

Stumbling blocks, magical thinking, and new diplomacy

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The need for KM in Washington

- Most employees must know some things, until they reach senior management
- Needed to meet the challenges of the “dramatic unities”: space, time, action
- Washington has many large organizations that must practice some form of KM

*Impediments to implementing KM:
mostly conceptual*

Moderating the
drumbeat of change...

Cavities



Bankruptcy



Death



Traditions are important, but not all are worth preserving



Organizations do not have DNA



They have structures and habits, and neither are immutable

Social media \neq KM

- KM must have enduring value, but...
- ...most social media transactions are ephemeral.
- You can extract knowledge from social media, but that won't happen automatically.



Implementation problem #1: Content sloth

Everyone sees the need for KM, and wants to benefit from it, but few people will readily contribute without encouragement.



Implementation problem #2: Metadata sloth

It's hard enough to get people to write about what they know, let alone describe their writing.



Alchemy in action:
The search for
magical KM solutions

Non-magical solutions...



Waiting for the children to arrive

Non-magical solutions...



Relying on technology
to implement KM

Non-magical solutions...



New ideas: not always good;
always have unintended consequences

Non-magical solutions...



Eliminating or reducing hierarchy

The Department of State:
Unique yet typical



State's KM advantages

- Excellent at networking and sharing information
- A general appreciation of history and background information
- Generally, good communication skills are prized throughout the organization



State's KM disadvantages

- Manages to be both excessively centralized and excessively localized
 - Lines of communication are vertical
 - Commitments are primarily local, to a bureau, office, or post
- Very little internal communication retained in an accessible way
- Professional specialization vs. local assignments



Enterprise search

- Long-term, painstaking effort to tailor indexing to the intranet's data sources
- 30k-40k weekly searches
- Mostly thankless task

Communities @ State blogs

- Continuous stream of information
- Started in 2005 with a single blog
- 70+ community blogs deployed
- Over 31,000 entries and 4,000 comments



Diplopedia enterprise wiki



- Background knowledge/enduring value
- Started in Sept. 2006
- 8,000+ articles from 1,900 editors
- 100,000+ page views a month

Changing the culture: what works

- Commitment to mission above all else
- Energetic leadership that can sort out good and bad ideas
- Pushing institutional responsibility to the lowest possible level

Bumps in the road



- A very active blog's demise
- A very active wiki editor squashed

Suggestions for implementing KM

- Don't borrow good ideas: steal them.
- Tell your story a thousand times and don't get weary.

Suggestions for implementing KM

- Supervisors rate subordinates on how well they share information outside their unit
- Let subordinates rate supervisors on how well they share information (among other things)



Last suggestion

Leaders should lead.

Questions?

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