be notorious, but because they
- > are identified as propaganda, they are almost certainly going to be
- > ineffective. The more effective narratives are those that aren't identified
- > as 'propaganda' or even 'stories' at all: they fly under the radar and are
- > seen simply as instances of a person telling you about something interesting
- > that happened last week. "Let me tell you about it!" What ensues is not seen
- > as "telling a story," but rather hearing about something interesting. It's
- > very low key and allows the listener to make up his or her mind what is the
- > meaning of what they hear. It's the opposite of propaganda.
- >> 11. IS EXPLICIT STORYTELLING BAD? Euan Semple also writes that we should
- > just let people tell stories as comes naturally "in contrast to an explicit
- > effort to teach techniques which could be so easily misused." It would make
- > sense to let people tell whatever stories they feel like telling if this
- > were effective in achieving their objectives, e.g. getting people to accept
- > a new idea. Experience shows however that this is usually not the case. If
- > you put people in a room together, they will certainly start telling stories
- > to each other, but they will not typically tell springboard stories. The
- > stories they tell will usually have a negative tinge to them, as they will

> be about unusual or difficult experiences, and will be told with a lot of
> context. By contrast, the narrative pattern of a springboard story is a
> positively oriented story that is told in a minimalist fashion. The pattern
> is something that can be easily learned but it doesn't usually happen
> spontaneously.
>> In practical terms, the issue boils down to whether we are going to be
> intelligent about our storytelling or not. Refusing to learn what works and
> what doesn't work in this field isn't all that smart - in fact, it's the
> antithesis of knowledge management. Refusing to do it because of the risk of
> misuse is a bit like saying we won't give people hammers or allow them to
> fly in planes because hammers and planes can be used as weapons rather than
> for their intended, constructive use.

OK taking these two posts together. I am not against learning what works about storytelling and improving our ability as individuals to tell effective stories but my concern probably relates back to your first point - that organisations have "discipline and focus". There is already significant structural weight behind those who would see themselves as maintaining that "discipline and focus" - adding manipulative storytelling capability to their arsenal may not be in the best interests of a flexible responsive and effective organisation.

Dismissing the storytelling or conversations of those whose views we don't respect as "self-indulgence, narcissism, self-absorption, and outpourings" smacks a little of not listening to people who don't wear a suit. Organisations are simply a collection of people who turn up at the same time and place and tell stories - accelerating and encouraging that storytelling from ALL involved has to be the way forward.

Date: Mon Mar 22, 2004 4:13 am

Subject: **PCM/SN: Re. Appreciating Potential Reader's Needs - Jack Vinson**

From: Jack Vinson

Subject: RE: Appreciating Potential Reader's Needs - Steve Else

Given Steve's three items below, I have to smile. These are things I consider when writing my blog. If I am going to say something - particularly if I am linking to words from someone else - I had better tell people why I think it is interesting. Likewise, [I find some bloggers frustrating to read in that they simply say "this is neat" without giving me a look into their heads as to why.](#) In other words, I learn less about the person and I am less likely to pursue the item in question.

Jack

[snip] From Steve Else:

1. Why didn't you clearly and succinctly highlight the relevance of your e-mail and attachment to the reader?
2. Why didn't you highlight and explain some key material or

indicate which slide or slides deserve particular attention and your justification for your thinking? 3. Why didn't you include some logical action recommendations based on your e-mail or attachment? The reason this last question is particularly important is that it reveals that readers are overwhelmed with FYI fodder and are in fact interested in the applicability, if at all relevant, to something they are working on.

Date: Mon Mar 22, 2004 5:45 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. Appreciating Potential Reader's Needs - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: Appreciating Potential Reader's Needs - Jack Vinson

Jack said:

- > Given Steve's three items [providing relevance, highlights/summary, and suggested actions in every e-mail], I have to smile. These are things I
- > consider when writing my blog. ... Likewise, I find some
- > bloggers frustrating to read in that they simply say "this is neat"
- > without giving me a look into their heads as to why. In other words,
- > I learn less about the person and I am less likely to pursue the item
- > in question.

I do the same when writing my blog. This is highly relevant to the issue of Personal Knowledge Management, and the fate of centralized knowledge repositories. **In order to be able to appreciate the user's needs, the contributor needs to know who the user will be, and what they will want to use the contributed knowledge for*. My experience suggests that this rarely happens, especially in the case of 'unfiltered' knowledge.* And when I look at organizations' 'stored knowledge' it is not at all obvious to me in what context it will be useful, and to whom.

Is anyone aware of organizations that have actually implemented some explicit codification of (1) appropriate use, and (2) appropriate users, for each 'knowledge object' in their repositories?

Date: Mon Mar 22, 2004 4:15 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. Relative Importance of PKM - Jack Vinson

From: Jack Vinson

Subject: RE: Relative Importance of PKM - Alice Macgillivray

Way back on Tuesday, Alice Macgillivray made the interesting observation that PKM will mean different things to different people. I completely agree. I like this idea so much because it resonates with observations I've made about how I interact with my own collection of technology - and how I see my friends and colleagues interacting with theirs. And Fred Schoeps says it well: "I love email and I hate it."

To take this further, just about any of the technologies promoted as knowledge management could fit into someone's version of personal knowledge management, depending on what they do in their work. Easy access to documents and standards: content management. Easy access to people who know: expert locators. Easy access to my files and emails: personal information management. You get the idea.

With blogs and social networks, the presumed topic of this wonderful STAR Series, I suspect some of the enthusiasm has to do with a "new" technology for knowledge management and the individual. In a change from the past approaches, these approaches tend to have a more personal feel to them (for a certain group of people). Is it possible that people who have taken up the flag for blogs/social networks have found a product that strikes a chord for them, where previous tools have not worked for them?

Here is Dave Pollard's view of the future, for anyone who missed it earlier:

But over the next couple of years you're going to see vast improvements in blogs: Their functionality will be incorporated into integrated Personal Content Management and Social Networking applications that will make it simple to identify and engage relevant experts and community members and, once engaged, 'move' the dialogue from one online medium to another (VoIP, IM, discussion group, Simple Virtual Presence video etc.) This will finally realize the promise of such tools to facilitate knowledge transfer. The technology is really quite simple and not dependent on further innovation -- we just need to get the functionality bundled and ubiquitous. We're just shy of that 'tipping point' -- the point FAX machines were at when they were only available in a minority of businesses.

Jack Vinson

Date: Mon Mar 22, 2004 4:17 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. The Art of Narrative - Jack Vinson

From: Jack Vinson

Subject: RE: The Art of Narrative - Dave Pollard

I too like Owen Semple's borrowing of a quote from David Weinberger, "Conversations only take place between equals."

This is an excellent example of why both the Steve Denning type of oral storytelling AND the blog type of conversation are so valuable. Telling stories makes people become more human -- makes it easier to connect with people. Similarly the blog (and other) conversations remove some layers of hierarchy from the equation in part because I feel I have more control. If I feel like responding to someone, I have more freedom to do so in my own space or in theirs. My expertise can be highlighted or brought into doubt by others with the same level of control. There is no "superuser" who is going to tell me to erase what I said, or to stop saying it. It's all part of the conversation.

As Peter West notes, the type of communication in these two media are different (discussion, dialog, and probably others), but these modes of communication both lead to better connections between people -- maybe even bringing them closer to being "equals."

Jack Vinson

Date: Mon Mar 22, 2004 5:34 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Who is Your Dream Client? - Fred Schoeps

From: Fred Schoeps

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 351

Thank you, Dave S.

Dave Pollard -- [if you could choose to work with any client, anywhere who would that client be -- and why?](#) What do you want to accomplish in the world as your KM legacy -- how will you make a difference in business through who you are?

Date: Mon Mar 22, 2004 5:49 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. Who is Your Dream Client? - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: PCM/SN: Who is Your Dream Client? - Fred Schoeps

Fred asked:

> Dave Pollard -- if you could choose to work with any client, anywhere who
> would that client be -- and why? What do you want to accomplish in the world
> as your KM legacy -- how will you make a difference in business through who
> you are?

That's a great question, Fred, and I will be showing my political and philosophical stripes through my answer (though most KM bloggers already know about them, right Judith?).

My dream client is a company called Husky Injection Molding, right in the community in which I live (Caledon, Canada). Husky has won dozens of awards for its environmental policies and programs (zero emissions from production, landscaping its facilities with local native species only, sponsoring environmental field trips for students in the communities in which it operates), and its social programs (in-house free day-care and health club, in-house at-cost restaurant serving only healthy foods, major contributions to local charities). I am convinced that they are an organization that would realize the enormous value that would come from empowering and connecting front-line knowledge workers (at Husky, that includes the people on the manufacturing floor) and improving their effectiveness and the satisfaction they get from their work. So although they have never had a 'knowledge officer', I am sure that they would intuitively 'get' PKM and Social Networking.

I am tired of trying to 'sell' KM to hierarchical, short-term focused, cost-obsessed corporations that don't get it.

And a job at Husky would have the additional benefit of allowing me to bike to work.

My legacy won't be in KM, unless it's convincing Microsoft, IBM/Lotus, Google or Yahoo to develop the second generation simple-to-use, integrated Social Networking tools and Personal Content Management tools I have espoused on my blog, and then make them ubiquitous. I'll leave the challenge of changing organizational knowledge processes and knowledge culture to others smarter, more patient, or more naive than I am ;-) My legacy, which is what I'm returning to now that I've left E&Y and the Center for Business Knowledge, will be in Innovation & Entrepreneurship, my first loves.

Date: Mon Mar 22, 2004 5:52 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: The Importance of Trust - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: The Importance of Trust

One of the questions I posed at the start of this Dialogue was what role trust plays in a decentralized, peer-to-peer model of knowledge sharing. I was reading an article today called Webs of Trust, from a book called Making the Net Work: Sustainable Development in a Digital Society, by Vidhya Alakeson et al. The article is here: http://www.forumforthefuture.org.uk/uploadstore/MTNW_webs_of_trust.pdf

Here are three pertinent quotes from it, that I'd like AOK participants' thoughts on:

"Doctors around the world faced with a medical mystery can log on to the web and share their queries with others in the field. Medicine has a long tradition of knowledge sharing anyway, but before the Internet it took place through conferences, journals and telephone calls. The web has made it possible to seriously improve that knowledge sharing: information is always accessible and answers to questions can come back almost instantly, from a vast number of people." -- Why is trans-organizational trust so strong in the medical profession, between people who don't even work for the same organization?

