

Food Security and Nutrition Network

Knowledge Management Task Force Meeting September 10, 2015 | 10:00 AM – 12:30 PM (EST)

"A Huge Case Of and For Learner-Centric Design": How a Combination of 10 Learning Formats, All Designed with the Learner in Mind, Turned a Large-Scale, Multi-Stakeholder Event into a Success Based on Knowledge Shared and Absorbed

Attendees:

- *Presenter: Arno Boersma, World Bank Group*
- Patrick Coonan, CORE Group/TOPS Program
- Shelia Jackson, CORE Group/TOPS Program
- Adrienne Todela, CORE Group/TOPS Program
- Melissa Stefun, CORE Group/TOPS Program
- Jindra Cekan, Cekan Consulting
- Cheryl Fries, International Medical Corps
- Karine Garnier, USAID
- Jamie Hope, Feed the Future
- Usman Iqtidar, KDAD
- Julie MacCartee, KDAD
- Nestor Mogollon, ADRA International
- Ashleigh Mullinax, KDAD
- John Nicholson, John Snow Inc.
- Yejin Oh, World Vision
- Laura Osteno, World Cocoa Foundation
- Neesham Spitzberg, World Bank Group
- Cheryl Turner, IMC
- Scott Yetter, Counterpart International
- Antonia Wolff, FHI360

Presentation:

I. A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To "The Forum"

The Sustainable Development Network, which is the largest sector of the World Bank Group, hosted a large internal learning event for all staff on February 24-28 2014. Boersma highlighted that conducting the event was a big effort because it was concurrent with an extensive change in the World Bank's organizational structure. Nevertheless, the planning team, which Boersma was a part of, saw how the transition period can provide for a much more dynamic learning event with everyone from all sectors and departments interacting with each other. The main objective for this event was addressing the "[Forgetting Curve](#)" and in turn sharing applicable knowledge; the planning team did away with the traditional lecture format and made interaction a default.

II. Formats to "Make Knowledge Stick" Had A Few Things in Common

To fulfill The Forum's objectives, the planning team first looked at learning formats already used at the World Bank for knowledge sharing events. These formats were collaborative and participatory with bite-

size and practical knowledge being formulated and shared. Boersma focused in on the goal of making knowledge stick and working with the elements to make that happen with The Forum.

III. The Forum in Numbers

According to Boersma, The Forum was the largest internal event organized within the World Bank up to date: **five days, 10 topical streams, 10 learning formats, 100+ facilitators, 150+ volunteers, 250+ events, 400+ speakers, 1500+ participants (40% field staff), and 2850 evaluations.**

IV. Top 10: You Know a Forum is “Sticky” When...

In this section, Boersma discussed 10 features an event should ideally have to succeed in making knowledge stick to its participants.

a. *10: Design is Learner-Centered* – The Forum had 10 learning formats throughout its five-day course, which revolved around relational (people-to-people) and contextual (substantial presentations) aspects of a learning event. These learning formats included: **(1) Wikithon** – the launch of an internal World Bank Wikipedia where all staff can share and edit documents democratically; **(2) Up Close and Personal** – TED-like talks; **(3) Meet Managers** – used lunchtime to meet managers across departments and sectors, which helped new managers meet their staff as an outcome of the organizational structure change in the institution; **(4) Project Expo** – exhibition of very practical projects in the organization; **(5) Master Classes** – sessions designed for more experienced staff; **(6) TTL Trade Secrets** – discussions on how different groups in the World Bank overcame their respective programmatic challenges and presentations of lessons learned; **(7) Hard Talks** – unscripted Q&A, modelled after the BBC show; **(8) Project Clinics** – sessions where project teams brought programmatic issues to “doctors” who helped them find possible solutions; **(9) Experts On Call** – staff had 15 minute-appointments with experts in different sectors; and **(10) Genius Bar** – modelled after the Apple Store feature, sessions at Bar helped participants acquire information on different tools and platforms that could be useful to them.

b. *9: Org. Silos are Broken* – Boersma stated that the planning team made sure that all of the World Bank departments were involved in the creation of The Forum, bringing in expertise and issues in event sessions.

c. *8: Communication (Appealing, Relevant, Consistent)* – The advertisements made for the event were interactive, easy to read, and visually-appealing. The planning team sent out a newsletter a week leading to the event date.

d. *7: Topics are Sourced Bottom-Up* – Before choosing event themes and topics, the planning team asked the potential participants what they would like to be discussed. The team wanted the forum to be molded by participant needs and wants for better knowledge capture and sharing.

e. *6: “Performers” are Trained* – Presenters, speakers and facilitators were signed up for workshops that taught them how to speak and engage in new formats. The planning team wanted the “Performers” to acquire new knowledge as well.

f. *5: Interaction is Default* – As Boersma had highlighted earlier in the presentation, The Forum was all about interaction between all participants – presenters and audience. For example, during the Hard Talks sessions, the planning team used Poll Everywhere for people—in-person or online—to ask questions.

g. *4: Participants are Pre-Selected Based on Profile* – Planning team based the attendance to different sessions on registration profiles, with field-based staff, who travelled the most to attend the event, getting priority to most sessions. They also considered sector experience and expertise, and years at the organization. Diversity in attendance was key for this event.

h. *3: Groups are Small* – With interaction in mind, each session had groups as small as 15 attendees, and were free-flowing.

i. *2: Knowledge is “Bite-Sized”* – Each sessions kept knowledge presented and shared sizable, practicable, and implementable. Boersma emphasized that there were no big research paper presentations.

j. *1: The Experience is Fun* – Food and swag promotional items were in abundance, and the overall atmosphere was inviting, energetic and fun.

