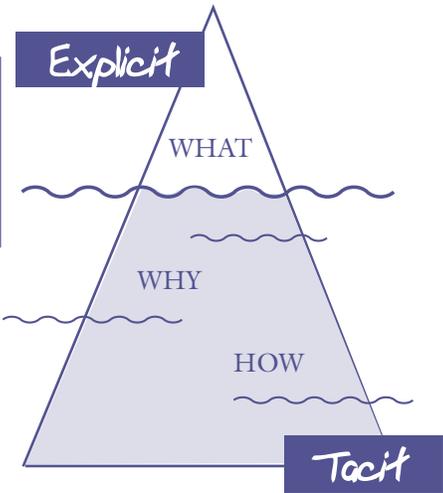# Offering Your Expertise

In a knowledge-driven organization, talk is real work. Conversations are the way people discover what they know and share their knowledge with colleagues. Whether it's called wisdom, experience, tribal knowledge, or just plain common sense – how to teach what you know is a critical skill.

Explicit

WHAT

WHY

HOW

Tacit

- WIIFM? Teaching helps you stay sharp, learn new approaches, and free up your time. Move from being a captive expert to having the freedom to expand your skills and interests.
- Teach the business; share your savvy about how things get done, important connections, and relationships.
- Be a guide to the culture and unwritten rules. Help others gain perspective about the organization and department.
- Create a climate of mutual mentoring by learning as well as teaching. Think twice before saying, "We don't do it that way" or "We tried that once a long time ago.."
- Reality Check
    - Am I perpetuating obsolete knowledge?
    - Am I shutting out new ideas in favor of "it's how we've always done things?"

Questions to Ask Your Partner

What experiences have you had with this type of assignment?

How is this assignment different or similar to others?

What exposure or information would you like to gain from us working together?

How is this assignment adding to your experience base?

Fast Facts

Knowledge is know-how and know-why. It is based on history, relationships and unwritten roadmaps.

Explicit knowledge is easily codified and conveyed to others (practical, procedural, rule-based.)

Tacit knowledge is experiential, how-to knowledge (clues, hunches, instinct, and personal insight.)

Actions

Ask about the person's prior knowledge or skills.

Invite someone for a "ride- along" – to accompany you to a meeting or participate in a task or project.

Encourage hands-on practice and give coaching.

Demonstrate the important things.

Share your process, documentation, and "cheat sheets."

Say your thoughts out loud.

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> " If we could sell our experiences for what they cost us, we'd be millionaires. "
> — Abigail Van Buren

Learning from Others

Most people find themselves in a state of perpetual learning – some days we are the expert, other days we are the learner. Rapid learning helps us flourish in our quick-change organizations. Learning is an ongoing process, not an end state where at last we "know it all."

- Learn "over your head." Stretch beyond the present and comfortable. Seek assignments and tasks that are out-of-the-ordinary.
- Pay attention to how you learn. Are you an information learner (give me the documentation), a people learner (show me), or an action learner (let me try)? Use all three methods for fast learning.
- Invest the time to meet with experts, develop a network, and learn about development courses and activities.
- Document what you learn, including process, tools, technique, and tips.
- Contribute your background, experience, and ideas – to your team, the department, and the organization.

Information Learner — Learns by Thinking

Action Learner — Learns by Doing

People Learner — Learns by Relating

Questions to Ask Your Partner

What pieces of your expertise are you most worried about slipping through the cracks?

Are there some important things in your job that take a long time to learn? What are they?

What things do you wish someone had taught you earlier in this job that you eventually learned the hard way?

What documentation, shortcuts, processes, or tools are especially useful?

Fast Facts

Information learning – job aids, documentation, procedures, and observation.

People learning – discussion, mentoring, collaboration, and lessons learned.

Action learning – try it, feedback, experimentation, and hands-on practice.

Actions

Learn about important network connections, and how to develop productive relationships with these people.

Be courageous in seeking, acknowledging and using feedback.

Ask "why" and "how" as much as "what."

Find out what can hurt you.

Show your appreciation; respect the time invested in building expertise.

Offer to help, and follow through on commitments.

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> "Successful knowledge transfer involves neither computers nor documents but rather interactions between people."
> - Thomas Davenport, CIO magazine