"For knowledge to flow freely in an organization there have to be high levels of trust between individuals. As management experts Nahapiet and Goshal argue: 'no matter how knowledgeable employees are, if they believe they are working in a hostile low trust environment they will hoard knowledge, avoid collaboration, and display very low levels of creativity'." -- [To what extent are the 'failings' of KM to date actually failings of trust, caused by poor organizational management, and is trust a precondition to KM success within organizations?](#)

"It's the small talk that's most important for building trust between individuals and exchanging valuable information."

-- In most organizations there is less and less 'time' for small talk. Can PCM/SN tools play a role in developing surrogates for small talk, like the 'sidebar Instant Messaging' capability built into some new videoconferencing and online learning tools?

Date: Tue Mar 23, 2004 4:13 am

Subject: PCM/SN: re. The Importance of Trust - Dermot Casey

From: Casey, Dermot, Project Manager, GE Consumer Finance

Subject: RE: The Importance of Trust - Dave Pollard

Dave

As a newcomer to the group and a lurker for the past few weeks I'll take a stab at answering these questions

>> "Doctors around the world faced with a medical mystery can log on to >> the web and share their queries with others in the field. >> -- Why is trans-organizational trust so strong in the medical >> profession, between people who don't even work for the same >> organization?"

Because we perceive Doctors and other medical professionals to have a primary duty to the community they serve, not the company they work for. The professional community is super-ordinate rather than sub-ordinate to the organisation. This can have very serious implications when the trust is violated as with the Shipman case in the UK where Dr Shipman was convicted of murdering 15 of his patients and may have killed as many as 200 more (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Shipman) The role of professional medical organisations further engenders trust through a certification program. It provides a filtering mechanism for people generally including medical professionals.

>> "For knowledge to flow freely in an organization there have to be high >> levels of trust between individuals. >> -- To what extent are the 'failings' of KM to date actually failings >>of trust, caused by poor organizational management, and is trust a >>precondition to KM success within organizations?"

Certainly many of the failings of KM are failings of Trust. Many of the attempts to impose pure technology-based KM solutions derived from a desire to replace people with technology. It's classic Theory X management theory, you can't trust people and you can't depend on them. Or as a friend of mine put it the "see an ass and kick it" school of management. If people trust each other and management then a number of things should happen, technology should be seen as enabling and supporting individuals. Systems will be designed around people and with people in mind (human centric systems) and will be more likely to succeed because they have been designed this way. And people will be trained and supported in the use of tools and their criticisms will be taken on board. This isn't pure a KM issue, problems with CRM and ERM, failure of huge numbers of IT projects can at some level be traced back to issues of trust. If there is anyone on the list

who hasn't read it I'd highly recommend "The Social Life of Information" by John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid which covers this ground in detail. There are a number chapters available for free at the Website <http://www.slofi.com/>

One other point on this is that while trust is a necessary precondition for effective KM I wonder whether its a sufficient condition

>> "It's the small talk that's most important for building trust between >> individuals and exchanging valuable information." >> >> -- In most organizations there is less and less 'time' for small talk. >> Can PCM/SN tools play a role in developing surrogates for small talk, >> like the 'sidebar Instant Messaging' capability built into some new >> videoconferencing and online learning tools? >>

Dave on this I'd say it can definitely help particularly when connecting outside the organisation. Coming back to my previous point on trust, one of the reasons that there is less time for small talk is that there is less trust of employees by organisations. If you're not doing something directly related to cutting costs or increasing revenue you're not doing your job. Small talk and the time taken for coffee breaks is almost seen as theft from the company and not seen as necessary part in developing the social capital within an organisation. If there was more trust there would be time for the small talk that enables the relationships that support and sustain knowledge discovery and creation within organisations. Its a classic example of where short term efficiency can kill long term effectiveness. So yes, use the tools by all means, but don't use them as a substitute where small talk is possible.

A final point on trust. I arrived at AOK through links from your site and despite never having met you I trusted your judgement from reading your Site/Blog on a regular basis. I effectively used you as a filtering mechanism to determine that AOK was worthy of attention in a world where there seems to be insufficient time for everything. I'm delighted I did as the quality of the conversations are superb.

Regards

Dermot

Date: Wed Mar 24, 2004 5:56 am

Subject: PCM/SN: re. The Importance of Trust - Dermot Casey

From: Dave Pollard **Re:** PCM/SN: re. The Importance of Trust - Dermot Casey

Dermot said:

> The professional community is super-ordinate rather than
> sub-ordinate to the organisation.

Welcome, Dermot. This is an interesting observation. I wonder if knowledge and technology are actually enabling more communities to become 'super-ordinate'? I know of some professors, some research scientists, and now, some software developers, who despite working for organizations that are very hierarchical, engage in very open, candid, free-sharing discussions in communities *outside* their organization, and which must, it seems to me, be therefore communities of greater trust than the organizations in which they work. [Are people abandoning closed internal imposed communities \(for which we in KM have responsibility\) in favour of super-ordinate communities, and are organizations therefore losing out?](#)

Date: Tue Mar 23, 2004 5:49 am

Subject: PCM/SN: re. The Importance of Trust - Peter West

From: Peter West

Subject: Re: The Importance of Trust - Dave Pollard

Dave Pollard and Fellow AOKers:

Dave Pollard wrote -

- > -- Why is trans-organizational trust so strong in the medical
- > profession, between people who don't even work for the same organization?

There are many factors at play. The emphasis on evidence-based practice, the allegiance to the Hippocratic Oath (the medical code of ethics), the complexity of human systems and the multidisciplinary nature of health care promotes (requires) sharing. One of the greatest challenges the health system faces is the timely transfer (translation, dissemination, etc.) of health research so as to inform policy/decision making, enhance practice and modify behavior. The fact that health professionals are entrusted with human lives (as opposed to widgets) makes hoarding and other aberrant behaviors seem particularly shallow and unprofessional - but it still occurs - after all, we are only human, and the health system is not immune to politics and other distractions. At another level, and especially in litigious-prone jurisdictions, avoidance of malpractice claims can be an additional stimulus for seeking medical advice.

Dave Pollard wrote -

- > -- To what extent are the 'failings' of KM to date actually failings
- > of trust, caused by poor organizational management, and is trust a
- > precondition to KM success within organizations?

[Many consider trust to be a precondition for effective "deep" knowledge sharing \(tacit knowledge\).](#)

Dave Pollard wrote -

- > -- In most organizations there is less and less 'time' for small talk.
- > Can PCM/SN tools play a role in developing surrogates for small talk,
- > like the 'sidebar Instant Messaging' capability built into some new

> videoconferencing and online learning tools?

PCM/SN and other technologies can support the establishment and nurturing of context-driven interaction and relationship-building - which may contribute to trust-building.

The majority of the trust literature that I have encountered is focused on the relational aspect of trust. In "How Can I Be Trusted? A Virtue Theory of Trustworthiness (Rownam & Littlefield Publishers - 2002)," Nancy Nyquist Potter turn the focus inward. She define full trustworthiness in the following manner - "being the sort of person who can be counted on, given who one is in relation to diverse others, to have the right feelings toward the right sorts of things, to deliberate and make choices, and to act from a trustworthy disposition. General trustworthiness requires that one be nonexploitive and nondominating not only to particular others in specific contexts but that one attend to the myriad ways that local ways of being affect broader power relations. A fully trustworthy person exhibits virtue by being the sort of person who not only fulfills specific trusting responsibilities, but who does so in a way that attends to the various features of the virtue. Thus, a trustworthy person may, at times, be required not to be trustworthy to certain others in order to exhibit full virtue." Potter lists 10 additional requirements of trustworthiness:

1. That we give signs and assurances of our trustworthiness
2. That we take epistemic responsibility seriously
3. That we develop sensitivity to the particularities of others
4. That we respond properly to broken trust
5. That we deal with hurt in relationships - both the hurt we inflict on others and the hurt we experience from others - in ways that sustain connection
6. That our institutions and governing bodies be virtuous
7. That we recognize the importance of being trustworthy to the disenfranchised and oppressed
8. That we committed to mutuality in intimate as well as civic relationships
9. That we work to sustain connection in intimate relationships while neither privatizing nor endangering mutual flourishing
10. That we need also to have other virtues

[I would be interested in learning what the discipline of complexity can teach us about trust.](#)

Best regards, Peter

Date: Tue Mar 23, 2004 2:01 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: re. re. The Importance of Trust - Brian Sarrazin

From: Brian Sarrazin

Subject: The Importance of Trust - Brian Sarrazin What is trust?

[It seems to me that trust is that relaxed feeling one gets from believing they "know" someone. Trust frees mental energy that might otherwise be used for wary attention to self-interest. Receptivity to "knowing" can be hampered in varying degree by negative emotions \(usually variants of fear\).](#)

Let's say you're walking through Malaysia and you come to a footbridge spanning a swollen river. How do you trust it? If you are a monkey, you hop on and gain a muscular sense for it. If you are a fearful and ignorant human, you may refuse to even touch it. If you are not fearful, and very ignorant, you may simply stride across. But let's say you are a structural engineer. You would probably satisfy yourself that the bridge was sound, using your specialized "knowledge."

How do we come to trust others?

We trust others when we believe we "know" how they make decisions and what actions they will take when they do. Dermot felt trust for Dave from reading his blog (me, too). I believe it is because Dermot and I feel we "know" Dave's type, and (probably) we saw ourselves or someone we would like to be.

Trust is always contextual and doesn't require two Boy Scouts. Even murderous thugs can trust each other, but only within certain (probably narrow) parameters. However, since we humans are so very complex, we can never be fully justified in trusting someone even in a normal contextual range unless there exists a certain, specific, bond (as part of the context). And outside the contemplated contextual range, all bets are off.

