

The kind of conversation I'm interested in is one in which you start with a willingness to emerge a slightly different person.

Theodore Zeldin
Conversation



Theodore is an
Oxford Historian

Business is a Conversation



The birth of the Gurteen Knowledge Cafe



London, September 2002

Global Knowledge Cafés

- I have run them all over the world
- Some interesting cultural experiences
- Format always works
- People love to talk
- Starting to discover their power



Have you ever thought that your job was to have interesting conversations?



Business is a conversation

Business is a conversation because the defining work of business is conversation - literally.

And 'knowledge workers' are simply those people whose job consists of having interesting conversations.

David Weinberger
The Cluetrain Manifesto



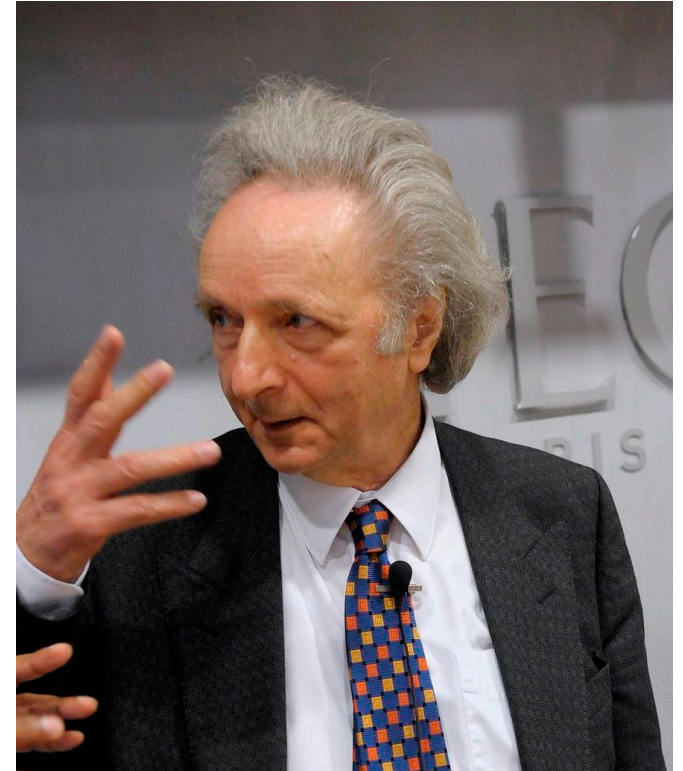
Conversation is a meeting of minds

Conversation is a meeting of minds with different memories and habits.

When minds meet, they don't just exchange facts: they transform them, reshape them, draw different implications from them, engage in new trains of thought.

Conversation doesn't just reshuffle the cards: it creates new cards.

Theodore Zeldin
Conversation



KM is about understanding



For all our knowledge, we have no idea what we're talking about.

We don't understand what's going on in our business, our market, and our world.

KM shouldn't be about helping us to know more. It should be about helping us to understand.

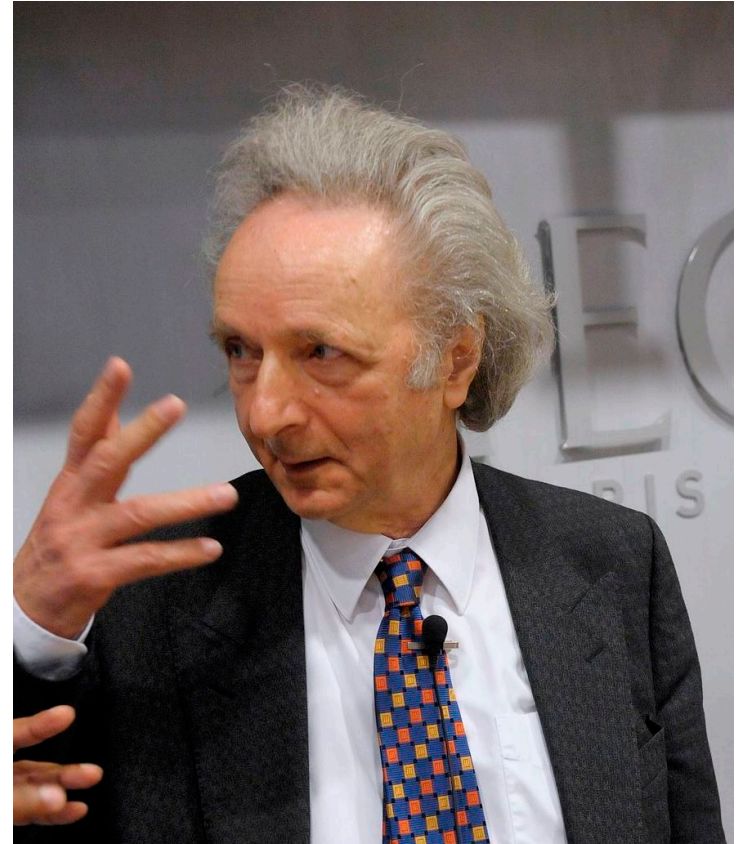
So, how do we understand things? It's through stories that we understand how the world works.

