Show Your Work

THE PAYOFFS AND HOW-TO'S OF WORKING OUT LOUD

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ASTD

WILEY

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Cover image: Shutterstock

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"Anyone who's diligently followed a written recipe only to have a terrible end result has felt the disconnect between tacit and explicit knowledge."

Introduction

"Everybody works. They create documents and presentations. They schedule and attend events. They comment on other people's work."

~ **John Stepper**, johnstepper.com

CALL IT WHAT YOU LIKE

When you were a kid, you likely had a math teacher or two who insisted that you "show your work." enabled him or her to see how you arrived at a final answer, what kind of thinking or steps got you there—and where you might have made a mistake. You can think of showing your work in any terms you'd like. Some call it "working out loud," making work visible, making work discoverable, or narrating work. There are any number of approaches to showing work, from writing to talking to drawing to photographing and more. And now, with so many new, often free tools people like to use, it's easier than ever before.

Showing Your Work Benefits Everyone

In its simplest, most obvious benefit, showing work helps an idea connect with someone else who needs it. The woman in Kansas who finds a YouTube video that helps her change the windshield wipers on her car. The man in London who, in a colleague's blog post, finds an answer to a bedeviling question. In organizations, it makes the walls between silos more permeable, helping talent pools connect and saving workers countless hours in looking for information.

While we're good at documenting standards, most of what we need to know is exception handling—what we must know and do and respond to that's outside a schematic or process plan or SOP. John Hagel and John Seeley Brown assert that "as much as two-thirds of headcount time in major enterprise functions like marketing, manufacturing, and supply chain management is spent on exception handling." (http://blogs.hbr.org/2010/09/social-software/). My own favorite neighborhood handyman, Mike, has never been here when he did not encounter an exception: the hole the builder cut for the attic stairs is not the standard size for the home repair store stairs Mike came to install; a repair to the porch railing found that the "standard" rails the builder used are no longer in stock, and on and on. Showing our work helps make what we do more visible and discoverable—particularly in the area of exception handling—and helps to record the information for future use.

The Silo Problem

Information flows up and down vertical chain of command

Looking very much like what we otherwise call "silos"

...while preventing people from connecting the dots between projects, expertise, ideas, past work, and each other.
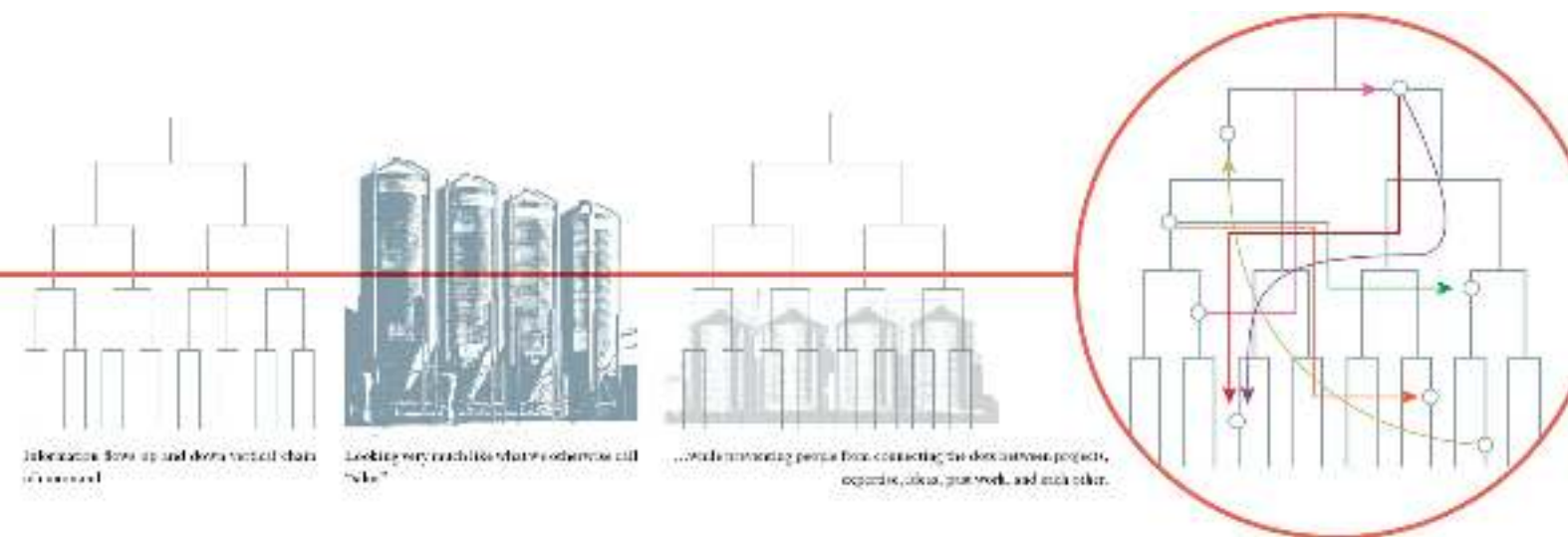
"If your dots are not observable/visible/transparent, then it's impossible to connect them."
  ~BRIAN TULLIS