What can we do to dependably create trust?

I hate to sound like a broken record – or like someone who cannot learn -- but we can offer visibility into action (the Med students watching the surgery example). [There is no better way to "know" someone \(within the context\) than to see them make decisions and take action based on those decisions. I think we should seek ways to efficiently enable such visibility.](#)

To enable visibility into the "expert" perspective, blogs, etc. enable a cockpit monologue (with some dialogue), comments after-the- fact, explanation of actions and interpretations. This is only half of what we need. Picture a system that captures actions into a network graph and maintains a running Bayesian belief net.

Sounds crazy, huh? And it would be for a system for tracking an NFL quarterback. But wouldn't it be fairly straightforward for insurance claims adjustment and loan applications, oh, and book-buying?

Brian

Date: Wed Mar 24, 2004 5:57 am

Subject: **PCM/SN: re. re. The Importance of Trust - Dave Pollard**

From: **Dave Pollard**

Subject: Re: The Importance of Trust - Brian Sarrazin

Brian said:

- > We trust others when we believe we "know" how they make decisions and
- > what actions they will take when they do.

To me this is a huge argument in favour of PKM. Perhaps then, there is a third reason people don't use knowledge in central repositories (the first being lack of awareness or inability to find it, and the second being lack of context to determine its applicability and value): In the absence of knowing its author well, we don't trust it. Maybe this is why knowledge (usually top-down, highly-filtered knowledge) that has the weight of authority behind it *is* used in central repositories, where more peer-to-peer unfiltered knowledge is usually not. *But*, if this peer-to-peer unfiltered knowledge were instead in a blog or other personal content repository, so that potential users could browse the author's other content, and if (per Brian and Dermot) that was enough to engender trust, perhaps a lot more knowledge would be shared, and perhaps organizational trust could flourish where it otherwise could not.

Date: Wed Mar 24, 2004 5:59 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. The Importance of Trust - John Barrett

From: John Barrett

Subject: Re: PCM/SN: The Importance of Trust - Dave Pollard

While there is little debate that a low trust environment tends to limit knowledge sharing, I don't see a significant percentage of businesses having this type environment. Likewise I haven't observed many high trust environments either. The vast majority are in the middle, with a level of trust generally above the threshold that would limit knowledge sharing.

For these there seems to be several reasons that knowledge sharing does not readily occur: 1.) Expectations and supporting behaviors regarding knowledge sharing have not been explicitly stated and performance against these is not measured; 2.) No time is allowed for anything but task completion; 3.) The "virtualness" of many organizations and teams makes "knowing" others and sharing knowledge more difficult; and 4.) as Nancy Dixon has pointed out, much of knowledge sharing is dependent on the receiver's skills, which have been given little attention.

With regard to Dave's third question, I believe we need to consider how to explicitly build exercises and techniques into our tool sets that will help us to get to know others. A "sidebar" IM conversation here and there will help some, but these are likely to be too random with too little coverage to really make much of a difference.

Has anyone tried or used exercises/techniques within a virtual environment in this regard? Are there any Organizational Development practitioners lurking about this discussion who can jump in with some ideas?

John Barrett

Date: Wed Mar 24, 2004 8:11 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Building Communities Through Virtual Communications - Steve Denning

From: Steve Denning

Subject: Building communities through virtual communications

John Barrett asks: "Has anyone tried or used exercises/techniques within a virtual environment in [building trust and creating communities]? Are there any Organizational Development practitioners lurking about this discussion who can jump in with some ideas?"

[There's no mystery that the principal way to build trust and nurture community is through the sharing of stories.](http://www.stevedenning.com/storytelling_communities.html) If you've got time, living together and sharing common experiences will do it too, but when time is limited, sharing of stories can be accelerate the process dramatically: http://www.stevedenning.com/storytelling_communities.html

The handicaps to achieving this in virtual communications are however immense.

First there's bandwidth issue, since most (perhaps 90%) of the communication in face-to-face storytelling comes not from the content of the story but in the way it's told - the tone of voice, the look in the eye, the body language, the interaction that flows from this, and so on. Most of this non-content communication is precisely what is eliminated in virtual communications. In virtual communications, it's usually difficult to see who else is "on line" and how they are reacting to the story, so that the amount of interaction is dramatically less.

Then there's the time issue. I think Dave Pollard is right that if people had the time to read a long set of blogs, they might learn enough about the person to begin to trust what they say. But the question here is: do they have the time? And will they spend it unless they have stumbled on the blog through a preexisting interest in a common subject in the first place? And also: does the author of the blog have enough discipline to stay "on theme"? In principle, blogs could help, but whether they work in practice would be my question.

[I'd be interested in hearing of any successes in virtual community building.](#) I've seen one possible successful example of a purely online dialogue in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in New York which operates a moderated dialogue: although the participants have for the most part not met face to face, and are scattered around the world, the dialogue appears to enjoy considerable openness of communication, in part because of the thoughtful and supportive moderation of the dialogue and in part because of the top level management support given to the whole undertaking. I'd be interested in hearing of other examples if they exist.

Steve Denning

Date: Thu Mar 25, 2004 6:21 am

Subject: PCM/SN: re. Building Communities Virtually - Alice Macgillivray

From: Alice Macgillivray

Subject: Successes at Virtual Community Building

Steve Denning said: "I'd be interested in hearing of any successes in virtual community building. I've seen one possible successful example of a purely online dialogue in the United Nations Development Program..."

I suspect you are using strict criteria, as some of the examples with which I am familiar are fairly well known. Companycommand.com seems to thrive on primarily virtual communication, as does Onefish.org. A community within onefish: Fishfolk used to be very vibrant, and may still be. It was/is a very eclectic group of persons concerned about sustainable fisheries management, ranging from ichthyologists to housewives of fishers where stocks and livelihoods are threatened. I still lurk in a technical community that deals with technical challenges of a software tool (ODTUG). Not inspiring content if one no longer uses the tool, but a loyal group of helpers who leap in within hours or minutes from around the globe to help with requests.

I've recently been part of two events that began with on line, then moved to face to face and back on line. Ironically, the face to face dynamics were the most challenging. And this story won't speak to sustainability as it's so new, but just today a few of us launched an on-line dialogue with persons who know each other -- for the most part -- from virtual communities. BTW the dialogue is designed to explore a number of cases, and I posted "my case" using one of your storytelling frameworks. And if my memory serves me well, Jerry was assembling some wonderful text-only stories from this forum a year or so ago.

Date: Thu Mar 25, 2004 7:04 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. Building Virtual Communities - John Barrett

From: John Barrett

Subject: Re: Building Communities Through Virtual Communications - Steve Denning

Steve and All,

No doubt we all agree that stories in person contain much beyond what can be written. However many stories that pass our way do arrive in written form.

[Do you think it would be possible to create guidelines/recommendations and a template for composing a written story to be posted in a virtual community?](#) Could we put it in some sort of online tool that makes it easier to indicate emotion and give feedback?

Just some additional noodling about this issue.

John Barrett

Date: Thu Mar 25, 2004 10:30 am

Subject: PCM/SN: KM or km - Chris Macrae [+Jerry Ash]

From: Chris Macrae, author & intangibles transparency mentor, London

Subject: KM or km

KM could be a very big subject humanizing the organisational typologies that people need around them to be happy, and free. Its interesting that the US declaration of independence was as I read it a great systems charter- if a system keeps oppressing the people have the right to tear it down (and it is not lost on this Brit that it was the British class system that was America's first such case of nation-wide change)

Of course km could also be a very small subject. Growing up in the 60s, I am still far from convinced that man and computer has ever managed each other as well as in the moon race decade- the energies of individuals multiplying teams multiplying NASA's hierarchy transparently multiplying business partners...wow that made the world proud to see (probably even if you were the average Russian person)

Regarding the risk that a big subject becomes small: 25 years ago an American came to a similar decision about Organisational Transformation. OT (Large Scale Change) professionals were jolly lucky because Harrison had previously been a priest so they trusted him to stage a get-together. And the next, and so the professionals that wanted to collaboratively grow that practice resolved to meet annually and to govern such meeting by the most open conferencing method ever designed. www.openspaceworld.com . The Alumni Network of Open Space is, unless someone wants to nominate another for us to go and check out, the most respectful Community of Practice there is, as well as working in 80 countries on some of the biggest humanitarian challenges I can imagine.

Bottom line: if KM is to be spelt with a big K then I think its practice better organize an annual get together in the open space way because then we can all see each other humanly first, and truly learn -- and that 2.5 days investment will sustain a year of virtual pow-wow in good grace. When's a good time to convene KM1 in Florida? -- there's quite a good club med at Sandpiper which is useful so Europeans can feel half at home too- I quite fancy seeing 100 of you there communing in a circle. The people who come are the right people as open space invitations always declare!

Chris Macrae www.valuetrue.com

[+Jerry Ash: Or perhaps it would be better said if AOK is to be spelt with a big K we better organize an annual get-together. I agree and our current planning process -- headed by Noreen Kelly -- needs to deal with that issue. Florida would be a great venue (I'm here already!) and we just need to know whether such an event will actually draw people from around the world. Another potential question for the online survey we are about to

launch!]

Date: Wed Mar 24, 2004 6:06 am

Subject: FW: PCM/SN: Piloting Blogs in Business - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: PCM/SN: Piloting Blogs in Business

Although it's taken us awhile to get around to it, I think we're honing in on the value of weblogs as KM tools:

The Good: -- simple, effective publishing medium -- enables people to 'subscribe' to what they want -- the content is completely personal (so: pride of ownership, better context, more likely to be maintained and kept current, versus centrally managed 'publications') -- helps engender trust in the author & hence more robust sharing

The Bad: -- current tools are too techie and require some knowledge of HTML and RSS protocols -- not integrated with the rest of the publishing 'process'

I'm interested in knowing whether, **even before we improve weblogs to make them easier to set up and maintain**, there aren't some obvious applications where they could be introduced **now** on a significant scale in many organizations to solve some urgent KM problems. The applications and users I think are most appropriate for blogs are:

1. Replace existing publications: internal and customer newsletters, policy and procedure manuals, regulatory updates etc. (give everyone in the company that produces, regularly contributes to, or edits such publications a blog).
2. Enable Subject Matter Experts to publish and share expertise: give anyone in the organization who is an acknowledged expert in a subject and who is frequently consulted to share their expertise, a blog, and encourage them, whenever they respond to a request for knowledge, to 'write it up' as a blog article.
3. Enable COP coordinators and core members to publicize and promote new additions to the community's shared knowledge, and to canvass members for needed knowledge and insight.

