



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Sharing Knowledge

The single most important tool for people, teams, and companies that aspire to stay competitive in the new economy is learning. Today, the methods of learning are changing and organizations are adopting different tools to promote learning.

Logic and analytical abilities alone can no longer guarantee success; people have to be more imaginative and more flexible than ever before, and ways of learning need to become more creative as well.

IBM established a program called 'Knowledge and Differentiation Program (K&DP)' to experiment with innovative models and methods for managing intellectual capital, both within and outside IBM. The program, built on ideas drawn from anthropology, medieval history, and complexity science, developed a series of methods, including a highly creative use of the age-old art of storytelling for knowledge dissemination across the company.

The free flow of stories within the organized workshops revealed a considerable number of decisions that would not have been revealed through the conventional interview and workshop techniques. Some of the most valuable information would have been lost if not for the informative but amusing stories from employees. Towards the end of the day in every workshop, K&DP teams presented a consolidated decision-information flow diagram made to represent the stories.

Storytelling helps employee learning in more ways than one

A large range of knowledge can be explored, and the might-have-beens as well as what-actually-happened can be shared.

Failure has always been more valuable in learning than success because by identifying and assessing the outcomes of previous experiences, employees can learn what to avoid.

Storytelling helps more in knowledge-disclosure than the normal interview techniques or formal meetings. It is an effective means of conveying complex information to diverse groups. Many organizations are even hiring actors and scriptwriters to improve the presentation skills of their executives.

Summary

Storytelling is increasingly becoming a powerful tool to draw some live models and practical solutions to real time problems at the workplace.