The Documentation Problem

Harold Jarche has written extensively on personal knowledge management, particularly the problem with documentation: while it's fairly easy to codify things like events and outputs, the tacit, implicit knowledge that is part and parcel of things like decisions is much harder to capture.

The attempt to reduce complexity to simplicity is fine when you're refining the bones of a production process. It's not fine when you assert that "leadership" is a matter of following four simple steps.

And sooner or later, documentation always breaks down. In the desire to oversimplify we end up with documents that are akin to having a map without landmarks or road signs, with the organization unable to see the routes people really take. (Brown & Duguid, 1990). We know what to do but not how it gets done. We need better maps.

Codifying Knowledge

← explicit — knowledge — implicit →

| Outputs | Events | Processes | Decisions | Connections | Expertise |

Increased difficulty to codify and share

Thanks to Harold Jarche jarche.com

SHOWING YOUR WORK ISN'T NEW

A thousand years ago a wanderer who drew a map at journey's end might be described as someone who "showed their work." Apprenticeship in many ways offered a "show your work" approach, with the inclusion of instruction and feedback. Electronic tools introduced in the late 20th century made showing work much easier, as many of this book's examples will show.

SHOWING YOUR WORK ISN'T MYSTICAL

One of the problems with the literature on showing work is that much of it is just too abstract and conceptual, with complex models and illustrations with maps and loops and actors. While the models may in some ways be accurate, and often in good intentions reflect the creators' enthusiasm, they don't seem to be very *useful*, else more people would be using them. They can also be daunting to the already-busy knowledge worker and the guy who fixes copy machines who works from his car most of the day.

As with the problem of "best practices," which are really only best in their original context, the problem with models and formulas is that they often fit common circumstances in only the most abstract way. We see a similar issue with traditional ideas of "knowledge management" (KM), offering things like manufacturing schematics that look great on paper but don't reveal stumbling points, exceptions, or extenuating circumstances. They don't account for what can happen due to group dynamics, overengaged process owners, and business owners who need to be educated. Likewise, asking a worker to "just write down everything you do" can get us what, but doesn't capture *how*. We are seduced by the idea that activities like this give us predictability and exact science.

There's also a danger of the formula, or the tool, driving the train. A common criticism of KM is that it attempts to isolate the actor from the work, and the work from context. Sharing work should be an organic activity in everyday workflow, not some separate overengineered process that eventually proves to be nothing but more work.