These three categories of people are the 'low hanging fruit' for blogging, I think, and only by getting these tools out there are we really going to know how to 'tweak' them and deploy them to maximize knowledge sharing. When I first looked at blogs (before I started my own) I was pretty dismissive of their potential. Now I'm a believer.

Who else, besides SMEs, core COP people and those who write for a living, might be good candidates for piloting blogs in business?

Date: Thu Mar 25, 2004 6:25 am

Subject: PCM/SN: re. Piloting Blogs in Business - Jack Vinson

From: Jack Vinson

Subject: RE: Piloting Blogs in Business - Dave Pollard

Dave suggests the first internal business bloggers will be the COP people, subject matter experts (SMEs), and internal publishers. He asks what other groups of people might be good targets.

As always, it depends. I think the definition of SME could be greatly expanded to allow, for example, laboratory researchers to publish their intermediate findings internally. I've thought a bit about how blogs could end up replacing a lot of what goes on in paper laboratory notebooks. Getting beyond the legal hurdles (which is happening), blogs also get beyond the paper hurdle of providing access to intellectual property as it develops. Of course, this breaks one of Dave's premises, that of using software as it stands. But I still think people in this kind of environment could benefit from the virtual teaming and trust-building exercise of posting their ideas and direction on internal websites, even if they must still keep paper notebooks.

What about groups where they already have processes for writing things down -- say operators, who must already keep records of important events in the facility? If they are already in the habit of writing and having their material read, then they may be more likely able to make the shift to a medium like blogs to extend and archive the communications.

We should also pay attention to what the folks at SocialText are doing, since they are selling the PCM piece to companies now. (Disclaimer, I just had dinner with a group that included Rick Klau, VP of Business Development, at www.SocialText.com.)

Regards,

Jack Vinson

Date: Fri Mar 26, 2004 4:04 am

Subject: PCM/SN: re. Piloting Blogs in Business - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: PCM/SN: re. Piloting Blogs in Business - Jack Vinson

Jack said:

- > I think the definition of SME could be greatly
- > expanded to allow, for example, laboratory researchers to publish
- > their intermediate findings internally. I've thought a bit about how
- > blogs could end up replacing a lot of what goes on in paper laboratory
- > notebooks. Getting beyond the legal hurdles (which is happening),

- > blogs also get beyond the paper hurdle of providing access to
- > intellectual property as it develops.

Absolutely, and [businesses which are constantly developing new products](#) (most software companies, pharma/biotech, media & entertainment, equipment manufacturers, even construction and clothing and cosmetics companies) [are ripe ground for using blogs as a JIT medium of sharing work-in-process, ideas, and even co-development.](#)

Date: Fri Mar 26, 2004 4:36 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. Piloting Blogs in Business - Bob Bater

From: Bob Bater

Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 353

Dave (Pollard),

You said:

- > Who else, besides SMEs, core COP people and those who write for a living, might be good candidates for piloting blogs in business?

[We did a project last year for a major UK engineering company to develop recommendations for a Lessons Learned \('LL'\) system. Our analysis produced the following LL lifecycle:](#)

[- capture - diffuse - peer review - comment/combine](#)

These four phases were to be re-iterative, with comments and combinations accumulating until an expert review decided that the LL could be crystallized sufficiently for the final phase of codification and storage and, of course, subsequent retrieval in a 'before-action-review'. We recommended blogging software for the four cyclical phases.

This could be regarded as a special case of a CoP, I suppose.

Regards,

Bob

Date: Sat Mar 27, 2004 6:27 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. Piloting Blogs in Business - Kaye Vivian [+IMPORTANT NOTE]

[IMPORTANT NOTE: Conversations with Dave Pollard have "officially" ended, but continued discussion is always encouraged and Dave has said he's not going anywhere. Often these extended discussions last for another week or two, but this time there is a

problem. Michele and I will be on the road beginning next Wednesday, March 31 and, since the AOK Knowledge Network is a moderated list, posts arriving between March 31 and April 14 will not be approved and distributed until April 15. SOOOO, if you have something more to say, I urge you to say it now! - Jerry Ash]

From: Kaye Vivian

Subject: Re: [AOK_K-Net] Re. Piloting Blogs in Business

Hi Jack,

Dave missed a very important group. The first business users will not "be" the COP people, subject matter experts (SMEs), and internal publishers, though they will be users. It already "is" competitive intelligence (CI)! Our company was not the first to use blogs for CI, and we have had blogging software installed for that purpose since last June.

I'm in a very conservative insurance company environment, and we put it in somewhat under the radar of our usual IT/sourcing/acquisitions process by using it for a small group of people who obtain competitive information from a variety of sources regularly and needed a place and way to share what they learn and discuss what others post. It's inexpensive and great for that. The bad news is that we started with what we thought was the best product available (Userland's Frontier) only to watch the company implode and leave us pretty much on our own without user support. (And it's a very unfriendly tool, in that a lot of the things you would want to customize are hard coded into the product and you can't access them, even with customer support!)

Subsequently we found a terrific CI tool called Traction (www.traction.com) that was developed for the CIA and is used by a large number of big companies. It's a blogging based application that has been in development for seven years...so I think it probably wins in the "first business use of blogs" department!

[Kaye, I used that URL and got a heavy vehicle parts company called Traction. - Jerry Ash]

A side benefit of the blogging tool, we have discovered, is that it's possible to use the RSS component to replace some costlier web site publishing processes we have in house. A weekly departmental web site update on our internal portal using normal document management updating processes costs about \$300,000 per year. RSS drops that by more than 60%.

While blogs seem a viable tool for KM, I can tell you from "the front" that the cultural change impact is substantially more than it seems it would be up-front. Blogs are probably optimal in small to mid-size organizations...say 20-200 people...and especially consulting organizations and/or organizations with a lot of under-30 users. Once you get to many thousands of employees in a traditional old-line business, you have all kinds of heirarchical constraints, management road blocks and "I don't want to rock the boat" mentalities to get past. People simply won't change how they work unless they are held

accountable for the new process, and getting the reward system to change in a big organizations is a daunting task that can take years. We've been working on it!

I think we will continue to see blogs used successfully in various pockets within large organizations, but I will stick my neck out and say that I don't see k-logs as a viable universal replacement for other KM approaches. It's simply too radical a change in how people in big companies are in the habit of working. And turning a super tanker is a very slow process. :)

Best regards, Kaye Vivian

Date: Sat Mar 27, 2004 12:20 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Re. Piloting Blogs in Business - Jim McGee

From: Jim McGee

Subject: Re: Piloting Blogs in Business - Kaye Vivian [+IMPORTANT NOTE]

Traction is at www.tractionsoftware.com

Date: Thu Mar 25, 2004 7:44 am

Subject: PCM/SN: re. 'KM for Front-Line Staff' - John Barrett

From: John Barrett

Subject: 'Knowledge Management for Front-Line Staff'

Certainly the ideas offered in this article make sense.

<http://www.steptwo.com.au/papers/kmc_frontline/pdf/KMC_Frontline.pdf>

In fact I've seen presentations on two systems (that include not just software, but also processes) that claim and offer examples of "front-line" KM in customer response settings. I don't recall the vendors at the moment, but will try to track them down if anyone is interested.

Based on my own experience in these environments I don't think blogging would be effective. It is critical to turn around and make available new information and knowledge extremely quickly. This dictates the need for structure in the input and also how the information is accessed. Today at least, blogging is too free form on both ends of that equation.

I do agree that as the author implies, all too often front-line workers are not considered when knowledge management opportunities are discussed. That is unfortunate as there are many KM practices and principles that do apply here.

John Barrett

Date: Fri Mar 26, 2004 4:08 am

Subject: PCM/SN: re. 'KM for Front-Line Staff' - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: 'KM for Front-Line Staff' - John Barrett

I second John's desire for some protocols and templates for written stories for business. I'd love to see some substantial work invested in this, perhaps by some graduate students who approach this with an open mind.

John said:

> Based on my own experience in [front-line] environments I don't think blogging
> would be effective. It is critical to turn around and make available new
> information and knowledge extremely quickly. This dictates the need for
> structure in the input and also how the information is accessed.

I agree with you for most 'top-down' knowledge: instructions, policies, and other knowledge that is highly prescriptive. But James also makes the point that front-line people are key to learning and communicating needs and ideas and assessments from customers. To that extent, [front-line people are 'customer SMEs', and I think giving them a vehicle like a blog for capturing and communicating what they're hearing from customers could be very useful.](#)

Date: Fri Mar 26, 2004 6:34 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Protocols and Templates for Stories - Steve Denning

From: Steve Denning

Subject: RE: Protocols and templates for stories

John and Dave have requested 'protocols and templates for written stories for business.'

[Protocols and templates for stories in business are what my forthcoming book, "Squirrel Inc.: A Fable of Leadership Through Storytelling" \(Jossey-Bass, May 2004\) and my upcoming article in the May issue of Harvard Business Review \("Telling Tales\) are about.](#)

The main focus of my work is on oral stories, but the basics of stories - whether written or oral - are essentially the same: it's just that the bandwidth for written stories is so much less than oral stories and there are different ways of conveying the look of the eye, the tone of voice, the body language of the storyteller in a written story. But the basics of narrative are the same in both media.

To illustrate what's involved in these different protocols and templates, you can download the first couple of chapters of Squirrel Inc from <http://www.stevedenning.com/Squirrel.htm>. These chapters happen to deal with stories to spark action. These are stories that - have a hero, - are about a specific incident that

actually happened where the change has already occurred, - are told in a minimalist fashion, and - have a positive tonality.

