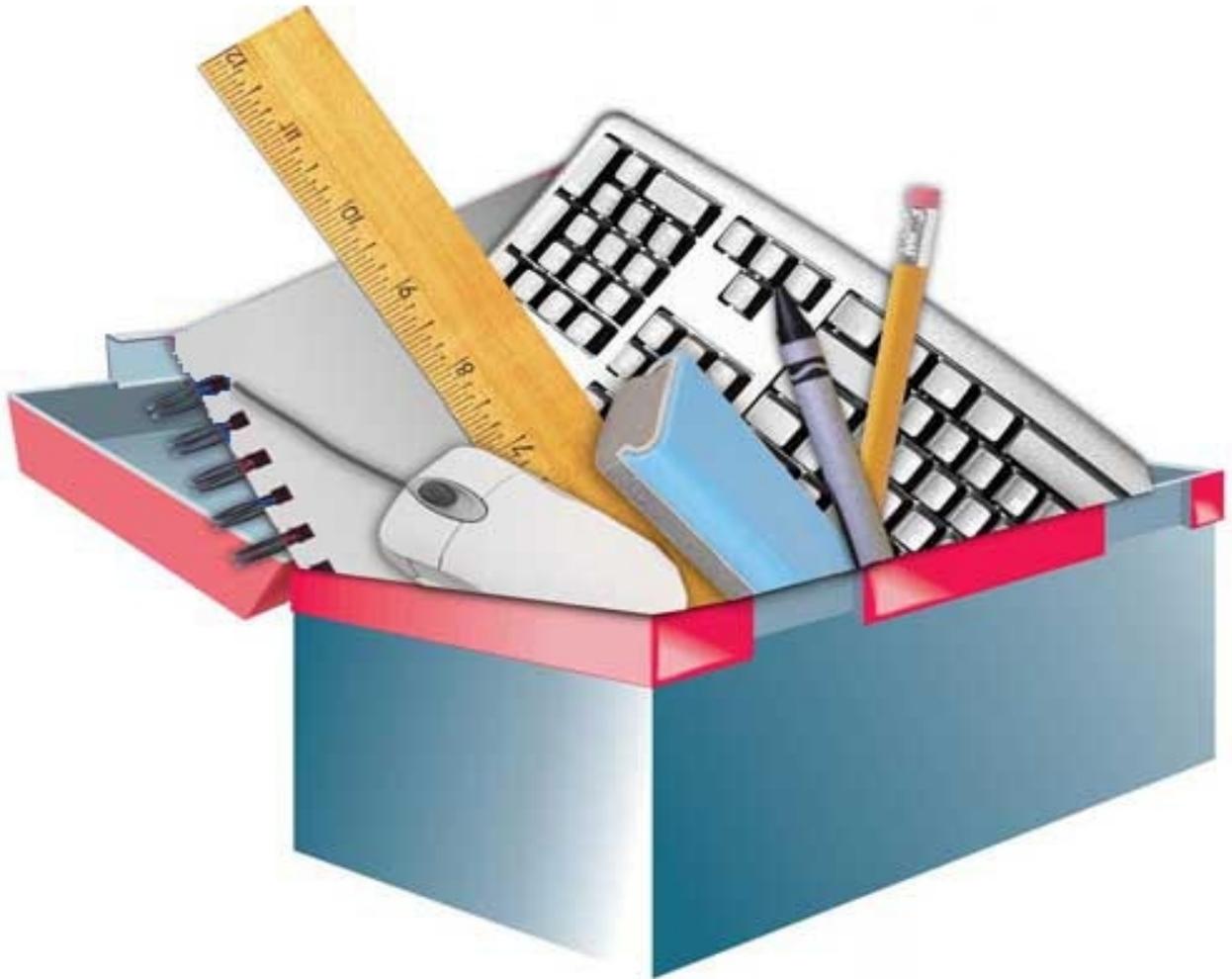


Knowledge Toolkit



Rose Atkinson (April 2014)

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Knowledge Cafe

What it is:

A way of sharing knowledge through conversation. It can be used within teams or across silos and is an effective vehicle to open up discussions that question assumptions, leading to deeper understanding, improved decision making, new ways of working and innovation. It helps facilitate learning from others and a collective understanding. It can also help to surface hidden problems or opportunities, especially those caused by lack of communication. A key component of a Knowledge Cafe is allowing people to engage each other in dialogue and give others a voice without attempting to impose views on them.