IT'S NOT JUST FOR "KNOWLEDGE WORKERS"

I have been in the workforce for more than twenty years, mostly in areas like L&D and HR. If one thing has nagged at me for all that time, it is concerns about the segment of the workforce that is, it seems, uniformly marginalized. We focus on the "knowledge worker," typically viewed as a college graduate working in a white collar job, at a desk, maybe at a desk in a cubicle, maybe at a desk in a home office. It's fine to want to know what they know, but what about the rest of the workforce? As noted by Mike Rowe (http://profoundlydisconnected.com/), "No one ever stops to talk to the guys working on the film crew."

You appreciate the hands-on or technical worker when you've tried a home repair a bit beyond your abilities, or despite following all directions failed at gardening. Anyone who's diligently followed a written recipe only to have a terrible end result has felt the disconnect between tacit and explicit knowledge.

Here's an example. Ask an expert to write down her recipe for caramel apples and this is what you'll get:

Caramel Apples

6 apples
14-oz package of caramels, unwrapped
2 Tablespoons milk

- **Remove stems from apple; push a craft stick into the top. Butter a baking sheet.**

- **Place caramels and milk in a microwave safe bowl. Microwave 2 minutes, stirring once. Allow to cool briefly.**

- **Roll each apple quickly in caramel sauce until well coated. Place on prepared sheet to set.**

Here's what happens when you ask an expert to show her work. This Snapguide on making caramel apples, from Bridget Burge's *Bridget's Everyday Cooking* (http://snapguide.com/guides/make-caramel-apples-1/) includes some things a novice might not know, and an expert might not think to write down:

Embracing a "Show Your Work" approach helps to include that segment of the workforce that's so often been marginalized. Also: we can get a better understanding of what the tradesperson or the craftsperson does. How did the groundskeeper create that elephant topiary in front of the children's wing at the local hospital? How did the pastry chef uniformly brown 400 Baked Alaskas to be served simultaneously? It's important, for clear communication, to strip out extraneous information. But sometimes we strip out too much, and the bones we're left with aren't enough. As Brown and Duguid (1991) noted, taking out too much information about the daily reality of the work can leave you holding a map with no landmarks.

BEFORE ANYONE SAYS "YES, BUT..."

NO ONE SAID IT ALL HAD TO BE PUBLIC

As we'll see in the examples, everything doesn't need to be shared everywhere. Proprietary information about a particular client may need to stay within a single work group. Details on fixing a particular water heater might be appropriate only for the company repair people scattered across North America. We don't want people to be deluged with information that is truly relevant only to a few. The problem is, often those making that call don't know who else might benefit. I once got a big work problem solved by a Twitter connection who teaches in China. And another by a consultant who specializes in helping retail and restaurant clients make their environments more comfortable for those with Asperger's and autism. One of the challenges is to figure out where to best share work for maximum benefit to everyone.

NO ONE SAID IT HAD TO BE INSTAGRAM

It seems as soon as people start talking tools there is quickly a hue and cry against Facebook, or LinkedIn, or YouTube. While I see a lot of overcaution (Really? Your dress code and wellness program are secret? Can't have cameras inside the workplace? Not even if it's for a limited, "I need t photograph this cake" use? Ok, not even then? How about drawing? Have they banned drawing, too?) agree that there need to be guidelines for where to share what. Here's one approach:

Where to share when @ work?

DO NOT POST If your content does not adhere to the community guidelines.

If you are sharing knowledge in a open or restricted community. **Social Site**

Team Site If you are securely sharing documents with your project team.

DO NOT POST If your content does not comply with social media policies.

If you are looking for a quick answer from a colleague. **IM**

Email If you are directly communicating with a targeted audience.

If you are **not** sharing but you need a place to store your content. **Local Store**

If you are publicly sharing information with the entire world. **Social Media**

DO NOT POST If your content is not in alignment with policies & procedures and vision & values.