V. Did It Work?

Boersma was pleased to report that after analyzing after-session surveys, after-event surveys, and a general evaluation four months after the event, the majority of the responses said yes to the effectiveness of the learning event in retaining knowledge, to the applicability of that knowledge, and to the actual application of it as well in respective sectors in the World Bank.

VI. Q&A

1. How do you measure or report progress on 'silos are broken'? There can't be a single answer but would love to learn from your insights/approaches! – Yejin Oh

a. The Director of the Sustainable Development Network managed to collect people across the institution and sat them in one room, which contributed a lot in the breaking of the silos. Those who participated in the planning had to report back to their respective departments, thereby making sure all departments knew that such event was happening. Some presenters also came from different parts of the organization. Boersma also added that a variety of people in the institution still ask the planning team how the event was planned.

2. What type of activities and/or strategies to actively engage people from different silos? - Shelia Jackson

a. Boersma explained that since there were 10 learning formats and 10 topical streams, the people were assigned a topic or a format. Likewise, regular meetings were held to check in to the departments and their involvement in the event. The time crunch also created a sense of urgency to those involved that being actively engage was stressed to produce the event.

3. I love the idea of working with the speakers in advance to help them present and engage more effectively. Did you experience push-back from some of the speakers who didn't want training or didn't think they needed it? How did you deal with that? – Julie MacCartee

a. There was some initial push-back from several speakers because they were not used to the learning formats for the event. Some people preferred the traditional presentation. Fortunately, no speaker declined. Once they accepted the training to the new formats, they started to look forward to the event.

4. These are some really great ways of sharing knowledge during an event - I'm curious to know if the hard talks with experts and the experts on call were formally facilitated or did the experts themselves facilitate? - Antonia Wolff

a. During the Hard Talks sessions, the facilitators were the interviewers asking questions to the experts. In other sessions, the facilitators had more of a moderating role, presenting the speakers and making sure momentum was kept up throughout. Facilitator training occurred before the event, which led to an added by-product of more than 100 trained facilitators.

5. Where did the planning team acquire the participant profiles? – Shelia Jackson

a. Excel files from HR

6. How well is Wiki working? Do Wiki documents gain formal recognition? How many Wiki champions have emerged? – Scott Yetter and Shelia Jackson

a. Boersma explained that it has not worked well in terms of being a broadly used platform for collaboration or document development. However there are pockets of the World Bank that eagerly use it. If people want to use it then they can, but if not then they don't have to. Moreover, the Wiki platform does not perform any sort of recognition, but once the documents become more formal, it will be transferred to a more curated platform in the institution.

7. Do you have advice on how to do a learning event like this at a very small scale with a small budget? – Cheryl Fries

a. Boersma said that budget was actually low for The Forum. Conducting it in-house was helpful in terms of cost; catering was the only external feature. He advised that borrowing learning formats that are sustainable, and using tools that are not too pricey are important. Likewise, encouraging staff and networks may bring about volunteers and even free or discounted services.

8. Did you have enough activity from a broad enough set of participants to generate enough content for such guidance docs, or did you supplement with further research and writing outside the Wiki? – Scott Yetter

a. The planning team jumpstarted with some content, but allowed participants to create the rest.

9. How do you choose a learning format for specific events? - Cheryl Fries

a. Boersma said that some people are more susceptible to new formats than others, and that it really depends on the audience the event is trying to gather. There needs to be a pitch for speakers and presenters that traditional formats are probably going to stick less than the new ones, so there's a call to evolve. Find people who would be willing to experiment new formats with the planning team. It also helps if a post-event report highlights what worked and what didn't work with these formats.

10. For meeting overseas, there's more of a call to conduct the formal, traditional learning event structure. Credibility is sometimes lost if a new format is used. How do you resolve this? – Shelia Jackson

a. Boersma's colleague, Neesham Spitzberg drew an example with the International Finance Corp. which holds a lot of events in their field offices. She advised to come in with new learning formats, but bring in a big speaker to start the event (traditional) and then continue with the new (evolved formats).

VII. Conclusion

Shelia Jackson reminded everyone of the KM Association event: "The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly: Autopsy of an Integrated, Open Source KM Strategy" by Richard Boly on September 25, 2015. More information and RSVP link [here](#).

The next KM Task Force Meeting will be a joint discussion with the M&E Task Force. More information will follow soon.