By contrast, chapter 8 deals with stories that share knowledge which typically: - are about a problem, the context, the solution and the explanation for the solution, - are told in a maximalist fashion, and - deal with issues and difficulties and hence usually have a negative tonality.

They are very different patterns. Thus stories to spark action are positive and minimalist, whereas stories to share knowledge tend to be negative and maximalist. Stories to spark action have a protagonist, while stories to share knowledge do not necessarily have a protagonist.

Understanding the implications of these different patterns is key to the effective use of stories, whether oral or written. Let me illustrate this with a couple of points.

a. Knowledge sharing stories do not inherently have a protagonist - a hero or heroine. They are about problems and how they got solved, or didn't get solved. Because there is no necessary protagonist, they can lack human interest and hence can tend to be boring. If you want such a story to be interesting, you may need to "inject" a protagonist by telling the story from the point of view of a particular actor on the scene. This is typically what good case studies do. The protagonist isn't necessary for the sharing of knowledge, but may be necessary if you don't want to bore readers.

b. A key dimension of knowledge sharing stories concerns the necessity of having an explanation - why did the solution actually solve the problem? Jim Collins' otherwise wonderful book "From Good To Great" has been criticized by Clayton Christensen and others for telling the story that all of his "great" organizations had "low profile" CEOs. The suggestion is that companies might focus on hiring low profile CEOs. But since he offers no coherent explanation for the finding, it's information, not knowledge, and not really a sufficient basis for action.

c. A frequent mistake in the use of story is to try to spark action with a negative story. One reason for this is that most spontaneously occurring stories (What Dave Snowden calls "feral stories") are about difficulties and issues. A negative story can be great for enhancing understanding and transferring knowledge but it doesn't lead to forward motion. When we hear or read it, we are typically sadder but wiser, but we don't leap into action. If you want enthusiastic action, you need a story with a positive tonality, while taking care to make sure that the story is also plausible to the audience. If it isn't plausible, it will generate anti-stories, and then you will be worse off than if you'd never told the story.

With seven different types of story and around five main dimensions of the narrative pattern, we're looking at a fairly complex set of relationships. While the HBR article lays it out analytically, the book *Squirrel Inc*, illustrates the different patterns through, guess

what? - a story, in the hope that this will be a more entertaining way to understand what's involved.

In the meantime, pending the publication of the article and the book, you can find daily illustrations of these narrative patterns in the Storytelling in the News section of my website at: <http://www.stevedenning.com/SIN-Archive.html>

I hope this is helpful as an introduction to a very rich subject. If there are specific issues you'd like to review, I'd be happy to discuss either in this listserv or off-line.

Steve Denning

Date: Thu Mar 25, 2004 9:20 am

Subject: **PCM/SN: re. Importance of PKM & Frontline Staff - Dermot Casey**

From: **Dermot Casey**

Subject: Re: Importance of PKM & Frontline Staff

Dave

Tying into your idea's:

I referenced John Thakera in another post today
<<http://www.doorsofperception.com/In+the+Bubble/details/66/?page=1>>. In the same essay he makes some wonderful points that go to the heart of Dave Pollard's idea on PKM:

"For me, the best description of the destination is by Ivan Illich. Illich said, 35 years ago, that we need to:

"Give back to people the capacity to resolve their problems within the network of their own relationships.' So, when designing systems, services, infrastructures - and work itself - we should ask whether our design actions will enable or disable human agency. "

[PKM and Blogs which work well, work because they enable human agency, its their power and their promise.](#)

It's also something to consider when looking at KM tools for frontline staff, who traditionally have been the most disempowered group. I was reading an article the other day (I think it was in one of Mark McElroy or Joe Firestone's pieces... made curious by the debate I checked out their material) which noted that Nordstrom is one of the most highly rated organisations for customer service in the US. Their policy manual is simple a one line statement that goes 'use your best judgement under all conditions'. (There's an interesting chapter on Nordstrom here http://www.robertspector.com/NordWay_extract.html) Hows about that for a simple rule

and boundary and enabling human agency. I think we need to get these ideas and structures right first or the tools we talk about will be useless....

Regards

Dermot

Date: Fri Mar 26, 2004 4:10 am

Subject: **PCM/SN: re. Importance of PKM & Frontline Staff - Dave Pollard**

From: **Dave Pollard**

Subject: Re: Importance of PKM & Frontline Staff - Dermot Casey

[Dermot's excellent point on the necessity to enable and not disable 'human agency' with KM has some profound implications:](#)

1. When you substitute command & control and rules for human agency, you stifle creative thinking, and give front-line people an excuse for customer service failures (I was just following the rules)
 2. People learn by applying their own knowledge, not applying others', so disabling human agency can also stifle learning
 3. Any job that is so prescriptive that there is more danger and inefficiency than value in human agency, should probably be automated
 4. If it's true that trust is greatest among peers, human agency must work best when each front-line worker has time, opportunity and incentive to share knowledge often with peers
 5. If downsizing or corporate policy or workload curtails the number of peers or the number of sharing opportunities with peers, the quality of service to customers will inevitably be impoverished.
-

Date: Thu Mar 25, 2004 6:45 am

Subject: **PCM/SN: Blogs, Conversations and Community Standards - Bill Hall [+Jerry Ash]**

From: Bill Hall

Subject: Blogs, conversations and community standards for knowledge

On top of some of the issues raised in our intersession conversations about the nature of knowledge and the roles of individuals in managing it, Dave Pollard's session has really caused the pot to boil. The latest contributions relating to the importance of trust and rules and norms for conversation turn up the heat even more.

I note from the Yahoogroups page that there are already 148 contributions this month to AOK - 20+ more than any other month in the history of the site. A number of the contributions have also been quite long and dense, needing deep and considered thought for full comprehension. It is not surprising that people are showing signs of "information" overload. There are a number of contributions I would like to respond to, but like many

others I have a day job that precludes doing so. However, perhaps I can summarise some of what I would have liked to say.

One of the threads generating heat this month has been the various paradigms for what knowledge is and the relationships between claimed knowledge and actual reality. The other has been discussion of tools and frameworks or conditions for assembling and sharing individual knowledge and to what degree the sources and recipients for that knowledge should be trusted. I would argue that the two threads are actually different aspects of the same fundamental issue: what criteria can we use to evaluate and trust our own and others' claims to knowledge.

Three stages in the social construction and evaluation of knowledge have been hot topics for discussion this month:

- * blogs,
- * conversations (e.g., forums like AOK) and wikis
- * and community standards for discussions.

Another has been implicit in the discussions from prior months: Popperian critical rationalism and its applicability to personal and community knowledge (see the McElroy and Firestone presentation - http://www.kmci.org/Resources/corporate_epistemologies_and_km.pdf). What follows below is in the Popperian tradition. I won't rehash the prior discussions relating to critical rationalism except to note that there are good reasons quite separate from the epistemology itself why Popper is not better understood by the humanities and in the KM community. Bartley's "A Popperian Harvest", in the 1982 book: *In Pursuit of Truth* (Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, NJ. summarises Popper's main contributions to epistemology, and explains why academic philosophers and many others with backgrounds in the humanities have had so many problems coming to grips with Popper's thinking. Although only available in paper - it is worth visiting an old-fashioned library to read it.

Fundamentally, critical rationalism accepts that we can never prove a claim to knowledge is true, but argues that truth exists as a fiduciary principle such that we can use criticism as a tool to selectively eliminate demonstrably false knowledge. Claims that survive criticism are thus more trustworthy than if they had not been criticised.

Thus, claims to knowledge can be evaluated on the degree to which they have been criticised against reality. The more stringently tested the knowledge is, the more trustworthy it should be.

Blogs, by this criterion, rank relatively low on the spectrum of trust insofar as they represent comparatively unedited and unreviewed thoughts of a single person (which is not to say that blogs cannot become discussions). The blog space may be a highly useful

tool for individual use assembling information and transforming it into a form of knowledge. It can also be quite useful for sharing progress and ideas to assist discovery. But the trustworthiness of the blog's content is entirely dependent on how critical its individual owner has been in constructing his/her claims and that information is often not available for evaluation.

Conversations like the present forum can be quite confronting, but because they provide the possibility for trenchant criticism of ideas, we are in a better position to evaluate the degree to which claims and counterclaims have withstood criticism to reach a more trusted conclusion.

Wikis, because they are designed to be the product of community contribution and criticism are probably more trustworthy than a blog, but they still suffer from being no more trustworthy than the last contributor. However, where the history of criticism and change is recorded (as in the example from Wikipedia - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge>; <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/wiki.phtml?title=Knowledge&action=history>) we can review the history of this criticism to inform the degree of trust we have in the wiki's content.

Community standards for discussion should at some level provide ground rules for rational criticism to ensure that important claims to knowledge have been well criticised and are thus worthy of trust. The contributions in this forum relating to the trustworthiness of clinical communication reflect such standards. The construction of knowledge in medical (and scientific communities in general) are subject to very strong fiduciary criticism via peer review publication processes. It is generally assumed that the knowledge shared in medical and scientific forums has been or is being criticised by such processes, and can therefore be assumed to be trusted. (Which does not deny that even medical and scientific claims can still fall short of truth.)

In sum, a critical rationalist approach can help to provide us with reasonably objective measures of trustworthiness of various sources of knowledge. When I have some time, I'll outline some of the ways these concepts are being implemented in the company I work for.

Finally, a note to our moderator. Personally, even though there are times when I simply haven't the time to read all of the long and thoughtful contributions (which can be quite irritating - especially when they are followed by possibly even longer critiques and arguments), this forum is exceptionally valuable because (1) contributors generally make well thought out claims and (2) the claims have been subject to searching criticisms of potential weak points or from different points of view. If the claims are to be trusted, we have good grounds for estimating the degree to which they should be trusted.

On the other hand, criticism of one's pet ideas can be hard to take, especially when we have big egos and begin attacking the person rather than the ideas. However, I would not in any way seek to limit the depth of the discussions - although I suggest you keep a fire

hose and delete key handy to douse flames if they become too heated and personally antagonistic.

Don't change what you are doing. If Dave Snowden, Steve Else, or I don't have time to read extensive contributions, that is our choice and loss. The alternative is for the forum to degenerate to chat room trivia - easy to read in a few minutes and guaranteed not to strain the brain.

