

Knowledge Mapping Session: Notes, by Tom Bigda-Peyton from 9-12-07, Boston KM Forum Breakfast Meeting

Presenter: Larry Chait

Attendees: Ken Abrams, Joanne Santos, Norman Daoust, Nat Welch, Tom Bigda-Peyton, Phil Murray, Dan Bogati

1. Presentation

Larry began by outlining key applications for knowledge mapping, including:

- Education;
- Organizational KM;
- Concepts; and
- Resumes (in visual format).

He reviewed materials gleaned from a Web search on the topic (he didn't find a lot of good examples of visual knowledge maps, and he did not include concept maps or mind maps). In brief, Larry found a wide range of definitions, terms, and meanings; there are no accepted standards or conventions for "knowledge mapping" as yet.

For more, see Larry's slides on the KM Forum website.

2. Themes and Discussion

A. Initial Questions

Some **questions** came up right away:

- *What is the process of knowledge mapping (Nat)?*
- *How do you do knowledge elicitation for this (Ken)?*
- *What makes for a "good" knowledge map? (Tom)*

B. Criteria for a "Good" Knowledge Map

- You must do usability testing for a knowledge map/ it must be usable. If you are developing knowledge novices need (from experts), you can test whether they're able to use it. (Ken)
- A knowledge map must be effective; it must enable doing things you couldn't do otherwise. (Robert)
- Must be able to see patterns (lawyers: "can't see stuff", intra-article, intra-paragraph). Must be 3-D: visual, text, linear, circular, other (criteria for k. maps) (Robert)

C. Outline of a Knowledge Mapping "Process"

In our discussion, we made an indirect approach to Nat's question (see above). At a high level, the elements of a knowledge mapping "process" appear to be:

1. Identify the issue;
2. Choose a knowledge mapping template;

3. Apply it;
4. Test for usability; and
5. Transfer and re-use lessons learned.

D. “Transferring” Knowledge Maps: Joanne’s experiment

Larry noted that “A knowledge map has most meaning to the people who created it/ had the experience.” Joanne then conducted an ad hoc, on-the-spot “experiment” with the group; she asked “Which one do you like?” (of maps 1-6). (Note: I saw this as an attempt to take maps created by others and, to an extent, “transfer” meaning/ownership/commitment to our group).

Nat and Tom both said they liked the Matrimony map (it has metaphor and is humorous).

Larry, Robert, and Norman said they needed more time to decide, and that they liked them all, for different purposes.

Results of Joanne’s experiment:

Several factors seemed to contribute to the group’s response to Joanne’s query:

- Content/external artifacts;
- Filters/preferences/bias (“learning style”);
- How the inquiry is handled; and
- Overarching purpose (i.e., mandate or vision implied by the discussion).

E. Refining our knowledge

After Joanne’s experiment, Larry said “I have a different answer now (to the question of which I like best)”:

- The Hydro Quebec map is best for organizational knowledge;
- The Raising CAIN map is best for a group; and
- The “Tree” or Matrimony Maps are best for “out further in the world.”

We concluded by noting **variables, or elements**, that seem to contribute to this kind of formulation (which I would see as “rules of thumb”, or actionable principles, Larry is positing:

- Complexity;
- Intended use;
- What types of things would work best, in what instances; and
- How to evaluate.

We can test this formulation, as well as the other elements noted in this memo, when we reconvene.