David Weinberger, The Cluetrain Manifesto

Dialogue

The kind of conversation I'm interested in is one in which you start with a willingness to emerge a slightly different person.

Theodore Zeldin
Conversation



Principles of Dialogue

- Suspend assumptions, do not judge
- Observe & listen to one another
- **Welcome differences & explore them**
- Allow taboo subjects to be raised safely
- Listen to your inner voice
- Slow the discussion
- **Search for the underlying meaning**



Dialogue is based on
the work of the physicist
David Bohm

What makes a good learning conversation?



Café Applications



Stories

- Int'l Relations & Security Network (ISN), Zürich
- Statoil, Norway
- ING Bank Academy, Amsterdam



ISN Zurich

The knowledge café has led to a dramatic improvement in inter-team dialog, collaboration & knowledge sharing.

Many internal work processes are now being overhauled for the better as a result of these knowledge cafes.

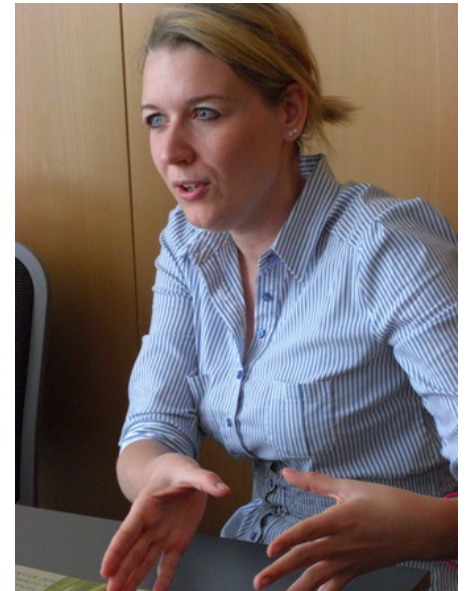
And we have seen an explosion of new ideas & initiatives on the part of staff at all levels of the organization.

Simply put, the knowledge cafe has empowered all our staff to speak up and take the initiative.

Chris Pallaris, Chief Editor
ISN, Zurich

Statoil, Norway

- To surface issues as a result of a merger
- Series of Cafés to bring retiring experts together with younger members to transfer knowledge
- Geophysicists
 - Discussion of preferred technologies
 - Exchange views on experiences



ING Bank Academy Research Alerts

- Gather articles & reports about relevant trends in management, banking & finance
- Broadcast “Research Alerts”
- If Alert deserves attention host a Knowledge Café
- Discuss implications, impact, risks, opportunities ...

Challenging Minds

- Education programme for mid-level managers
- Abandoned lecture style training
- Small Knowledge Café style conversations around specific topics
- Short videos downloaded from YouTube
- Carefully crafted reading materials developed by CoachingOurselves (Henry Mintzberg)

Gurteen Knowledge Café Process



What's the process?

- Speaker makes a short presentation 10 – 15 mins
- Poses a trigger question
- Small group conversations at tables
- Three rounds 10 – 15 mins
- Whole group conversation in a circle 20 -30 mins
- Share actionable insights 20-30 mins
- Two hours in total



Café Tables



People need to
be close
enough to touch
each other



Café Circles



Café Principles

- Relaxed, non-threatening, open conversation
- Close to a pub or café conversation
- No manipulation; no hidden agendas
- Everyone equal; no table leaders; no reporting back
- No one forced to do anything – OK to just listen
- OK to go off-topic
- No summarization or attempt to reach consensus
- Don't let the capture of outcomes get in the way of the conversation (no flip charts)

Café Principles

- Relaxed, non-threatening, open conversation
- Close to a pub or café conversation
- No manipulation; no hidden agendas
- Everyone equal; no table leaders; no reporting back
- No one forced to do anything – OK to just listen
- Trust people to talk about what is important to them
- OK to go off-topic
- No summarization or attempt to reach consensus
- Don't let the capture of outcomes get in the way of the conversation (no flip charts)
- No note taker
- Encourage people not to take personal notes

