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Collective Digital Storytelling™: Learning in the 21st Century



Collective Digital Storytelling™ (CDS) combines methodologies of Organization Development, Digital Video Capture and Collective / Systemic Storytelling to create a platform that is engaging (learners are part of the video, not just watchers), emerging (the story is not spelled out ahead of time, but is allowed to develop from a variety of perspectives) and therefore, is dialogue-promoting (dialogue naturally occurs, but it can be included formally as part of the process).

Uses of CDS:

- Culture/Value clarification or reinforcement
- Innovation and Creativity
- Onboarding
- Acknowledgement of goal attainment
- Lessons learned
- Complex knowledge sharing
- Organization Change

Has implications for team learning, double-loop learning and surfacing of underlying assumptions behind actions. It goes beyond traditional pedagogy to more complex learning that requires deeper understanding. There is more to learning than just acquiring the facts. CDS can enhance synthesis, provide context and improve commitment.





Storytelling is a powerful learning strategy, but suffers from some practical obstacles. Many storytellers are in leadership positions but may lack specific skills around delivery and cohesive story development. In addition, it becomes a challenge to relay the same story repeatedly to many live audiences over time with the same energy in a compressed timeframe. With today's global organizations, this is almost an impossibility.

When only one perspective is presented, it becomes *the* storyline. It squeezes out other valid perspectives and does not reflect the reality of the complex, dynamic and intertwined nature of organizational relationships. CDS honors those aspects since it not only promotes the idea that stories are truly multi-perspective in nature, but represents real situations as opposed to scripted and planned narratives. Learning is heightened because of increased relatability, the capture of subtle nuances of assumptions and reasoning necessary for double-loop learning and has the benefits of a common experience in geographically dispersed organizations.



WHY IS “COLLECTIVE” IMPORTANT IN COLLECTIVE DIGITAL STORYTELLING™?

Collective:
An Important Word

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Every project has a story...  
Every initiative has a story...  
Every Accomplishment  
Every Loss  
Every Failure  
Every Employee Change...  
has a story that can be learned from.

But, who should tell the story?

Everyone.

What's the difference between CDS and the documentary style of filmmaking?

Collective Digital Storytelling™ can be considered a sub-genre of documentary style, but it differs in some key ways:

- Documentaries usually start out with a specific story in mind and then identifies people to tell parts of it. CDS starts out with a general idea or concept and lets the stories emerge as it is captured. It doesn't look for a specific individual to talk about "x" topic.
- CDS works best when leadership shows a genuine interest and curiosity for discovering the reflections, assumptions and perspectives of their people. Documentaries are typically designed to put forward a story or narrative that has been defined by some entity and in organizations, it is typically leadership.
- With CDS, differing or conflicting perspectives are used as a source of dialogue to further sense-making. In creating documentaries, consistency is sought and inconsistency is viewed as something that weakens the story that has been decided upon ahead of time.





**Double-loop learning:** leads to understanding the principles, underlying assumptions and conceptual frameworks that explain why we do what we do.



**It allows us to reflect on what drives what we do and determine the validity and applicability of those principles, underlying assumptions and conceptual frameworks in light of new information.**

### Why E-learning professionals should learn more about Collective Digital Storytelling™

Not only has technology improved exponentially, but rapid improvement has created simpler forms. For example, in the early 1990's, a video camera was still a shoulder-slung apparatus weighing somewhere between 20 to 30 pounds. Today, video capture is possible on a smartphone. Video editing used to require extensive equipment (multiple tape decks and screens). Today, anyone with a fast CPU and a software package can do it – plus sound and motion effects that a few years ago were only seen at the multiplex. It is only a matter of time until those skills become obsolete.

It makes sense to expand the capabilities of the E-learning professional to include a broader and more nuanced approach to learning. There are opportunities to expand and enhance learning by understanding the *process* of learning so that is not just an event, it is an experience that can begin the first time there is an interaction between participant and practitioner and extend beyond what is commonly viewed as a “session” or “program”.

The **PROCESS** make CDS more than just a video...

Learning begins with the first encounter. Engagement with the participants is critical. The quality of the interaction between the practitioner and the participant affects the outcome because through inquiry, the participant is encouraged to reflect on not only *what* they did, but *why* they did it. This opens new options, new ways of thinking through things. Why is this important? Because single loop learning is insufficient in today's complex organizational environments. For example, what happens if an employee is “taught” to respond a certain way in a certain situation, but the situation he or she encounters is slightly different? The context is different. If they also understand the principle behind the response, they are able to think through what will work or won't work. They can be more active in the interaction and consider the subtleties and changing environments in today's fast-paced world.





**The  
Learning  
Event**



**The  
Learning  
Experience**

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