Icons: DefaultIcon

Image courtesy Joachim Stroh

FINALLY: SHOWING YOUR WORK IS NOT ABOUT "INFORMATION"

The quest for "information" generates:

- **Spreadsheets**
- **Meetings**
- **Quotas**
- **TPS reports**
- **Status updates**

- **Top-down dissemination**
- **Sacred story versus real story**
- **Only good news**

"Information" alone is not enough. Adding the better information to more understanding of the exception, the behavior of the individual, the input of the expert, the workaround, the correction, the error helps generate a more robust picture that will help to inform and further refine enacting skillful work.

Remember: Communication over information. Conversation over tools.

So: Let's get going.

Benefits to Organizations

Narrating work offers myriad benefits to organizations, from better locating talent and finding tacit knowledge to increasing efficiencies to improving communication. One of the problems with traditional knowledge management is the temptation to try and oversimplify an unavoidably complex task. Building a house takes much more than a blueprint; a schematic of a manufacturing process may from 50,000 feet, look like a series of simple steps but on the shop floor be a very different proposition with many moving parts and frequent exceptions.

> *"If everyone in the team narrated their work openly, we wouldn't need any meetings to assess project status and we would gain a lot of time."*
>
> ~**JEROEN SANGERS**, http://en.blog.zyncro.com/2013/05/16/working-out-loud/

But they don't tell us the story the person in charge of the process, on the floor, every day, would tell what to do when a supplier fails to ship a critical component, or a flu epidemic derails schedules, or someone creates a custom shim for an ill-fitting part without telling anyone about the flaw. The problem with documentation? Well . . . the reality is rarely what's documented. So how can showing work help the organization?

INCREASED EFFICIENCIES

- Reduction in meetings

- Fewer silos and decrease in redundancy
- Saved time and energy
- Reduction of time spent both in searching for information and people/relationships
- Reduction in time spent interpreting historical documents and artifacts
- Connecting talent pools
- Improvement in creating and storing information and artifacts
- Capturing explicit, but not tacit, knowledge

(**Author note:** This does not address the problem of meetings held from dysfunction, like creating intentional delays, discomfort with using newer, more efficient tools, simply liking to "get together" even when it is not productive, and having meetings to give the appearance of working. In other words: sometimes managers don't want to reduce meetings. Interestingly, I have worked in two organizations fueled by "standing meetings," in which allotted time gets filled whether there is anything important to discuss or not. I worked in a third in which there were no standing meetings, and it seemed to get by just fine without them.)

OVERCOMING TRADITIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION TRAPS

Many organizations are good at capturing basics of explicit information: to order product Z fill out form N; submit requests by Thursday. But much of our time is spent dealing with Barely Repeatable Processes, the ones that deal with people, and which often are managed through a morass of emails, lunches out, Post-it Notes, and meetings. It is, in other words, how most of us spend most of our days. They are fluid (non-rigid) processes and events with many moving parts that are not easily mapped, as with a manufacturing process.

The truth is, asking someone to "write down everything they know" or "list everything they do" just doesn't work very well. We can find out what they do but not how they get things done. And overengineered, bureaucratized reports and documentation processes are often exercises in futility, as they capture the "what" of work but not the "how."

The image on this page shows an example of a newly implemented process for submitting status reports. It was provided from an HR outsourcing firm middle manager who asked to remain anonymous. The IT department developed it as a way to force employees to use SharePoint instead of the less formal tools workers had been using. When I asked for detail, as the image is not very legible, the person who submitted it said: "You don't want to be able to read it. You'll go blind."

A colleague working with a software group—who also asked to remain anonymous—reports: "When I was working with [A Software Company], the CEO wanted my help formulating this highly replicable process of creating video: gathering info, production planning, shooting, and then editing and post-prod into a simple linear process with a few decision points along the way. Of course, that all worked in theory, but the practical reality was that we were working with all contracted filmmakers, we had international travel issues, timezones, logistical concerns with film storage—you name it. All the things that go along with film-making. She was endlessly frustrated that the artistry of film-making

would get lost in the quest to scale and flex her process, and yet she also didn't want to compromise client service/satisfaction in a quest to streamline the people/processes that we *could* control. And there you have it."