Café Outcomes

- Outcomes are what you take away in your head
- Deeper understanding of the issues discussed
- Deeper insight into other people's perspectives
- Better appreciation of your own point of view
- Improved relationships
- Position to make more informed decisions

Knowledge Café



Café Conversation

Do you think you could improve your Learning Cafes by adopting some of the Knowledge Café principles and if so, how?



www.gurteen.com

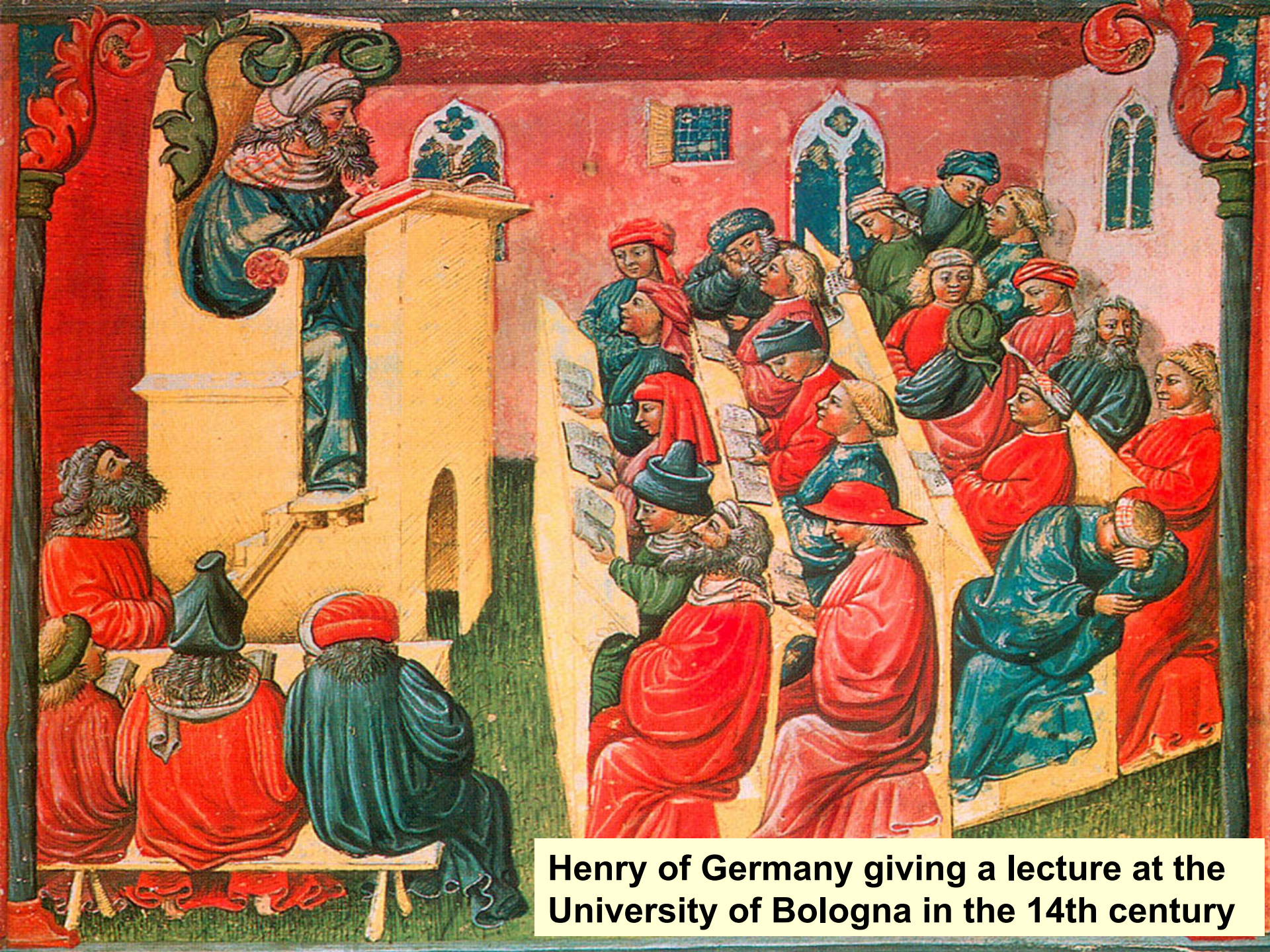


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Laurentius de
Volterra duxit



Henry of Germany giving a lecture at the University of Bologna in the 14th century

Not just chit-chat

The most widespread and pervasive learning in your organization may not be happening in training rooms, conference rooms or board rooms but in the cafeteria, the hallways and the cafe across the street.