How it works:

Bring people together in an informal environment - usually a large room with small (preferably round) tables seating 4-6 people at each. Having set a theme for the Cafe, get someone to speak for a few minutes on the theme then open it up for general conversation. After a few minutes ask two people on each table to move on to another table and resume the conversation. Let conversation develop naturally and don't worry if it appears to wander off topic as this is sometimes where the real learning occurs. After a few rounds of conversation and people moving tables after each session, open up the conversation to the whole group and ask people to share what they have learned. There is no desired outcome and no requirement to record the conclusions of a Knowledge Cafe as conversation itself is the objective; but when used as a consultancy tool there might be an agreement to record some key learning.

When used with a group of people who do not know each other, a useful precursor can be a session of 'speed networking'. For people experiencing a Knowledge Cafe for the first time the format can be unsettling and they may not be used to having the freedom to 'just talk' - especially to people they don't know or perhaps with more senior colleagues. In these circumstances a little more facilitation can be helpful.

Randomised coffee trials

What it is:

A way of sharing knowledge through conversation. It is used in organisations to encourage people to talk to each other, make new connections, break down silos.

How it works:

People in an organisation sign up to participate in the scheme. Every two weeks a coordinator pairs each person with someone else in the organisation and circulates the matches. The onus is then on individuals to connect and arrange to grab a coffee and meet for an informal conversation away from their desks. People are not obliged to talk about anything in particular. Benefits are:

- Provides legitimacy to chat to people about things that aren't directly work related. Although there are very often real benefits through making a connection with someone new.
- Totally random conversations, as well as some very useful work related conversations. Breaks silos in a really effective way.
- Offers the chance to make time to talk to people they should be talking to anyway, and to meet people who they won't be directly working with but it's nice to know who they are.
- It's a really good way of revealing links within the organisation, encouraging people to network and collaborate.
- People like the prompt to talk to someone new (or someone they already know), and the permission to take 30 minutes just to see what's going on, without any particular agenda or goal.

River diagram

What it is:

A health check matrix. Based on self assessment it provides a simple and non-threatening way of visualising the difference between where an organisation is, and where it needs to be in terms of its performance.

River diagrams are a way of identifying:

- Quick wins where little is needed to bring the organisation up to optimum performance, as well as areas where the most effort will be required
- Individual examples of great performance that can be used elsewhere in the organisation
- Areas of weakness that are holding back progress or overall performance

River diagrams are a useful tool for focussing on the issues which will provide the most benefit.

How it works:

The diagram has a vertical axis from level one (basic performance) to level five (world class performance)¹. The horizontal axis lists the working practices (eg: leadership, communications, managing contracts, managing delivery, managing resources). The organisation marks its current performance for each, records it on the diagram and joins the marks to map the “south bank” of the river. It then assesses what its target level of performance is in each case and records that on the diagram in the same way to map the “north bank”. The width of the river in between banks is the gap between actual and target performance.