BRIAN TULLIS: WHY OBSERVABLE WORK?

Here are some of the things that I worry about for my team and my company. How can we effectively:

1. Share what might be half-baked ideas that would benefit from outside input, but that we don't share openly for fear of being shot down?

2. Document and share lessons learned on projects/audits/operational failures so that we don't repeat the same mistakes again?

3. Narrate our work so that we don't have to drag each other into status meetings and waste our collective time reporting what we did instead of letting status emerge naturally from our visible work?

4. Make our electronic documents come alive and be linked across an organization instead of going to die in networked file shares and content silos?

5. Describe exactly the heck it is we are talking about when it comes to social media being used to get work done without calling it "Wikipedia for the workplace" or "Facebook for the enterprise"?

Translation:

1. Promote and foster innovation

2. Promote best practices and continuous improvement

3. Narrate our work and expose it through targeted activity streams

4. Unlock our documents and leverage hypertext

5. Make it all happen without coming across to our colleagues as social-media-hyping, jargon-spewing-idiots

My personal reasons for believing that these are important come from my own core values that I share with anyone that will listen:

- Transparency
- Continuous improvement and learning
- Narrating what I do because it helps me get work done, and hopefully helps others too
- Debate and disagreement as a means for seeking truth
- Exposing failures so that they are a lesson for others
  http://nextthingsnext.blogspot.com/2010/09/gathering-my-thoughts-on-observable.html
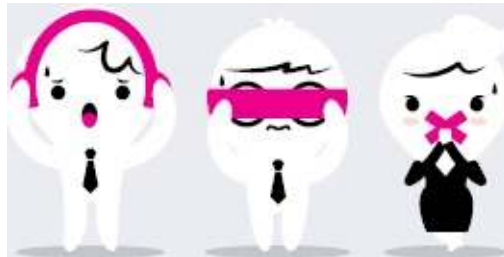
THE PROBLEM OF UNDERSHARING

Liz Guthridge writes about the problems old-school, Tayloristic views of workplace communication continue to perpetuate. The practices constrain workers who need to work with external clients and customers, perpetuate a sense of distrust between workers and management, slow problem resolution, defeat goals of being "agile," and hamstring workers so that they cannot contribute in meaningful ways. Some of the old behaviors are:

- Sharing information on a "need-to-know basis" to protect corporate secrets
- Withholding information as a way to maintain efficiency
- Avoiding saying anything so as not to worry people
- Staying silent to avoid acknowledging a problem that doesn't yet have a solution
- Sugarcoating information to try to put a positive spin on negative situations
- Saving time (especially leaders' time) by staying quiet
- Keeping information under wraps as a power play
  http://connectconsultinggroup.com/avoid-undersharing-at-work/

  Thanks to Liz Guthridge, Connect Consulting

LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

We learn so much the hard way, but are rewarded for our successes and often punished for even minor or inconsequential failures; what is learned this way is often swept under the rug. But there can be so much to learn from exploring someone else's mistakes, especially if we can get insight into what caused them and how they were corrected. U.S. National Teacher of the Year Sarah Brown Wessling offers her own example of a devoted practitioner working to improve both her own practice and that

others, sometimes stumbling along the way. This is available as a long, in-depth video; please watch when you have a chance. See https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/when-lesson-plans-fail.

While her class on *The Crucible* was being taped, Wessling realized her lesson plan was going terribly awry. It happened that she was being videotaped that day; she went back and narrated the video, describing what went wrong and how she fixed it. Then she uploaded it to the Teaching Channel site so others could learn from it.

In class that day Wessling handed out what she felt was a straightforward assignment. But the teenage students were confused and grew increasingly loud and disgruntled. Wessling notes it would be easy to write that off to problems with listening or disrespect, but instead says, "I choose to see it this way. I've done something to make them act like this, because they usually don't. I realized I had completely misfired. I didn't create enough scaffolds for them to be successful . . . [in the end] I didn't teach them anything."

