

KNOWLEDGE MUST COME THROUGH ACTION
SOPHOCLES



KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN PRACTICE



Steve Banhegyi & Associates
Art and Science of Change

Overview

“Of central importance is the changing nature of competitive advantage - not based on market position, size and power as in times past, but on the incorporation of knowledge into all of an organization’s activities.”

- Leif Edvinsson

The manner in which we define something has a lot to do with our experience of it. We see Knowledge Management as being the way in which organisations can consciously and deliberately design aspects of their future and the cultural container that creates context for day-to-day interactions.

Knowledge is defined by Peter Drucker as *“Information that changes something or somebody – either by becoming grounds for actions or by making an individual (or an institution) capable of different or more effective action.”* This definition addresses both the individual and corporate aspects of knowledge.

Our approach to KM facilitates a community to express its highest aspirations in ways that are simple and intuitive. We see KM as being pivotal not only for sharing knowledge, but also for the transmission of aspects of organisation identity, culture, vision, mission, values, measures and purpose to current and future generations of employees. Thus, integrated multidisciplinary KM provides an opportunity to project a professional, focussed environment that is tangible to your clients, stakeholders and staff.

KM always involves a certain level of self reflection and organisational soul-searching and interventions can often trigger unintended consequences as well as useful strategic insights. We offer an understanding of social dynamics and a long-term view of organisational culture and ways of making Leadership’s message stick.



The Art of Social Memory

“The store of wisdom does not consist of hard coins which keep their shape as they pass from hand to hand; it consists of ideas and doctrines whose meanings change with the minds that entertain them”

- John Plamenatz

Irrespective of which KM strategy you employ, a good story is the simplest and most powerful way to create a desired present and future. It is ultimately the story that transcends technology and guides us in our day-to-day interactions. The fact is that technological standards are continuously changing and there is simply no guarantee that the software you use today as a cornerstone of your KM strategy will be useful (or even accessible) in years to come. We need to get back to basics. Fundamentally, the most powerful (and only) means we have of communicating complex information across space and time is through story and the management of symbols and metaphor. Africa’s Oral Tradition is at last being recognised by Business Schools worldwide for the powerful vehicle that it is.

Steve Banhegyi & Associates have an excellent track record in using storytelling as a meta-level concept that drives Knowledge Management efforts. We have consulted for a variety of organisations including Government, Listed and Private companies (a comprehensive client list is available on request). Our distinctive difference is that we facilitate organisations to access and then reflect upon and reformulate certain stories and memes. We then facilitate the creation of multimedia reminders or ‘memory devices’ of a desired paradigm, culture and value system. Through a custom designed change management strategy, Leadership is able to ‘lead the story’ in a deliberate way.

Organisational Storytelling

“Companies... have a hard time distinguishing between the cost of paying people and the value of investing in them.”

– Thomas A. Stewart

Organisational storytelling comes in two distinct flavours: the life stories of the individuals that comprise the organisation and the organisational narrative. It is important to engage both; the stories of individual employees are useful in understanding the unique organisational ‘diversity mix’ and the organisational story creates context for day-to-day experience. Organisational narrative engages stories with themes such as *What is going on? Who are we? What do we sell and to whom? How we do things here, where we come from and where we are going to.* These are profoundly important stories and they need to be deliberately told and controlled by leadership. One of the first symptoms of an organisation in trouble is that its narrative collapses; everyone has a different story about ‘what is really going on’.

Organisations, cultures and societies are sustained by stories and our attempt to understand and negotiate the world is grounded in narrative. Storytelling translates bare facts and logical argument into a form with which people can engage – both emotionally and intellectually.

If you wish to transform the way in which people approach issues or demonstrate the value of behavioural change, there is no better way than through a good story. Ideas become stimulating and inspirational when presented as stories. Stories are catalysts of change and vehicles of meaning that demand to be passed on, retold and embellished as part of an organisation’s oral culture.

Kickstarting KM

“The basic economic resource - the means of production - is no longer capital, nor natural resources, nor labor. It is and will be knowledge.”

– Peter Drucker

A great way to stimulate Knowledge Management efforts and make the connections is to start regular Knowledge Sharing sessions that include:

Sharing stories of customer service

Sharing fun times

Organisational rituals

Social Functions

Sharing information about departments and activities

Facilitating Knowledge Sharing Sessions



There is no substitute for experience and actually ‘doing it’. Steve Banhegyi & Associates can help facilitate a pilot 3 hour Knowledge Sharing workshop in your organisation with up to 12 participants. This provides you with a safe, expertly facilitated process with no further obligation. Please contact us on steve@trans4mation.co.za for further details.

Why tell stories in Organisations?

*“Sharing knowledge is not about giving people something,
or getting something from them.*

That is only valid for information sharing.

*Sharing knowledge occurs when people are genuinely interested
in helping one another develop new capacities for action;
it is about creating learning processes.”*

Peter Senge

Quick, clear holistic communications: Storytelling communicates ideas holistically and so listeners can quickly understand and acquire complicated ideas. Storytelling helps us make sense of a chaotic world by collapsing time, space and providing a sequence of events that make sense.

Natural Communications: We all learn about the world through stories. Whatever it is we know has either been communicated to us via a story or it is encompassed in a story that we have created. We learn story as soon as we acquire language; and we actually think and feel in stories.

Persuasive, action-oriented Communication wins hearts and minds: After listening to a story, the listener is compelled to create a parallel story appropriate for their environment. The result is a story that is ‘owned’ by the listener who is stimulated to co-create and ‘own’ key ideas and associated attitudes. A good story – as long as it is well and consistently told - has the power to change attitudes, perceptions and ultimately expectations and behaviours.

Edutainment: Stories enliven and entertain by inviting us to both physically and emotionally participate in the story. This is in stark contrast to abstract communications. Powerpoint slides and lists are dull because they

are populated with things and ‘text blobs’ rather than people. Abstract communication through bullet points has the further disadvantage of painting the world in terms of linear cause-effect relationships rather than a complex, living dynamic which is more like what the world actually is. Storytelling is both entertaining and interactive because listeners co-create in their own minds.

Context Creation: Storytelling creates the context within which knowledge arises, and hence it is the fastest, most accurate means for knowledge sharing.

Expanded Emotional Communication: Tacit knowledge is incredibly valuable for organisations. By telling a story with feeling, we communicate more than we explicitly know. While we know much more than we can tell, storytelling communicates more than we explicitly know. Storytelling also enables the discussion of emotions in culturally acceptable ways and is useful in indirectly talking about feelings that many listeners might find embarrassing or not have the appropriate language for.



The one day in-company

KM Workshop: Creating the Future

The introductory workshop is designed to kickstart KM activities. The overall themes include: Exploring models of change, making sense of complex systems, ensuring ownership of process, strategic planning, leadership, managing change and innovation. The workshop introduces models and processes of KM and Change and the practical ‘how to’ of transformation.

The 'how to' of KM and Transformation

How to get started with KM in your own organisation

Using models of change to transformation

How knowledge is described, created, stored and shared

Antiknowledge – where all knowledge comes from

The power of metaphor and story

Anticipating, managing and leading change

Ensuring buy-in and commitment to KM efforts

The game of KM and transformation

Creating a strong, vital and responsive organisation through Knowledge sharing

Sustainable KM strategies – software or story?



*Visit KnowledgeHive - Africa's first virtual community for Knowledge Management professionals:
<http://isivivane.com/knowledgehive>*



Visit www.storytelling.co.za for articles, insights, links and discussions about creating and telling powerful stories in organisations and to ourselves.



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