Regards,

Bill Hall

[+Jerry Ash: Because Bill's observations on "Posting Norms" were pertinent to the content of his post, they are displayed here. The remaining posts from today on "Posting Norms" will be grouped in the last post approved today and appearing in tomorrow's Digest. I encourage you to read them although the reviews of my performance are far from unanimous! The posting issue has not been totally a diversion from the original theme of this Dialogue. Hosting and moderating communities is a tough, delicate and critical job -- a sometimes painful demonstration of the soft and not-so-soft side of social networking.]

Date: Fri Mar 26, 2004 4:06 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Blogs, Conversations and Community Standards - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: PCM/SN: Blogs, Conversations and Community Standards - Bill Hall

[+Jerry Ash

First, I'd like to thank Bill for the excellent summary of the discussion to date. And I'd like to agree with Jerry that discussion of posting norms on this (and any) discussion group are **absolutely** on-topic. Discussion groups are a form of social networking, although a sometimes brutally primitive form.

Bill said:

- > Claims to knowledge can be evaluated on the degree to which they have
- > been criticised against reality. The more stringently tested the knowledge
- > is, the more trustworthy it should be.
- > Blogs, by this criterion, rank relatively low on the spectrum of trust
- > insofar as they represent comparatively unedited and unreviewed thoughts of
- > a single person (which is not to say that blogs cannot become discussions)...
- > The trustworthiness of the blog's content is entirely dependent on how critical
- > its individual owner has been in constructing his/her claims and that
- > information is often not available for evaluation.

I have to beg to differ on this. First, blogs are not always individual efforts -- many of the most popular blogs are 'group blogs', and some go through quite rigorous editing, much like the 'newsletters' that they may replace. Secondly, any blogger that does not use the power of the Internet to link to online sources used in their article, and to cite offline sources, justifiably sacrifices a great deal of trust from every experienced blog reader. I am aware of two bloggers who got caught in lies on their blogs, and their reputation was toast -- they lost almost all their audience and never got it back.

There is actually a fair bit of material on Karl Popper online. I particularly like this 'beginner's guide to falsificationism': http://www.science.gb.net/2_Popper.pdf I find the whole discussion on inductive logic and its lack of verifiability fascinating. I highly recommend, for a compelling and contrary anti-Popperian view of argument, the work of Barbara Minto on Structured Thinking -- you can find a primer here: <http://blogs.salon.com/0002007/2003/09/09.html#a436>

And Bill said:

- > This forum is
- > exceptionally valuable because (1) contributors generally make well thought
- > out claims and (2) the claims have been subject to searching criticisms of
- > potential weak points or from different points of view...
- > On the other hand, criticism of one's pet ideas can be hard to take.

Absolutely. To some extent, my blog's readers have 'self-selected' to continue reading my articles, and that means they tend to be much less critical than an open 'unowned' forum like this. I have learned a great deal from the criticisms of my (and others') arguments this month. In fact, the only things in this forum of greater value than the constructive criticisms are the real-life examples.

Date: Fri Mar 26, 2004 4:31 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Popper's Views on the Web - Joe Firestone

From: Joe Firestone

Subject: Re: Blogs, Conversations and Community Standards - Dave Pollard

Dave and Bill,

Dave commented on Bill's statement quoted just below:

Bill said:

- > Claims to knowledge can be evaluated on the degree to which they have
- > been criticised against reality. The more stringently tested the knowledge
- > is, the more trustworthy it should be.
- > Blogs, by this criterion, rank relatively low on the spectrum of trust
- > insofar as they represent comparatively unedited and unreviewed thoughts of

- > a single person (which is not to say that blogs cannot become discussions)...
- > The trustworthiness of the blog's content is entirely dependent on how critical
- > its individual owner has been in constructing his/her claims and that
- > information is often not available for evaluation.

Saying:

I have to beg to differ on this. First, blogs are not always individual efforts -- many of the most popular blogs are 'group blogs', and some go through quite rigorous editing, much like the 'newsletters' that they may replace. Secondly, any blogger that does not use the power of the Internet to link to online sources used in their article, and to cite offline sources, justifiably sacrifices a great deal of trust from every experienced blog reader. I am aware of two bloggers who got caught in lies on their blogs, and their reputation was toast -- they lost almost all their audience and never got it back.

I'm inclined to think that both Bill and Dave have points. [I think rather than looking at individual blogs, it's more relevant to look at the blog community within a particular domain of interest.](#) Within such a community you can easily have the dynamic of conjectures and refutation that Bill is looking for. And while no single blog may present high trust knowledge, the pattern of organization a user develops from the arguments presented in the community may be very worthwhile. Anyway, when we compare blogs to professional journals as a publication outlet for new findings, blogs, in my view, provide a better opportunity for rapid and significant interaction than do journals.

Dave said:

[There is actually a fair bit of material on Karl Popper online. I particularly like this 'beginner's guide to falsificationism': \[http://www.science.gb.net/2_Popper.pdf\]\(http://www.science.gb.net/2_Popper.pdf\) I find the whole discussion on inductive logic and its lack of verifiability fascinating. I highly recommend, for a compelling and contrary anti-Popperian view of argument, the work of Barbara Minto on Structured Thinking -- you can find a primer here: <http://blogs.salon.com/0002007/2003/09/09.html#a436>](#)

I think the beginner's guide to falsificationism is focused almost entirely on a caricatured reconstruction of views expressed in Popper's early work (written originally in German in the early 1930s and published in an abbreviated form in English as *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* and considered by many to be the leading work of philosophy of science in the 20th century. "The beginner's guide" also has a nod to Popper's *Conjectures and Refutations*, first published in 1963.). I think "The Beginner's Guide" is a caricature for a number of reasons. First, it never provides the argument showing why Popper and Hume believe that "induction" is invalid, and therefore it never compels the reader to face and understand that argument. Second, it doesn't provide a good account of why the invalidity of induction is a problem that has bedeviled philosophers since Hume. Third, it leaves the reader thinking that Popper's view is that one cannot prove that propositions are true but that one can prove that propositions are false. However, Popper's view is much more nuanced than that and actually encompasses the view that we cannot prove

or 'justify' anything with certainty and that the attempt to do so should be given up in favor of the critical approach to error elimination. Fourth, the little critique of Popper at the end of "The Beginner's Guide . . ." is oversimplified, hangs on the definition of words having unclear and ambiguous meanings and, in my judgement, is incorrect since Popper never made an inductive inference from good corroboration to high verisimilitude.

Since your time as moderator is ending shortly, we don't have the time or space to carry on a full discussion of Popper, but here's some information and opinion.

First, I think my first blog, "All Life is Problem Solving: Learning and Knowledge Making in an Evolutionary and Critical Perspective" at <http://radio.weblogs.com/0135950/2004/03/20.html> provides an alternative introduction to Popper which is much more faithful to the spirit of his work and the course of its development over almost 65 years of professional life than "The Beginner's Guide . . ."

Second, if one is looking for a short (less than 100 pages), book-length, inexpensive and simply written introduction which is nevertheless quite accurate, than I think the best work is Mark Notturmo's *On Popper* (Wadsworth, 2002) at http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0534584012/qid=1080314718/sr=1-1/ref=sr_1_1/103-0749695-5702245?v=glance&s=books

[NOTE: You probably know this, but long URLs sometimes need to be copied and pasted into your browser window.]

Third, Popper is being used increasingly in KM. In addition to Bill Hall's work, which uses Popper heavily, my work and Mark McElroy's is steeped in Popper's thinking. Our work on the Open Enterprise is essentially Popper meets complexity theory meets value theory. Our views on Knowledge, Knowledge Claim Evaluation, the KLC, and the Origin of the KLC, covered in Chs. 1-2, 5, and 6 of *Key Issues in The New Knowledge Management*, synthesize Popper, complexity theory, Argyris and Schon, motivational theory from psychology, and some aspects of Pragmatism.

Our work in corporate epistemology is based on Popper's thinking, Ilkka Niiniluoto's development in *Critical Scientific Realism* (Oxford, 1999), Mark Notturmo's *Science and the Open Society* (Central European University Press, 2000), and work by various evolutionary epistemologists as reflected in Radnitzky and Bartley's volume, *Evolutionary Epistemology* (Open Court, 1988). My book on *Enterprise Information Portals and Knowledge Management* is indebted to Popper's ideas on problem solving, as is my specification of the Enterprise Knowledge Portal concept.

Apart from the above, Kamen Lozev, a Bulgarian academic, is teaching the application of Popper to KM in his program, and Deborah Blackman (Sydney, Australia, and James Connelly and Steven Henderson (both from Southampton, UK), have just published an article in *The Learning organization Journal* applying Popper to the clarification and specification of Double-loop Learning.

Fourth, there's a great amount of discussion of Popper's views on the web, both pro and con. The kmci list serv groups, are pretty inactive now, but they were very active during 2001 and 2002 and a number of threads covered Popper, pro and con. The groups are at:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/kmci-Virtual-Chapter/> and

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/KM_Best_Practices/?yguid=99993484

In addition, there are three groups on Karl Popper on the web.

Karl Popper at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/karlpopper/?yguid=99993484>

Critical Cafe at: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Critical_Cafe/?yguid=99993484 and

Critical Rationalism at:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CriticalRationalism/?yguid=99993484>

Some great posts have been produced by these groups on many subjects. The last two are incredibly active, but the quality of their posts has deteriorated in the past few months since the influx of a number of new members primarily interested in exchanging about politics rather than Popper's thought primarily.

There's one last group where Popper's thinking has received serious attention. That is The Fabric of Reality Group, a list serv dedicated to discussion of David Deutsch's views on the Many Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Theory. Discussion here is of very high quality, but is only occasionally centered on Popper.

For those interested in Popper, have fun exploring.

Best, Joe

Date: Thu Mar 25, 2004 2:08 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Blogs & Wikis - Alice Macgillivray

From: Alice Macgillivray

Subject: Blogs & wikis

I quoted Stowe Boyd a few days ago, hoping to generate more discussion about blog and wiki "philosophies." I'm glad Bill Hall has resurrected this topic with statements including "...Blogs, by this criterion, rank relatively low on the spectrum of trust insofar as they represent comparatively unedited and unreviewed thoughts of a single person."