Wessling had 5 minutes to adjust her plan before the next class started. "What I learned from the first class is that this was too hard," which prompted her to revisit her goals for the lesson and the big ideas she was trying to convey. She then describes what went through her mind as she reshaped the lesson even as students in the upcoming class were settling into their seats. This proves a fascinating narration of the tacit, hard-to-capture process known as "thinking on your feet."

She then discusses the experience with fellow teacher Kate, because "these things are hard to process on your own." Wessling comments that developing a trusted network, with people who can help you think things through and give honest feedback, is vital to successful practice. But Wessling did more. Rather than just bury the conversation with her colleague as part of her day, Wessling captured it, too, and included it in the video she shared.

Wessling did not set out to "work out loud" that day. But by narrating what happened she was able to tie the events to a larger conversation about the struggle to meet the needs of adults working with Common Core education standards, and the kids who needed to learn. She ends her commentary with a reflection on the bigger picture of what she learned from the experience, the need to adhere to standards in a way that "makes sense to the kids in front of us."

Note, too, the prompts shown on the Teaching Channel's interface, with questions to encourage the viewer's reflection and application to practice.

The question: Which would be more useful to the novice: An out-of-context 6-minute video of Sarah's perfect final lesson, or the longer version showing how it evolved and why she made her final design choices?

Graphic and information courtesy of Teaching Channel, www.teachingchannel.o

In considering the value Wessling's very public reflection can bring, think about the support it has: a confident practitioner, secure enough to admit she makes mistakes; an ability to recognize when something is going wrong and working to identify the root cause rather than lay easy blame (in this case, on the kids); and an administrative structure and work culture that tolerates those mistakes and sees them as opportunities to improve. Wessling's mistake was unfortunate, but it was not the end of

the world. What do more workplaces need to do to allow public reflection on ways to get better? Wha cultural elements currently in place support or inhibit free conversation?

Many of us have ideas that don't match reality. Here's a project postmortem from an anonymous gamer. It turns out an idea for a game is not the same as the reality of developing that game, and the programmer's point of view is very different from the designer's. This bit of after-the-fact reflection offers valuable from-the-trenches insight into something that might save someone else from learning the hard way. In this case, the gamer isn't even known—so there is neither censure nor credit for him —but is willing to share his learning publicly.
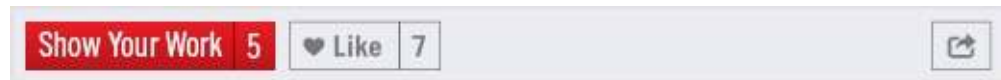
Post-Mortem Race to the EDGE! Game

WHAT WENT WRONG:

Interface design: In hindsight it would have made things easier and more productive if I had worked more closely with a designer earlier on in the development process.

Planning: I consistently underestimated the amount of development effort required to finish the game.

TAKEAWAYS?

1. I need to learn proper effort estimation.

2. Involve a UI designer in all aspects of the project. Games are a visual medium and need a visually intuitive representation.

3. Developing and publishing a game is a difficult and time-consuming process . . . Though emotionally rewarding, it is financially risky. The business aspect of development and publishing needs to be taken as seriously as the technical aspects.

Finally, cookie baker Gloria Mercer, whom you've seen elsewhere in this book, shared a bit of how she made a mistake and how she learned to improve based on feedback she received. Some spinoff learning during her cookie-training phase was the need to develop photography skills. The next column shows what she posted on her Facebook business page.

Showing mistakes offers enormous insight into how work gets accomplished, and how to improve on it. Culture matters here: Do you want mistakes hidden away, likely to be repeated later, or surfaced s they can be kept from happening again?

PRESERVING INSTITUTIONAL KNOWLEDGE

One of the tragic flaws of email is that not only is conversation locked inside a back-and-forth between two people, when in many cases it would be better shared "out loud," but also that when one of the principals retires or leaves, the account is deleted. Whatever might have been there of value would have been difficult to extract, and now it's gone forever. The person who leaves behind work narrated via a blog or through shared presentations, or via images captured during a tricky repair and posted to the work unit wiki, is helping to preserve institutional knowledge for those coming after.

