

Communicating Learning with Knowledge-Events



A Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Partners in Innovation Programme funded project

An Approach to Knowledge Management for SMEs



UCE
Birmingham

KNOWLEDGE IN EVENTS

Events, because they describe the complexity of the real world, have different types of knowledge. The knowledge that we are most familiar with is **factual knowledge**: like the cost of a brick or the mix of concrete for a particular circumstance. However, events also show **process knowledge** which involves the appreciation of situations, the negotiation of position and the making of decisions. Process knowledge is more difficult to determine and encapsulate as it is **tacit** thus often gets neglected, however, it is what is most important in real world activities. Knowledge-event management can capture some of this process knowledge as well as factual knowledge and through **debriefing** some of this can be made explicit and communicated around the organisation for others to learn from and so improve theirs and the organisations practice.

The learning from events benefits the individuals, the companies and the industry:

- ❑ Companies develop their knowledge base becoming more competitive and sustainable through changing their approaches so as not to repeat, or handle better, the event-types
- ❑ Managers learn to handle events better and develop self worth for the skills they use in handling events
- ❑ Companies appreciate their human assets and grow as communities of practitioners

The Industry provides a better service to clients more economically.

COMMUNICATING LEARNING

The event participant and the facilitator both learn from the **debriefing** of the event. However, greater benefits can be achieved by communicating the event and its analysis to others.

The objective of communicating learning is for others to be able to work more effectively and efficiently in the world. As there are different types and multiple levels of knowledge produced from the event, there are many opportunities to communicate these and this can be done in many ways. Each way will favour different types of knowledge and will produce different outcomes. In addition, different people handle knowledge in different ways depending on their learning styles, experience and current position. This requires us to select different communications forms for different circumstances.

The following are good at communicating facts:

- ❑ Posters
- ❑ Newsletters
- ❑ Email
- ❑ Internet Web pages

The beauty of facts are that they can be tested, easily communicated in an explicit form and have general applicability. However, the generality of facts makes them very abstract, that is, difficult to see their appropriateness for particular real situations. Indeed the real world of construction is very complex and facts are only one aspect of being able to operate successfully in it. Many peoples' learning style works best with facts and this can cause conflicts with others in difficult real world situations.

CREATING NEW LEARNING

Communicating learning about process knowledge is more complicated. The communication methods mentioned already can do this if this knowledge has been made explicit. Knowledge-event **debriefing** makes it explicit by exposing the contributing issues and wider issues, and also the skills for handling the particular event. *This leaflet is an example of both factual and process communications in an abstract explicit form.*

Knowledge-event communications cannot only transfer factual and process knowledge but can also transform them and even generate them. These communications are more important as they allow individuals and organisations to improve work in new areas and improve their practices generally. People do not gain this knowledge by being told it they must learn it themselves.

- Training workshop
- Quizzes e.g. pub or game
- Informal critical conversation

These methods use the events to generate discussion and interaction between people. During these discussions the mental-models that individuals have, and use to operate in the world, are surfaced. People need to search their models for solutions, modify them, and test these solutions with others. Re-telling the story of the event in a conversation can effect deep knowledge transformation. In this socialisation, the **tacit** learning, which involves facts, process and emotions in a context, is conveyed. The other party transforms stories in conversation through enhancement, interpretation and connection. Those involved need to be critical of conversation because it can be the source of negative knowledge as well as learning.

THE PROJECT

This leaflet is part of a DTI funded project to test and improve an *Approach* to Knowledge Management for construction SMEs

The *Approach* is a simple and low cost technique for Knowledge Management using; Dictaphones to **Capture** Knowledge from events, Debriefing to **Transform** the Knowledge, and visual communications to **Disseminate** Knowledge within the company and the industry.

People have **Knowledge** when they can make use of information from the past events for a current situation.

Tacit Knowledge is personal knowledge in people's minds including know-how and intuition.

Explicit knowledge is generalised knowledge that can be put into documents or databases.

Knowledge-Management involves appreciating this Knowledge base and actively collecting it, sharing it and creating new knowledge within an organisational setting.

For Information on the Project
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THE PARTNERS

This is a DTI funded project that involves 12 construction companies, 3 construction networks and 2 universities. The companies involved are part of the new progressive thinking in the industry and demonstrate their own willingness to be the champions of change.



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