As a sidebar, I read the front line KM article, like aspects of it, have been involved in front line KM with a somewhat different focus, believe it important, and can't personally envision a blog or wiki fit -- but I'm on the learning curve there.

Dave - could you and/or others speak to the blog and wiki philosophies (in reference to front line KM or any theme you like)? I freely admit to being inexperienced, sceptical about the direction of blogs and of my reaction to them, and very curious. I don't recall if it was here or in com-prac that someone recently posted the article "Is social networking just another men's group?" I've spent most of my career working with men and avoiding discussions about gender, but blogging "feels" like a guy thing to me. I know there are good female bloggers out there and don't really want to dig into the gender topic in depth, but it is a way of introducing the concept of power.

The blogs I have seen are clearly identified with individuals and their networks. There seem to be recognized metrics to ascertain the popularity and status of one's blog. Some appear to be blatant marketing tools. The easily viewable interaction appears to be in the form of outsiders' comments on the insider's perspectives. However, I suspect that when one is immersed in the subculture, there are many layers of interaction going on that may feel like profound collaboration. I also cannot help but think of time. The corporate professional may be able to set aside other tasks to make a blog entry, while his secretary cannot, or may not feel she has anything important to say, despite her "market intelligence". His wife may be making the kids' lunches while he blogs in the evening.

[It is very easy for me to see blogging technology reinforcing administrative structures and being abused by those who value power over others in corporate settings. I suspect wikis are much less inclined to facilitate either.](#)

Although it might not sound like it, I am eager to have my initial impressions dispelled and look forward to learning more from all of you...

Date: Fri Mar 26, 2004 4:11 am
Subject: PCM/SN: Blogs & Wikis - Dave Pollard
From: Dave Pollard
Subject: Re: Blogs & Wikis - Alice Macgillivray

Alice said:

- > The blogs I have seen are clearly identified with individuals and
- > their networks. There seem to be recognized metrics to ascertain the
- > popularity and status of one's blog. Some appear to be blatant
- > marketing tools. The easily viewable interaction appears to be in
- > the form of outsiders' comments on the insider's perspectives.
- > However, I suspect that when one is immersed in the subculture, there
- > are many layers of interaction going on that may feel like profound
- > collaboration. I also cannot help but think of time. The corporate
- > professional may be able to set aside other tasks to make a blog
- > entry, while his secretary cannot, or may not feel she has anything
- > important to say, despite her "market intelligence". His wife may be
- > making the kids' lunches while he blogs in the evening.

- > > It is very easy for me to see blogging technology reinforcing
- > administrative structures and being abused by those who value power
- > over others in corporate settings. I suspect wikis are much less
- > inclined to facilitate either.

There are about 1.5 million blogs out there, and it is hard to generalize about them. They are, in essence, merely tools, with two basic, broadly applicable functionalities: 1. publishing (and subscribing) -- 'narrowcasting' perhaps, and 2. personal content management -- a searchable, sortable electronic diary. The commenting feature is pretty rudimentary and needs to evolve before it becomes core functionality, In fact, some bloggers don't allow comments on their posts.

In a business context, this functionality offers the potential for newsletter publishers, subject matter experts and COP coordinators to do their job more effectively and efficiently, and reach a greater, focused audience.

Although currently blogging **is** time-consuming, it need not be so. The next-gen blog will probably be 'virtual', i.e. whenever you 'save' or 'send' a document or message, you will have the option to 'blog' it at the same time. If you say yes, you will be asked to categorize it. Then, anyone who 'subscribes' to that category of your blog posts will automatically be sent a copy. Control over subscriptions, and hence over the egos of 'publishers' and over information overload, rests with the subscriber. Most bloggers with big egos have attracted thousands of readers per day, voluntarily, so their egotism is to some extent warranted. So I think blogs are, to some extent, anti-hierarchical, and could 'democratize' business publishing much the same way that the paperback 'democratized' literature.

And though you are right that the majority of 'popular' blogs are written by males, that is changing as the medium matures. A great example is the 'misbehaving' all-woman professional group blog: <http://www.misbehaving.net/>

Date: Fri Mar 26, 2004 7:13 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: More on Blogs and Wikis and PKM vs OKM - Bill Hall

From: Bill Hall

Subject: More on blogs and wikis and PKM vs OKM

Although I didn't have time to elaborate in my last contribution, I'm actually devoting considerable thought to potential roles of blogs and wikis in the intersection between personal and organizational KM.

The real world need -----

My organization employs several thousand people across a range of industries ranging from high-tech software, through defence contracting, to infrastructure and logistics support. Eighty to ninety percent of our business would also have a strong engineering

component. Common threads across all of our industries is that virtually everything we do is organised as projects and that much of the work has to meet externally imposed regulatory standards, in terms of financial control, business processes and technical processes. We profit from our successes and are responsible for our failures. The knowledge we use in business has to be trusted on bases well outside personal comfort zones.

Our company has been formed primarily through acquisition and aggregation of units that were either independent or divisions of other companies. Consequently, each unit has brought its own culture into the larger organization, and there are still cultural barriers to easy exchange of information and knowledge between projects and divisions. Although we are not really multinational (at least not yet), we have active offices in at least 7 different timezones right around the world. We are working to implement a variety of culture, process and technology-based solutions to facilitate learning, innovation and sharing across our internal boundaries. As an engineering company, our management has a better understanding and acceptance of technology-based applications than culture-based ones (i.e., we find it easier to spend resources implementing applications dealing with explicit forms of knowledge than on travel and people's time resources to deal with personal and cultural knowledge).

We have recently implemented OpenText's LiveLink system as an intranet KM portal. I'm not promoting the particular product - I can't say that I am 100% happy with its technology, and I am sure there are other applications offering similar or even better capabilities. However, even in its vanilla form LiveLink gives us a marvellously plastic web-based system that provides end users with "private", workgroup and public repository workspaces a variety of tools for accumulating, sharing, and retrieving content (depending on what permissions users are granted). Virtually everyone in the company who has a PC on their desktop now also has access to the potentially awesome portal capabilities. Once we are comfortable with the issues of firewall security and access controls, parts of the system will also be made available to our alliance partners, suppliers and clients to facilitate the wider sharing of information and knowledge.

In conjunction with knowledge mapping tools, we are also learning how to use LiveLink to map access to our organizational structure and people skills, and to enact and track information and knowledge related processes. In other words, the technology offers a number of possibilities to facilitate the culture of knowledge sharing.

Early adopters have had a free-for-all (i.e., unregulated) experimenting with the system's capabilities, but general takeup of the system has been slow because to now we have only been exploring its capabilities and have not provided our users with clear policy, training, and standards they can follow for adding knowledge to the system and for establishing the trustworthiness of the knowledge already existing in the system. I am currently responsible for proposing our policy settings to try to achieve the optimum balance between identifying and capturing staff knowledge and ensuring that it is "right" and trustworthy to others who need to use it.

Trust in the organizational environment -----

Before focussing on the issue of blogs and wikis, I want to re-emphasise the importance of establishing trust in and fiduciary control over the knowledge we employ in our business. Our people transform our knowledge into decisions and products, they must be able to trust what they use. Our reputation and profitability depend on getting things right - and looking at what we do from a critical rationalist stance helps us to focus on this (engineers, lawyers and auditors are critical rationalists even if they have never heard of the philosophy).

It is also worth noting that the Popperian concepts of three worlds of knowledge (see Popper's Objective Knowledge) provides a much more practical epistemology for this kind of analysis than does Polanyi's primarily Personal Knowledge or The Tacit Dimension. Popper's epistemology encompasses and explains personal knowledge, but it includes a lot more relating to objects of knowledge as well as people.

I have the feeling that many AOK contributors - especially those from more people oriented "touchy feely" backgrounds - have tended to gloss over the need for our claims to knowledge to "get it right" by comparison to trusting the source of the claim. However, any organisation in any kind of competitive situation (even a government welfare organization seeking funding from limited budgets) still inevitably faces the need to get things right.

Blogs and wikis -----

Blogs and wikis are two ends of the same spectrum. At one end you have blogs containing uncriticised collections of personal musings, copyright infringements and links to passing fancies. At the other end you have a socially constructed wiki environment where numerous participants sharing and criticise knowledge with a common goal to get it right. The wiki approach is also reflected in many web-based decision support tools.

LiveLink gives tools able to be used over this full spectrum. Users can put anything they want in their personal workspace. This can be kept private or all or designated parts can be made available with varying degrees of access to individuals (e.g., view only, edit, add, delete, etc), workgroups or everyone. Workgroups and the Enterprise workspaces can (should be) more controlled. Publishing privileges can (should be) limited to authorised people, and what is published can (should be) subject to peer review and authorization workflows.

In this framework, my current thinking (still largely untested in practice) is:

1. The personal collections and thought processes can (and from the organizational point of view should be) captured and preserved under personal control in the personal workspace. Users may make all or parts of this collection available to selected peers for review and criticism. Such collections accessed by others will be flagged as personal (and

therefore comparatively untrustworthy) knowledge. However, the personal workspaces will provide auditability and traceability of the process - and these traces can be administratively preserved and available to the organization even after the individual who made the collection has left the organization.

2. Information and knowledge objects in Group workspaces relating to particular projects will be regulated and managed according to the needs of the project, with enacted workflow processes for review and signoff to establish degrees of trust. Formalising and depersonalising the processes of review and criticism should also work to minimise the negative aspects of conflicting egos that often develop in the public spaces of forums where disagreements can so easily shift to focus on the person rather than the content. The workgroup level will also be primarily responsible for establishing classification and other metadata around the objects

3. Depending on the kind of material and its intended use, objects published to the whole company will be subject to even more stringent review and authorisation.

In essence, the portal environment will help us in all stages of building and establishing trust in our knowledge.

