

Enhancing collaboration and knowledge sharing

ALIA and their training partner ARK Group, recently offered one free registration, valued at over \$2000, to attend a two day conference in Perth on *Enhancing Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing in the Energy & Resources Sector*.

I was fortunate to have my submission chosen, and joined approximately 40 other people from all over Australia and Asia for an intense two days of knowledge sharing and networking. Now I am charged with the task of *taking this knowledge forward*.

Topics covered that particularly interested me included:

- how to communicate with numerous groups of people across a matrix organisation, delivering and providing access to a diverse range of technical information, sometimes in remote locations
- how to gain the support of senior management and engaging the organisation in knowledge sharing practices
- preventing knowledge loss with an ageing workforce
- capitalising on web 2.0 tools to create collaboration spaces.

Other thought provoking presentations included:

- looking at the challenges of effectively managing knowledge in a busy and growing market
- effectively building and sustaining Communities of Practice (CoPs)
- looking at how to manage the relationship between KM and cultural change (what are the conditions that enable knowledge sharing)
- how the recent trend to decentralisation is eroding some of the work of knowledge and learning management teams
- using online collaboration to knowledge share and connect dispersed teams
- using collaboration as a platform for innovation.

Speakers at the conference came from a variety of companies including WorleyParsons, Rio Tinto, Department of Corrective Services, ANSTO, Alcoa and Minter Ellison as well as a range of specialist consulting companies. Equally interesting was the range of job titles/roles including Chief Knowledge Strategist, Principal Consultant:Communities of Practice, Capability Development Consultant, Best Practice Communications Specialist, and Chief Knowledge Officer.

So what is Knowledge Management? Dr Colin McIvor (WorleyParsons) summed it up for me by describing it simply as finding the right expertise at the right time. It's about people in your company—what expertise do they have and how do you find them when you need an answer. No one has enough time to put all the information they know into systems so the answer will not always be in a document.

This excerpt by Dave Snowden from Mark Bennett's presentation (Rio Tinto) sums it up:

We can always know more than we can tell, and we will always tell more than we can write down. The nature of knowledge is such that we always know,

or are capable of knowing more than we have the physical time or the conceptual ability to say. I can speak in five minutes what it will otherwise take me two weeks to get round to spend a couple of hours writing it down.

The value of this tacit knowledge is intricately linked to the person's experience and expertise. As Ling Heang (Woodside) summarised, KM activities are active and successful within companies/industries that require technical best practice, undertake diverse business processes and continuous improvement, across diverse geological locations and which have committed KM champions.

Apart from the excellent presentations and panel discussions, the breaks provided a lot of opportunity to network. People like to associate with like-minded people and here was a room full of people interested in collaborating and sharing! One excellent idea was having two large flip charts set up so people could either post questions or alternatively list their area of expertise to share with others (to follow up in the breaks). Many questions were on the use of web 2.0 tools, which was expertly covered on the last afternoon of the conference by Kate Crawshaw from Headshift.

The final question was, "What one thing will I take back to the office and do differently?" It is knowing the value of sharing information, collaborating and networking. The more connections you have, the more knowledge accumulates, and passes through your 'node'....and those people/websites/knowledge sources with fewer connections do not thrive in terms of knowledge accumulation.

It is the realisation that tacit information, the valuable information and experience that each of us have, that is stored in our heads, can be shared and captured via online collaboration and knowledge sharing tools. Innovation on its own is not enough; it needs KM activities to generate greater value. It is also not enough to simply capture learnings—they must be communicated too. As Arthur Shelley (from Intelligent Answers) urged, "Start a conversation that matters"—who knows where it will lead!

I would like to thank ALIA for making this opportunity available.

Sandra Daws
Librarian
Woodside Energy Ltd, Perth
sandra.daws@woodside.com.au

NEWSPAPERS WANTED

- Bound volumes or long runs. All 19th and 20th century Australian and overseas newspapers
- Also popular MAGAZINES (e.g. *Life, Look, Women's Weekly*, etc.) to 1970

PAPER WORLD

Colin Leitch, Paper World Pty Ltd
75 Racecourse Rd, North Melbourne, Vic 3051
Ph: 1800 811 755 Fax 03 9328 8169
Email: colin@paperworld.com.au

(Member of the Ephemera Society of Australia)