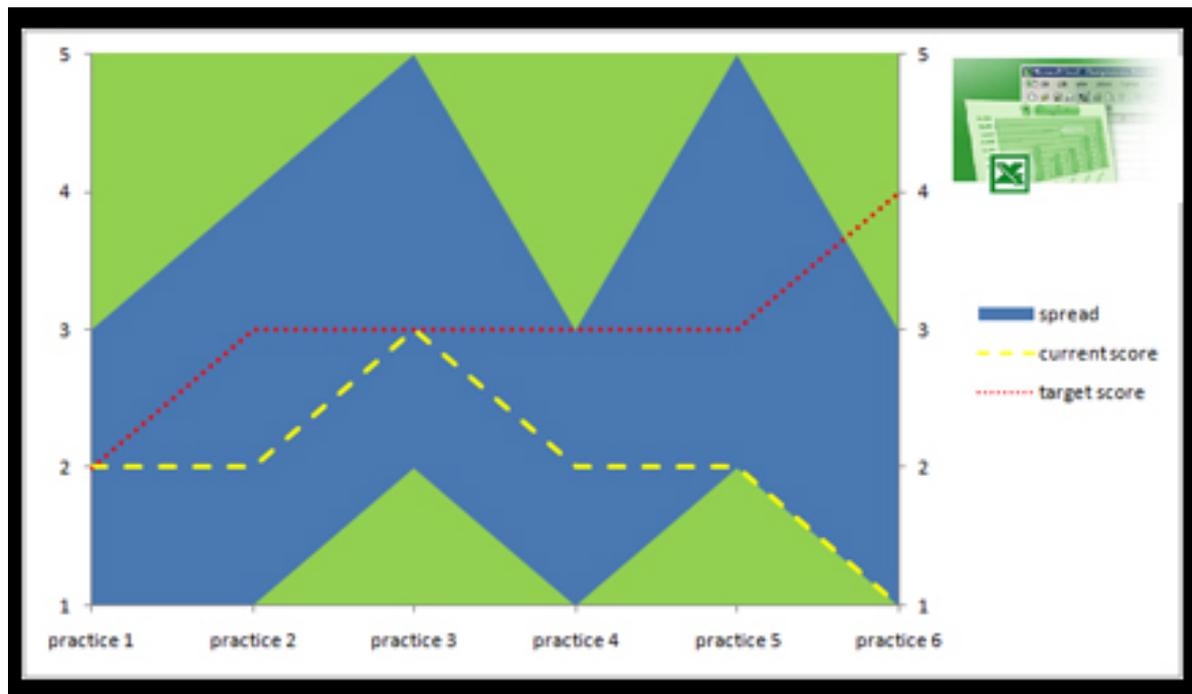
River diagrams can be completed for parts of an organisation to compare their relative performance against an aggregate assessment for the organisation as a whole. These can be used to identify teams demonstrating particular strengths or weaknesses.

¹ The organisation may set its own definitions

Example River Diagram:

Example showing:

- Spread of departmental performance scores achieved across an organisation in blue (the river). Lowest scores are nearer the south bank. Highest scores are nearer the north bank
- Combined assessment for the whole organisation (yellow line)
- Target performance for the whole organisation (red line)



For more information on the River Diagram and other knowledge tools, see: “Learning to Fly” <http://www.chriscollison.com/l2f/> and “No More Consultants” www.nomoreconsultants.org by Geoff Parcell and Chris Collison.

Rapid Evidence Review

What it is:

A Rapid Evidence Review (RER) is a way of reviewing research and evidence on a particular issue. It looks at what has been done in a particular area and records the main outcomes. Evidence reviews can be run in several ways. Some are more exhaustive in their execution and ambitious in their scope. A fully developed review will scan available literature / documents as comprehensively as possible. The RER provides a quicker but still useful way of gathering and consolidating knowledge. It is a useful building block from which to start work on a new project.

Any new piece of work is likely to draw on what has already been done by others. An RER ensures that you take account of this work before starting a project. This avoids duplication of effort and gives you a firm foundation on which to build.

How it works:

RERs can be run in a variety of ways. This is a simple model:

- Gather the group of people you are hoping to get information from. Ask them to write on paper any ideas and examples of work that relate to the issue you are researching
- Stick these examples on the wall around the room. Use group discussions to identify supporting evidence and record the outcomes

Peer Assist

What it is:

A Peer Assist helps people to gather knowledge and insight from other teams before embarking upon a project or activity. It partners those seeking assistance (“receivers”) with a peer or group of peers who have expertise in a desired area. Talking to experienced peers about the best way to approach new projects saves time and money and avoids repetition of mistakes. It also creates strong links across teams and relationships between people.

