

# The Gurteen Knowledge Café



KM Egypt  
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# Begin with the end in mind

- Raise awareness of the role of conversation in your business lives
- To teach you about Knowledge Cafes and how to run them
- Encourage you to create more opportunities in your organization for creative conversation



# The birth of the Gurteen Knowledge Cafe

London, September 2002



# Business is a Conversation



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# 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 central to all that we do
- Its our job!

# 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



Nancy Dixon  
Common Knowledge  
Associates

Gurteen Knowledge

# 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



- Theodore in an Oxford Historian
- Conversation is creative

# KM is about understanding



- Its about understanding & sense making
- Through conversation & storytelling

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

# Conversation is 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



Theodore in an  
Oxford Historian

# 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

# Summary

- Business is a conversation
- Conversation is a powerful learning & KM tool
- Conversation is creative
- Understanding is more important than knowing more
- Dialogue is the key to quality conversations

# Gurteen Knowledge Café Process



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# Conversational Cafés

- A conversational café is a simple process for bringing a group of people together to have open conversations about a topic of mutual interest with a specific business purpose in mind
- Examples
  - World Café
  - Knowledge Cafés
  - Gurteen Knowledge & Innovation Cafés

# Key Aspects of a Gurteen Knowledge Cafe

- All about relaxed, non-threatening, open conversation
- No one is forced to do anything
- Everyone is equal
- No table leaders
- No reporting back
- Sharing circle: individual summary at end
- No overall summarization or attempt to reach consensus
- No capture on flip-charts
- Outcome: what people take away in their heads

# Different forms of Café

- Many forms of café adapted to different purposes
- Gurteen Knowledge Café & World Café
  - Learning, inspiring action
- Gurteen Innovation Café
  - Surfacing issues
  - Refining issues and problems
  - Developing responses
- AARs, peer-assists, retrospects could be considered forms of Café

# Knowledge Café Examples

- National Audit Office
  - What should we do with social tools?
- Dubai Holdings
  - Evening on the canals of Amsterdam
- StatoilHydro
  - merger, management training, retirement, transfer of technical expertise
- Portal Partnership
  - A sales tool

# Café Conversation

What is the role of conversation in organisations and how important is it?



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# Summary

- Business is a conversation
- Dialogue not debate
- Knowledge Café: simple process
- Powerful learning & creativity tool
- Can be adapted for varying business purposes
- Low cost to run

[www.gurteen.com](http://www.gurteen.com)



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