Storytelling

Section 4

Resources:

Stodd, J. (2016). Storytelling | Julian Stodd's Learning Blog.

http://bit.ly/StorytellingJulianStodd A collection of articles on Storytelling from Julian's blog.

Beanmachine.be. (2017). Beanmachine.

http://bit.ly/Beanmachine A business that helps organisations to be connected, aligned and responsive, in order to deliver value sustainably

Betterevaluation.org. (2014). Most Significant Change.

http://bit.ly/TheMostSignificantChange An overview of the Most Significant Change, an approach to generating and analysing personal accounts of change and deciding which is the most significant – and why

Denning, S. (2000). The Springboard: How Storytelling Ignites Action in Knowledge-Era Organisations.

http://bit.ly/TheSpringboard A book synopsis. Steve Denning tells how he - a rational manager - got involved in storytelling

Find out more at
bit.ly/AcademyLearningArchitecture

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Storytelling

Stories are powerful. They can share experience and understanding, express tacit knowledge*, provide a means for recognising local resilience, and help communities to share best practices, what works and what doesn't. Stories play an important part in Scaffolded Social Learning design. Compelling stories make us think, reflect and connect the dots between our existing understanding and new knowledge we are exposed to. They are effective vehicles not only for learners to share their understanding but also to present formal content and gain and share relevant examples.

In the Thinking part of this section
We will explore the different types of stories.

In Planning
We understand the skills and support needed to use stories in social learning.

In Doing
We will explore ways of recognising social leaders in your community, and you will create your own story of the journey that learners will take through your Scaffolded Social Learning programme.

? DEFINITION

Tacit knowledge: intuitive knowledge and know-how rooted in context, experience, practice and values. It is difficult to communicate and is transferred through socialisation, mentoring, etc. Tacit knowledge examples: innovation, leadership, intuition, body language, knowledge retrieval.

Example:
When you learn to drive or ride a bike, over time the knowledge of the all steps needed to operate a car or bicycle become intuitive.

Storytelling for Organisational Change

Description:
What was the challenge? / What happened?
The first time Hans Donckers applied storytelling was actually in one of the largest IT consultancy firms in Belgium. The CEO had defined a new strategy for working with clients and partners. He knew that culture in his company would need to change in order to make the strategy a success. He would need management to become examples of the strategy as well as convey the message to the employees. Instead of planning typical roadshows to deliver the message, Hans gathered with the management to translate the strategy into real, emotional stories that would be recognisable for employees.

Solution:
How did we approach it? ? What did we do?
During 'corporate campfires' Hans identified concrete events in the company's past that were good illustrations of what the future should look like. For instance, one of the stories that was gathered was about one of the IT consultancy's clients. One of their buildings caught fire in the evening. A team guided by a very dedicated and self-guided manager drove to the client's offices, worked all night and had their system up and running by the morning. This case really symbolised a new way of seeing customer service for this company, and ever since this has been a guiding story for their new strategy.

All the stories collected around the corporate campfire actually happened and most employees had been part of one or more of them, so they weren't invented. They were their stories!

Conclusion:
How did it work?/ What are lessons learned? How does it relate to broader context?
There were also many other stories of events and practices from the company's past that would no longer be in line with the new strategy. Those are the stories that you need to abandon. In many companies Hans uses 'transition rituals' to leave part of the habits or culture in the past, and to take the successful ones with them into the future. Concretely, he uses a 10 meter long timeline on where all the stories from the corporate campfire are plotted. Then, the group reflects together about which of these stories can serve as inspiration for the future and which ones should become past tense. The selected stories become symbols and touchstones that can guide or inspire behavior in future challenges.

These types of activities brings the collective memory of the organisation into one room, gives time for reflection about the past and visualisation of the future, which is important when bringing about change.