How it works:

A peer assist can last from an hour to a full day depending on the size of the project. There are four stages:

- The “receivers” present the background and objectives of the project or task they are about to begin. They should also say what they hope to achieve in the peer assist.
- The peers discuss the receivers’ situation and share ideas and experiences. The receivers simply listen
- The receivers analyse and reflect on what they have learned and examine options. The peers take a back seat
- The peers present their feedback to the receivers’ analysis and answer any further questions

After Action Review

What it is:

An After Action Review (AAR) is a tool to evaluate and capture lessons learned. It takes the form of a quick and informal discussion at the end of a project or at a key stage within a project or activity. It enables the individuals involved to:

- Review what has happened
- Summarise new knowledge
- Decide what action should be taken next

This discussion should cover:

- What happened and why
- What went well
- What needs improvement
- What lessons can be learned from the experience

How it works:

An AAR involves major team members and is conducted as soon as possible after the specified stage, project or event. It is structured as an informal brainstorming session to build consensus on the following questions:

- What was supposed to happen ?
- What actually happened ?
- Why were there differences ?
- What did we learn ?
- What are the lessons for next time ?

2:5:1 After Action Review

What it is:

An alternative version of After Action Review. A simple framework that everyone can relate to which is easily remembered and easily walked through while standing up in front of a group. Those who are uncomfortable speaking in front of a group can use one hand to grasp the corresponding finger on the other hand for each section... adding to their comfort level by giving them a prop.

How it works:

2

- Who you are
- Summary of your experience

5 fingers

- Little finger – what parts of the effort did not get enough attention
- Ring finger – What relationships were formed, what you learned about relationship building
- Middle finger – what you disliked, what/who made you frustrated
- Pointer finger – what you would do better next time around, what you want to tell those who were “in charge” about what they could do better
- Thumb (up) – what went well. What was good?

1

- The most important takeaway from the effort

Gone well / Not gone well

What it is:

A quick tool to get candid feedback at the end of an event or activity. It allows all participants to say which aspects worked and which didn't, in an open and accepting atmosphere. It is a useful way to close a session and provides an opportunity to discuss the event. It is especially useful in getting people to express more critical comments in a relaxed way.

How it works:

This is a facilitated session to get feedback and requires a flipchart to record the information. The flip chart is divided down the middle into two columns: "Gone well" and "Not gone well". The facilitator asks the group to comment on anything to do with the event that went well or not so well. This could include content, delivery, style, discussion topics, ability to contribute, plus whatever people want to raise in relation to the event. All positive and negative thoughts are recorded in the respective columns.

Retrospective review

What it is:

A Retrospective Review is an in-depth discussion that happens after the completion of a project, event or activity. It is structured to help the people involved reflect on the project in more detail.

The review ensures that you:

- Retain learning from what has happened
- Understand why it happened
- Look at what went well, what needs improving and what lessons should inform future work

How it works:

Every major project should conclude with a retrospective review. This is the main way of ensuring that lessons learned are recorded in an objective way. It also ensures that the information can be made available to others. A Retrospective Review can be run in various formats, including a workshop or meeting. The output is documented and stored or published before formally closing the project.

For smaller projects that require less detailed evaluation, an After Action Review (AAR) can be undertaken.

Relationship mapping

What it is:

A way of visualising communications and relationships in an organisation, their frequency, effectiveness, and positive and negative impacts upon each other. Can be use in a 1:1 session with an individual, or as part of a group discussion, depending on the relationships and issues being discussed.

Can be used to map external as well as internal relationships. Useful in identifying lack of dialogue, obstacles to effective communication, and the impact of working relationships on effective working. Examples of good practice may be identified which can be used more widely.