IMPROVING PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND AWARENESS OF WORK AND EFFORT

An organization successful at showing its work offers not just "What we can sell you" information but presents interesting accounts of work that that shows "what we *do.*" This can be especially useful for non-profit endeavors, those staffed with volunteers, and those supported by donations or tax dollars, it says,"*This is what we do with that money.*" https://www.facebook.com/pages/Toronto-Wildlife-Centre/155768073655?ref=ts&fref=ts

The Toronto Wildlife Centre narrates its work, and generates a great deal of community engagement, via frequent Facebook updates. In April 2013 a post requesting donations for an injured coyote resulted in a huge community response and subsequent requests from the public for updates on the coyote's condition. Since then, many people have been posting on Toronto Wildlife Centre's page asking for updates on the coyote. Generating such a specific level of interest is an enormous boon in connecting with the public.

Toronto Wildlife Centre
April 22

UPDATE: The snared coyote had his third surgical procedure today, to suture the area that had opened up and become infected on Friday. His infection is clearing up very well and the skin and flesh around his mouth is starting to look healthier. In this photo, we can see the extent of his wounds on either side of his face from the snare, now stitched up. He is continuing on painkillers, antibiotics, and lots of rest.

BETTER CUSTOMER SERVICE

Showing work can also result in enhanced service to customers. Christopher Groskopf says of the "mountain" of open source code he and colleagues developed during his time on the *Chicago Tribune*'s News Applications team: "More important than any individual project, we've found ourselves in the midst of an exploding community of news-oriented developers who are hell bent on using, contributing to, and releasing new open source code . . . This works for our industry because, with very few exceptions, none of us are in competition with one another. We can share code with the *Washington Post, ProPublica,* or the *New York Times* at absolutely no cost to ourselves. This collaboration allows all of us to serve our readers better."

http://blog.apps.chicagotribune.com/2011/09/02/show-your-work/

REDUCING SPACE BETWEEN LEADERS AND OTHERS

Richard Edelman, CEO of the world's largest independent PR agency Edelman PR, regularly posts to his first-person "6 AM" blog. Some posts are about business in general; others share insights gained via a personal experience; still others offer a frank revelation about decision making or activities that affect his organization and its workers. For example, a January 7, 2013, post titled "Paid Media—A Change of Heart" describes his reasoning for changing a long-held position. The blog—which invites comment—builds trust, supports an atmosphere of openness, reduces pushback and outcry, and helps

everyone understand how the leader thinks. (See http://www.edelman.com/p/6-a-m/paid-media-a-change-of-heart/ for the post)

OTHER BENEFITS OF SHOWING WORK

- Supports recruitment. Showing work via public channels communicates "real" information about the company, the people, the work, and the ways in which workers spend their days.

- Disaster prevention/continue the flow. Narrating work answers questions such as:

  What happens if _____ resigns or retires?

  What happens if _____ is out sick?

  What happens if I transfer?

  What happens if I am out sick?

- Connecting with remote or scattered staff

  Lowe's Companies believes in working out loud. In describing the Lowe's "Open Leadership" initiative, Sandy Carter reports that the workers who offered the best tips turned out to be those located farthest from headquarters.
  http://www.socialfish.org/2012/11/how-do-you-work-out-loud.html

- Enhances employee morale

  "One of the main intrinsic motivators is for people to see a purpose in their work. Visibility allows us to make connections to our coworkers, companies, and society at large."
  ~ Tullis & Crumpler, http://nextthingsnext.blogspot.com/2011/04/whats-vis.html

- Supports informal, social, and peer learning

- Supports the popular organizational talk about "collaboration"

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION CASE STUDY: NASA'S MONDAY NOTES

Here is an overview from Dr. Roger Lanius of a very effective organizational communications system.

