

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 57

Taking time to capture stories during and after a project could help make explicit a lot of tacit data...

Capture Stories...

"History will be kind to me for I intend to write it" Winston Churchill



"Harrow Youth Orchestra"

What is the best story in your organisation?

Being the season of the "greatest story ever told", I found myself at the Christmas concert of the youth orchestra in which my daughter plays. My son and I sat right at the front with my daughter a few feet away in the "pit", waiting for her group to perform.

The music started and the band kicked in to a variety of classic songs from the likes of Lionel Ritchie and the Beatles. Despite not having heard many of them for over ten years, I found the lyrics popping in to my head and I began quietly singing along, until I saw the horrified look on my daughter's face (seriously uncool to sing along Dad!).

Reacting to her press of the metaphorical mute switch, I turned my head away and singing mutely, I pondered from where these lyrics had popped up? Perhaps they are stored in some

obscure memory bank and the "vault" is opened by a combination of musical notes?

After the concert I thought about tacit knowledge in organisations, all those valuable snippets of information, insights and understanding that are not written down and are often lost. What organisational equivalent of "musical notes" does it take to elicit these tacit nuggets and make them explicit?

Do we all have to line up and sing a company song each morning, I wondered? "Yes! And. Yes! And... the greatest in the land. We do facilitation and we only charge a grand...."*

You could get people to write up end of project reviews but these are often written from one perspective (see quotation by Winston Churchill) and it can be difficult to persuade people to record their experience once the lure of the next project is in their eyes.

It struck me that we could overcome this reluctance by getting people to relate stories about their work and I recall hearing a speaker some years ago talking about capturing stories in a water company and relating how they changed processes as a result of the stories.

SO

I thought how interesting it might be to employ a creative writer to interview people on a

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project team, capture their stories about a project, find links between them and transcribe them on to a searchable database with various links and cross references. Wouldn't that be worth doing just once to see if it captured some valuable tacit information? Wouldn't it also be a valuable resource for inducting new staff?

ACTION

How might your organisation use stories to obtain tacit information? Think if there's any way you could try this experiment in your organisation or one known to you.

TO CLOSE

One of the many elements I enjoy about writing these articles is the information I discover when researching (I love how the Internet has made research available in an instant). I looked up storytelling and organisations and found a number of very worthy academic articles (i.e. I struggled to understand them!).

In one the author [David M. Boje](#) describes seeing a play in Los Angeles called "Tamara" in which the audience can choose which actor to follow and can watch the same event, but from the perspective of different actors. He relates this to organisations and how people within it tell different stories about the same events. He also provides useful insights in to his methods should you choose to experiment.

I realised too that these articles are my way of making explicit my tacit knowledge and after a couple of years, now have a searchable database

of stories on creative leadership. One day I'll turn them in to a book.

Thank you for reading the Gorilla. May your Christmas or any other celebration be full of sparkle, crackle and happiness. And if you have a bit of time, you might like to read this article by Pete Norvig of Google which I found during my search – click [here](#) to read. If you would like some laughs try this page of Woody Allen [one liners](#).

**.....terms and conditions apply... contains nuts...not suitable for children under three...*

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Contact John or Kate Brooker:

Speak: +44 (0) 20 8869 9990

Write: hi@yesand.eu

Read: www.yesand.eu