How it works:

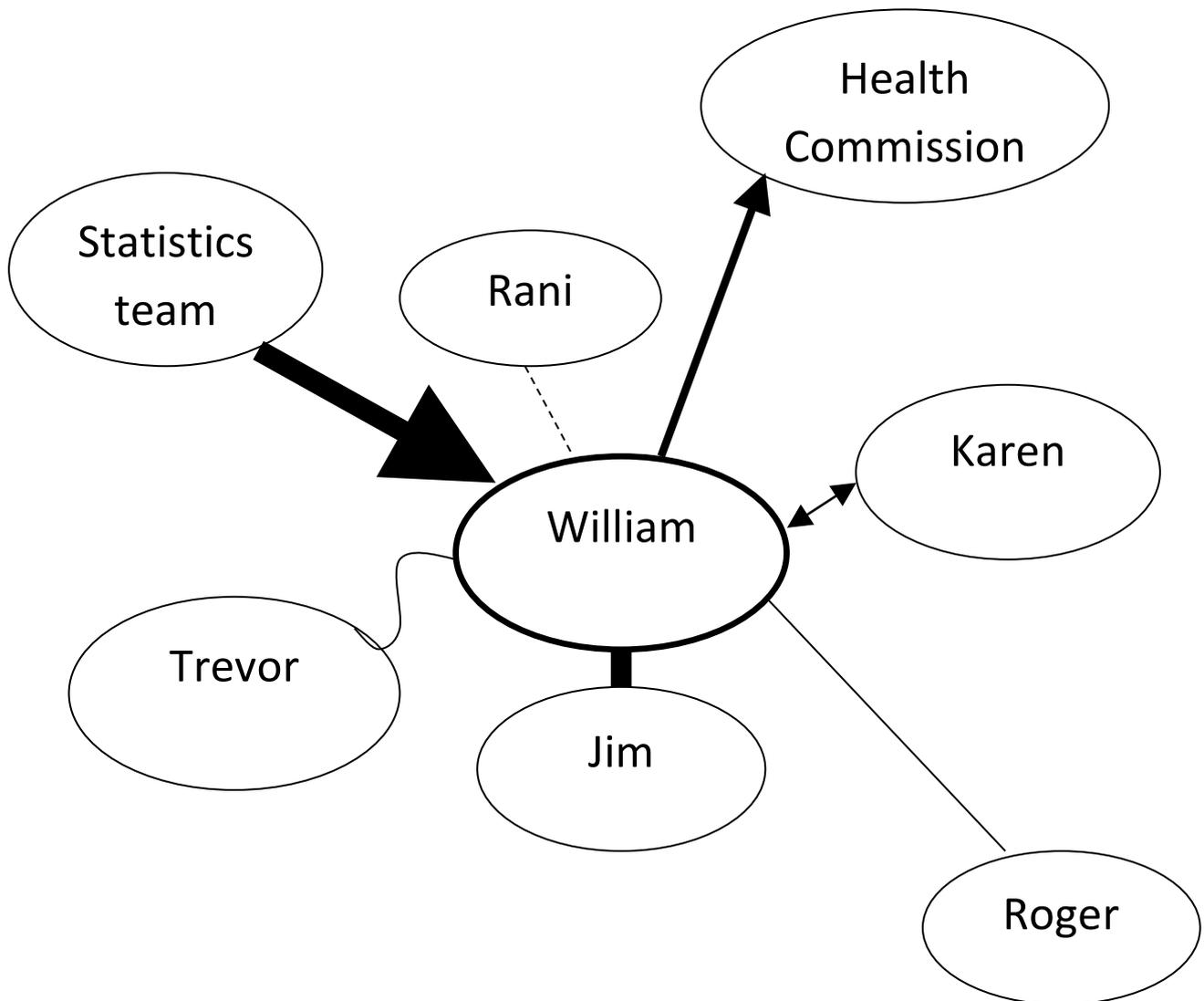
Start with an A4 plain piece of paper. In the centre of the paper draw a small circle with the name of the person doing the map. Start mapping from the centre to the people, teams and organisations they have relationships with. The closer to the centre of the page, the closer the relationship is.