Junita Brown & David Isaacs



Conversation is a learning technology

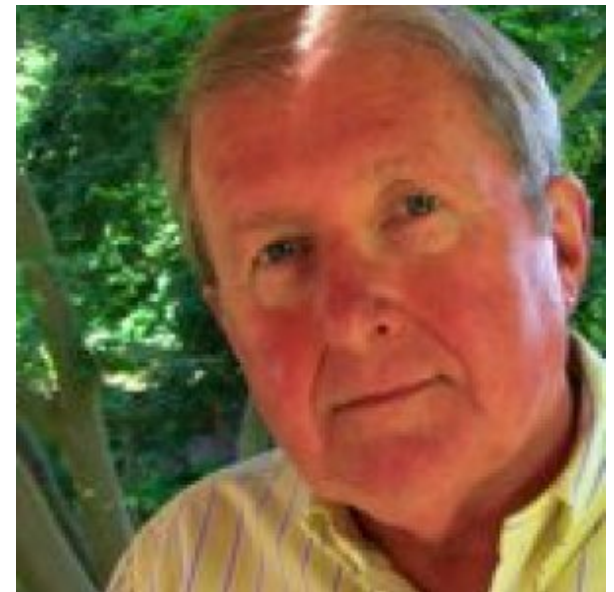
Conversation is the most powerful learning technology ever invented

Conversations carry news, create meaning, foster cooperation, and spark innovation.

Encouraging open, honest conversation through work space design, setting ground rules for conversing productively,

and baking conversation into the corporate culture spread intellectual capital, improve cooperation, and strengthen personal relationships.

Jay Cross, Informal Learning



Conversation is our most effective KM tool

Our most effective KM tool is conversation

The words we choose, the questions we ask, and the metaphors we use to explain ourselves, are what determine our success in creating new knowledge

as well as sharing that knowledge with each other.