To conclude -----

[Although the discussion above focusses on our management and distribution of knowledge objects, we do recognise the importance of managing social aspects as well.](#) Some of our early adopters are proving that we can also use the system to identify and access tacit and implicit knowledge that only exists in peoples heads. We have begun to use knowledge maps to explore what kinds of knowledge people hold in their brains, to store the maps in the system, and even to build HTML roadmaps linking people to organizational, discipline and other kinds of expertise that cannot be mapped directly.

We are hoping that communities of interest/practice etc. can also be developed that will be able to carry out most of their interactions via the portal. We recognize that such communities will be greatly facilitated if we can manage to bring them together once or twice a year for cross divisional face-to-face interactions - but given the dispersed nature of our operations this is a costly enterprise by comparison to almost anything we can do within the portal system.

Regards,

Bill Hall

Date: Fri Mar 26, 2004 4:13 am

Subject: PCM/SN - Blogs in Other Fora - Jack Vinson

From: Jack Vinson

Subject: PCM/SN - Blogs in other fora

As we wrap up our discussion of blogs/wikis and the potential to use these tools in the world outside, there was a meeting of about a dozen or so people in the Netherlands a week or so back called Blogwalk, where they were looking at very similar questions. A number of the attendees have written about Blogwalk on their own blogs, including this interesting summary of the value of blogs from Mopsos (<http://blog.mopsos.com/archives/000079.html>). There are links within this article that lead you to other people who were in attendance.

1- As they are deep conversations with oneself and with the world, weblogs connect like-minded people, thus playing a key role in the grassroots formation of communities of practice.

2- A necessary enhancement of weblogging technology is the ability to choose your audience by ticking a box just before saving. Some entries would be made accessible to the entire world (Internet), others would be restricted to your company (Intranet), to one or the other of your communities of practice (Extranet), to your family and friends etc... This by the way is coherent with Microsoft's Weltanschauung.

3- The core issue underlying any knowledge management technology (weblogs being one of them) is really information architecture. One must really understand the morphology and syntax of web-based communication, understand the differences between data, content, information and document, dig into XML tagging etc. Weblogs are the simplest form of content publishing because they provide very little structure and are easy to use. They convey rich and contextual -but not actionable- information . The more structure is given to a publication, the more actionable it becomes. But at the same time the publication process becomes more constrained (workflows, taxonomies etc.)

Regards,

Jack Vinson

Date: Fri Mar 26, 2004 4:15 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Community and Transparency Analogies - Chris Macrae

From: Chris Macrae

Subject: Community and transparency analogies with media models

There is also a huge hidden agenda being replayed in all the virtual KM platforms- who benefits if this space gets bigger?

What's the equity of this space; will those who help garden it in the most beautiful of ways ever get any returns?; or will someone later come along and tear up relationships with all the chief growers unless they have a legal contract promising them some stake in the community

Vandalism anywhere starts with: Feeling no affinity with the ruling owners

This gets compounded if a media is currently free to use and a person wants publicity; and I am interpreting media widely - most universities started as media in this wide definition as did many professional associations

A lot of the dynamic troublespots of knowledge sharing gets compounded if the virtual platform is very narrow in its tunnels and if there is no moderation - the EU's www.knowledgeboard.com is extraordinary in its failure to understand minimum communal design principles in its very software architecture, imo! Its worth mentioning because as the most resourced space in KM , any viciousness it spins will likely boil over in other spaces a- as hey KM is very highly connected in the ways people are trying to shape its lead agendas

I am pretty clear in my own mind that AOK will sustain while many more highly resourced spaces won't. So the dividends will go back to Jerry for all the time he has put into it but equally if it ever becomes the biggest km association in the universe, perhaps there should be a membership points system voted for most by those who have participated at least once a month and for at least 24 months, or whatever

New media models are very difficult; well over 90% of new media businesses destroy themselves because they don't model this transparency early enough. I am not meaning to suggest AOK as something that is more social than business in what it circulates needs to take the above too deeply, but it might if it becomes the annual convention centre of all who care most about KM improving 21st C organisations for people

Chris macrae

Date: Fri Mar 26, 2004 4:55 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Final Thoughts - Dave Pollard

From: Dave Pollard

Subject: Re: Quick Response Re: Final thoughts

Dear AOK members:

Thank you for giving me the enormous privilege of moderating a discussion of this most esteemed and illustrious group. I am humbled to be thought of as a STAR in such a milieu, and even more humbled that this month has seen a record number of posts to the forum. I have learned a tremendous amount from this discussion, including:

* that even in the next-generation world of excellent Personal Content Management and Social Networking software, there will still be a role for centralized KM, for policies, regulations, and other often-used top-down knowledge, and for the 'deep knowledge' needs that are unique to each organization

* that hierarchy, and background knowledge of the other conversants (i.e. relationships), factor strongly in trust, and trust is a necessary precondition to knowledge sharing that we need to learn, and teach, how to organize, create, and record excellent stories (both oral and written) and great conversations (both F2F and virtual), and that the key to doing so is to be sensitive to the audience and its needs

* that we need KM leaders (a) to champion weblogs and other fledgling PCM and social networking tools, (b) to encourage obvious users (newsletter writers, SMEs and COP coordinators) to experiment with them, and (c) to use them themselves, so that they understand their true potential and so they can advise the designers of the next generation of such tools how to build them right

* that the jury is still out on whether and when adding structure and protocol to 'conversational' social networking tools and content (including stories and even discussion groups like AOK!) helps or constrains the value of the 'conversation'

* that the jury is still out, too, on the relative value of knowledge arrived at by inductive vs. deductive processes (an issue I had never given much thought to) that improving the effectiveness of front-line knowledge workers is a delicate balancing act, requiring both (a) consistent, reliable, accessible top-down knowledge, education and instruction, and (b) tools and resources that enable and encourage 'human agency', i.e. the freedom to apply individual experience and peer learning to solving always-unique customer and business problems.

I look forward to continuing the discussion in coming months, especially on the important issues where there is not yet consensus. I would also be prepared to continue the dialogue 'off-group' (dave.pollard@sympatico.ca, or by Skype at davepollard), provided we agree to report-back on progress/consensus or continuing points of disagreement, to the group.

I would also like to thank Jerry for his extraordinary and thankless work, in this demanding and occasionally frustrating medium. Better Social Networking tools are coming soon to improve the signal/noise ratio.

It has been a distinct pleasure 'conversing' with all of you. I now pass the torch to Nick Melton, former Chief Knowledge Officer at BP, next month's moderator, and trust you will be as generous with your time and knowledge with him as you have with me.

Kindest regards, Dave Pollard

Date: Fri Mar 26, 2004 5:21 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Thank You, Thank You, Thank You - Jerry Ash

From: Jerry Ash

Dave, on behalf of all the members of the Association of Knowledgework, I want to thank you for a stellar performance in the STAR seat. As participation in this Dialogue grows, I realize the job gets bigger and bigger for the volunteer moderator. If it were just a chore, I fear we would soon find few takers when I propose a turn at the helm. But your words are heartening:

"I have learned a tremendous amount from this discussion...."

Many of our STARS have said the same over the past three years. Think about it. We have asked those who were known experts to share with us, and they have come away saying *they* were the richer for it! In today's learning environment, even more than before, the best and brightest among us still have a lot to learn! It is that which will keep them coming to this well. And, back again. Just look at the former STARS who engaged in this conversation -- Amidon, Snowden, Frapaolo, McElroy, Buckman, Denning and a host of regular AOKers who have not been invited to moderate only because they are already valued contributors to the Dialogues.

If the asynchronous nature of the this venue has left you at times overwhelmed or confused, please look for the Summary and link to the Pollard Dialogue Archive in next week's EZine. Carol Butler, AOK archivist, continues to do an excellent job of unscrambling the chronological archives at our Yahoo site to present a growing body of knowledge at the AOK Website.

Now I ask you, *please* join me in thanking Dave Pollard and all who made this Dialogue meaningful. Send a message now just saying "Thanks." Or more if you feel like it. You know the drill:

YAHOO GROUPS MEMBERS: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AOK_K-Net/ DON'T YAHOO? Then: use your Reply Function, type and send your message.

Dave, "thanks" never seems enough. So, thank you, thank you, thank you!

Jerry Ash

Date: Fri Mar 26, 2004 7:09 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Blogs & Wikis - Thanks from Alice MacGillivray

From: Alice MacGillivray

Subject: Re: Blogs & Wikis - thanks from Alice MacGillivray

Thanks to all who have posted (and I even got a phone call) about blogs. Every bit of information and every perspective is interesting and helpful. If there are any last minute recommended group blogs and/or wiki perspectives, I'm listening.

Date: Fri Mar 26, 2004 8:06 pm

Subject: PCM/SN: Thank You, Thank You, Thank You - Joe Firestone

From: Joe Firestone

Subject: Thanks for a great run

You kept the discussion flowing and helped to stimulate well-written posts full of rich ideas. I think the number of people who contributed and the quality of the posts is testimony to the great job you did. I'd like to express my thanks for a great two weeks, one effect of which was to finally persuade me to start blogging.

Best,

Joe

Date: Sun Mar 28, 2004 8:02 pm

Subject: FW: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 356

From: Paul Cripwell

Subject: RE: [AOK_K-Net] Digest Number 356

Thanks to all for a long and interesting Star series.

I may not have contributed to the conversation but was reading the posts nonetheless. (Been busy developing the Knowledge Transfer Indicator.)

In my continuing efforts to understand KM at the deepest levels, I realize that my operating maxim remains true.

Everybody is right!

Over time the many postings have shown that there is a world of difference out there. I have also discovered that every problem is unique and requires a unique answer. In some cases it is possible to take that answer/solution and apply it in other situations. The more general the solution the wider it can be applied. However there is always an underlying philosophy to the solution and once this no longer applies the solution fails.

Cheers

Paul

Date: Mon Mar 29, 2004 7:10 am

Subject: PCM/SN: Thank You, Thank You, Thank You - John Barrett

From: John Barrett

Subject: Re: PCM/SN: Thank You, Thank You, Thank You - Jerry Ash

Yes thank you Dave and all the other contributors. It was a very engaging and enlightening discussion with much to continue thinking about.

John Barrett
