

# Spaces and Permission

## Section 6

### Resources:

Yates, D. and Paquette, S. (2011). Emergency knowledge management and social media technologies: A case study of the 2010 Haitian earthquake.

<http://bit.ly/EmergencyKnowledge> A downloadable PDF, collated from multiple sources, on the response to the 2010 natural disaster and subsequent responses



## Spaces and Permission

Learning can be powerfully transformative when it includes opportunities for co-creation and collaboration, but for this we need strong, healthy Learning Communities\*. Creating the kind of social space where people are inspired to participate in a productive and purpose driven community, requires two things: the right technology and communities bonded by trust, shared purpose, and shared values. When people participate in these types of spaces, they do so based on a sense of permission, whether granted or claimed.

Learning designers must consciously consider permission and safety in the spaces you provide. It is up to the delivery team, content facilitator, community manager and storyteller, to ensure all participants feel the right sense of permission – that no one is claiming too much authority for themselves and keeping others down, and, on the reverse side, that no one is assumes they aren't allowed to participate when they actually are.

**Learning Community:** a Learning Community is a purpose driven community in which members are learning together and advancing together towards a shared goal. Members actively contribute to the community because of their shared values and interest in the purpose.

**Social Capital:** the bond that holds individuals in a community together. IN community development literature, held by an individual. When a learning community or community of practice is bonded and dynamic, is held by a community. See Social Capital & Social Leadership factsheet in this section.

**Social Leaders:** People who build a reputation for themselves in the community space through actions and contributions that are aligned with the community's values and purpose.

## Emergency knowledge management and social media technologies in the 2010 Haitian earthquake

by Dave Yates and Scott Paquette

### Description:

#### What was the challenge? / What happened?

The US response to the 2010 Haiti Earthquake was a large effort coordinated by three major agencies that worked with the Government of Haiti, the United Nations, and many countries from around the globe. For the first time, however, US government agencies used social media technologies such as wikis and collaborative workspaces as the main knowledge sharing mechanisms.

Many aid agencies operated in Haiti at the time of the earthquake; however most lost infrastructure and unfortunately many aid workers were killed or injured. The United States embassy was undamaged and its personnel were able to quickly initiate a response effort. It was agreed early that the U.S. Department of Defense would 'carry the load' of the response itself—in terms of supplies, personnel, and information. This example is from the U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff's Crisis Action Team (AFCAT), a Defense component organised, trained, and equipped to gather information and provide facts and information.

### Solution:

#### How did we approach it? What did we do?

In past responses, each functional area worked in a 12-h cycle, gathered information from various sources and presented to senior leaders at the beginning of each successive 12-h shift. Each presentation created formal and informal tasks for the next shift, continuing the information gathering cycle. Most staff only learned what others were doing when listening to the briefings even though all individuals were located in one large operations center.

If knowledge sharing was even lower with agencies outside of the staff. Inter-agency knowledge sharing was accomplished through liaison officers who coordinated knowledge back and forth.

Using SharePoint allowed anyone on the team to create web pages 'on the fly'. All contributions were tagged with contact information, so it was easy to know where to get or share more information. SharePoint also changed the social dynamic of the response effort. by supporting enhanced knowledge sharing between functions on the staff and directly with others. SharePoint sites were for sharing knowledge within the staff. The AFCAT used wikis to share information for the relief effort as a whole. Used in tandem, these social media tools fundamentally changed how knowledge was acquired, shared, applied, and maintained.

### Conclusion:

#### How did it work?/ What are lessons learned? How does it relate to broader context?

Social media facilitated knowledge sharing in two ways, by increasing knowledge reuse within the staff base, and by eliminating the reliance on formal liaison structures (both in terms of personnel and systems) between organisations. Whereas before the majority of knowledge was shared during formal briefings with no opportunity for exploration or sharing, now each staff member had complete visibility into how their colleagues were managing knowledge.

After the initial international response, the impact of the relief efforts could be clearly seen. Over 2.4 Million bottles of water and 3.4 Million meals were distributed, along with 70,000 households given shelter materials.