Nancy Dixon
Common Knowledge



Café Purposes

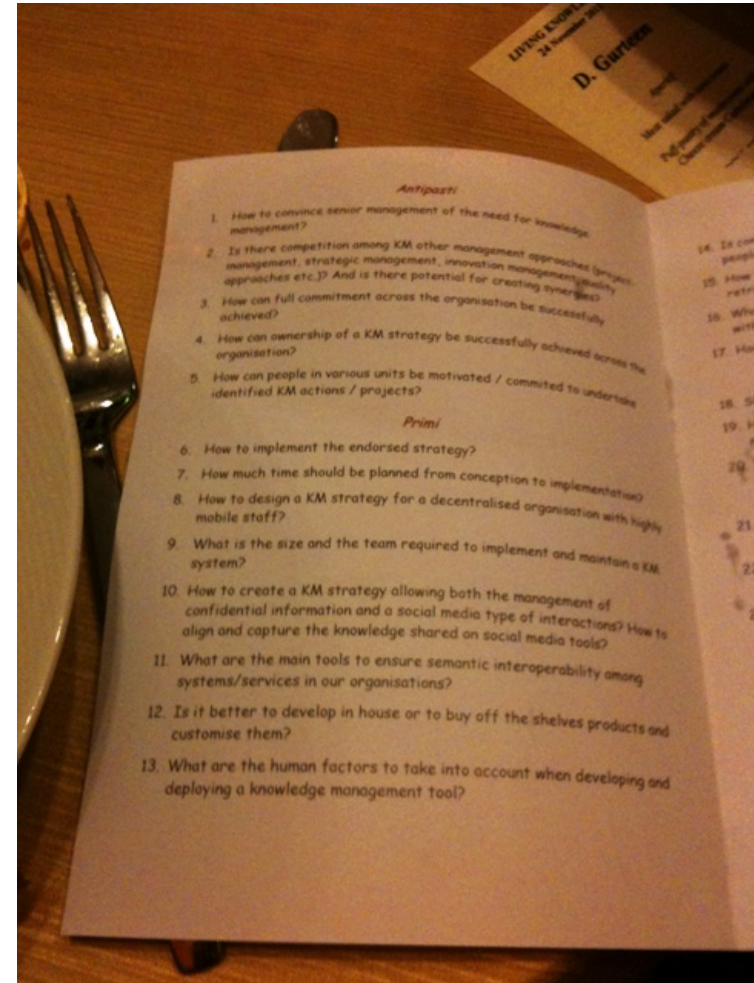
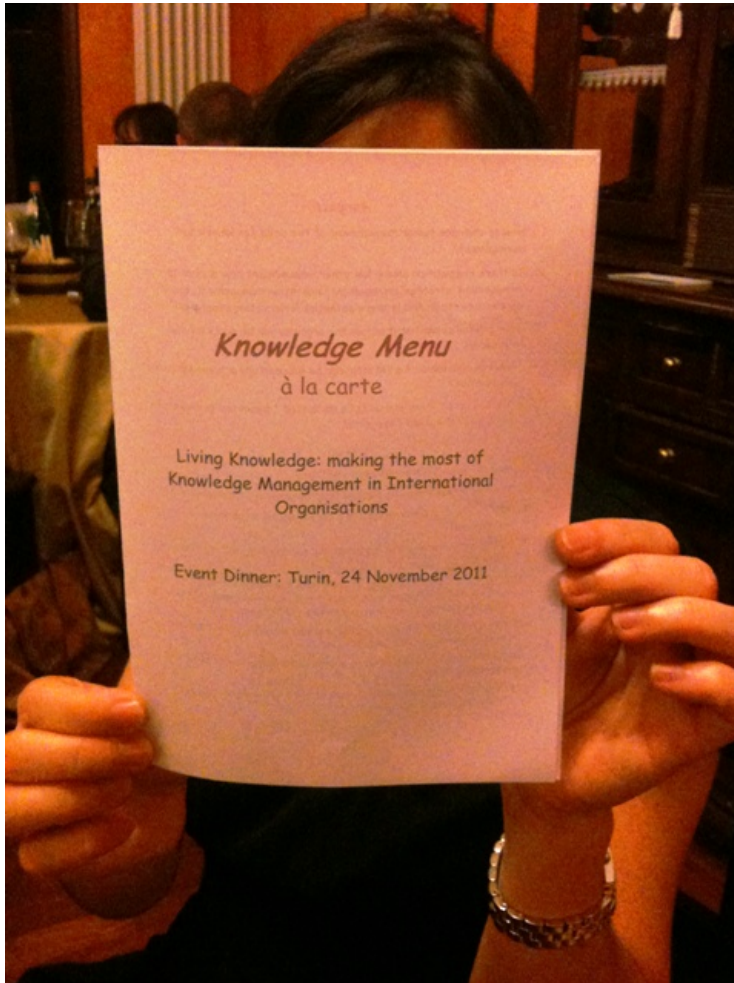
- learn from each other
- clarify issues
- gain insight
- break down organisational silos
- break down inter-personal barriers
- surface issues & problems
- surface potential risks
- surface opportunities
- get buy-in for a course of action
- stimulate innovation
- build better relationships
- engage with our work
- share good practice
- develop our unique voice
- move to action



Meetings

- Break meetings into two
- To better understand the issues
 - Knowledge Café style
 - Divergent
- To make decisions and plans
 - Debate and politics allowed!
 - Convergent

Conversation Dinner

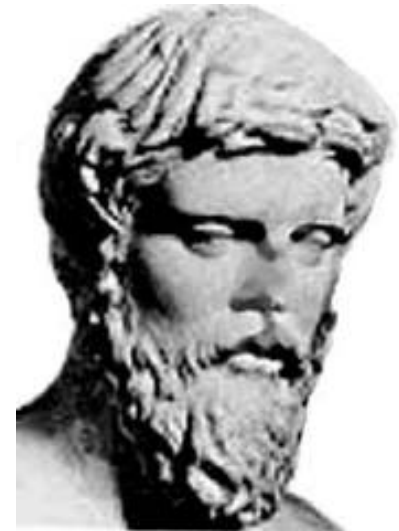


European Training Foundation, Turin, Nov 2011

Kindling the fire

The mind isn't a
vessel to be filled, it's
a fire to be kindled.

Plutarch 46-120 AD
Greek Historian



David Gurteen

- Physicist
- Software Development Manager
- Independent since 1993
- Lotus Notes Consultant
- Website, Knowledge Letter, Knowledge Community since 2000
- KM consultant, facilitator, speaker, blogger, curator



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