[A novel management approach] was pioneered at the Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC) by its director, Wernher von Braun. This was the "Monday Notes," a management tool he developed during the early 1960s.

Originated as a means of enhancing communication among managers, it was especially intended to deal with the communication gap while Kurt Debus, working much of the time in 1960-1962 at Cape Canaveral, Florida, was away from Huntsville, Alabama, where the Marshall Center was located. Simplicity was the key: no form was required, one-page maximum length, only header was the date and the name of the contributor.

Von Braun asked each of his senior managers to send him once a week a one-page, paragraph-style description of each week's progress and problems. Submitted each Monday morning, it dealt with the previous week's events and von Braun encouraged his reportees to offer totally candid assessments, with no repercussions for unsolved problems, poor decisions, and the like. This Monday Note became

so successful as an informal communication tool that von Braun asked about two dozen other officials at MSFC to also send them in. Soon, those sending in notes were not just immediate subordinates, but also lab directors, project managers, and other selected key personnel. In many instances they were two of three levels below the Marshall Center director.

Von Braun read each note and wrote margin comments congratulating success, asking questions, making suggestions, or in some instances giving more negative feedback. After the review by von Braun, his secretary duplicated the entire package of Monday Notes and marginalia, and sent a set to each of those who submitted them.

These Monday Notes made possible important communication between leaders at MSFC. These became another tool—in addition to briefings, informal meetings, and memoranda—for the center director to keep informed of problems and progress. These provided easy and direct access to the MSFC director for managers two or more levels below; no middle-management edited the notes before they went forward. They also prompted the senior leadership at MSFC to pause once a week and reflect on what had been accomplished and to consider the problems to be resolved.

Everyone who has discussed the role of the Monday Notes at Marshall have concluded that the feedback function from the MSFC director was critical to their success as a management tool. It made possible a greater degree of vertical communication at the center, but it also facilitated horizontal communication between organizations, because each person sending a note got copies of everybody else's, thereby learning what other organizations were doing.

Every week managers at MSFC stopped to read what their peers had communicated to von Braun and how he had responded. It served as a court of last resort in resolving differences between organizations at MSFC. The notes also sometime acted as legal briefs presented to an arbiter. Subordinates used the notes as a tool to place before von Braun their perspectives on difficult issues and to advocate their particular solutions. They knew they could get the attention of senior management and a resolution to a problem when raised in this manner.

The requirement to send a Monday Note also prompted many of the subordinate managers to improve internal communication in their organizations. Many required their subordinates to work up similar short notes for them, from which they prepared their inputs to von Braun. It forced virtually everyone in a leadership capacity at MSFC to pause once a week to reflect on what had been accomplished and to consider the problems to be resolved.

The Monday Notes illustrated two general principles in management:

- Made healthy *conflict* between organizations and persons at MSFC a realistic and useful management tool. The freedom (as well as the forum) to disagree was critical to the success of the organization. Disagreements that surfaced in the Monday Notes ensured that a variety of options and solutions were advocated. Evidence indicates that von Braun encouraged this type of conflict and was delighted that the notes were used to express it.

- The notes built *redundancy* into the management and communication system at MSFC. They ensured that all sides were heard. They created additional channels of communication both up and down the organization and across offices at MSFC.

Over time these notes became too bureaucratic—they were at one point institutionalized with forms—they ceased to be useful management tools. At that point they tended to be thought of as just one more report to file, and the time taken in doing it was time wasted in the accomplishment of the mission. Immediately, the quality of the notes fell, and they ceased to provide as much information to the

sample content of Show Your Work

- **Krazy Kat pdf**
- click The Soprano Sorceress (Spellsong Cycle, Book 1)
- read online Oath of Office (Dr. Lou Welcome, Book 1)
- read The Mammoth Book of Erotica presents The Best of Maxim Jakubowski book
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