By drawing lines of different thickness you can demonstrate the amount of dialogue between the relationships. The thicker the line, the more regular the dialogue.

Key:

General contact	
Occasional but relevant contact	
One-way information interchange	
Two-way information interchange	
Difficult relationship	
NB: For all the above: Line thickness = volume of information (thicker = greater) Line length = frequency of contact (shorter = more frequent)	

Example of a relationship map:



Knowledge exchange

What it is:

A way of capturing (harvesting) knowledge from individuals, especially before they move on to a new role or leave the organisation

How it works:

Can be done through a 1:1 conversation, a written questionnaire, or a combination of both. Can include all or some of the following elements:

1. General information

What do you consider to be the most valuable and or unique knowledge that you hold in your current role ?

Prompts:

- Do you have any specialisms ?
- Do you hold any valuable knowledge that you would consider hard to replace ?
- Do you hold any knowledge or skills that no one else in your organisation has ?
What has made the largest contribution to you learning what you know ?

Prompts:

- On-the-job training and work assignments, previous jobs, educational background, mentors, other people.

2. People and people skills

Who are the people you interact with most frequently ? You may like to use the relationship map to illustrate this.

Prompts:

- Is there anybody for whom you are the main or only point of contact in your team ? Have you thought about internally and externally ?
- Who do you consider are your key contacts, both inside and outside the organisation ?

Prompts:

- Do others on your team know about these ?
- Do you have any useful 'shortcut' contacts who can help you get things done ?
- Do you have a relationship with specific vendors and contractors ?
- Is there anyone you can go to for expert advice, decisions or permissions ?
- Was anyone particularly helpful or difficult ?

3. Key operational information

What are the key factors contributing to successfully carrying out your job ? Is there any key documentation that you find particularly useful to your role ?

Prompts:

- Are these readily available to others ?
- Is there anything you feel was missing and would have made your life easier if you had access to ?
- Think about procedures, manuals, software, reference materials, websites, e-newsletters and subscriptions.
- Are there any immediate issues specific to your role that in your view need to be urgently resolved ?

Prompts:

- Think about any decisions, threats and opportunities.
- Are there any dormant issues specific to your role that in your view need to be resolved in the longer term ?

4. Lessons learnt and pattern recognition

In your position, what is generally likely to go wrong, and how do you usually respond to or resolve problems ?

Prompts:

- Do you have any specific skills you use for troubleshooting or diagnosis shortcuts – rapid ways of finding the cause for a fault ?
- How have you identified and managed potential risks or problems in the past ?

Prompts:

- Do you have special knowledge for spotting deteriorating performance or imminent problems and failure ?
- What mistakes do you think have been made in the past that you think could be avoided in the future ?
- Are there any unexploited ideas or potential improvements and or innovations that you want to mention ? This could apply to the organisation itself, or the whole sector.
- Are there other roles that you perform – officially or unofficially – in the organisation ?
- Also mention anything else generally of which you think we should be aware ?

Learning before, during, after

KM tools & techniques	Learning before	Learning during	Learning after
Rapid evidence review (RER)	✓	✓	✓
Peer assist	✓		
River diagram	✓		✓
Gone well / not gone well			✓
Relationship mapping		✓	
After action review (AAR)		✓	
Retrospective review			✓
Knowledge exchange	✓	✓	✓
Knowledge Cafe	✓	✓	
Randomised coffee trials	✓		

More knowledge resources:

- “Learning to Fly” <http://www.chriscollison.com/l2f/>
- “No More Consultants” <http://www.nomoreconsultants.org>

- <http://www.gurteen.com>
- <http://www.knoco.com>
- <http://www.knowledge-management-tools.net>

Rose Atkinson (April 2014)
mail.roseatkinson@gmail.com