

particular, when being introduced to a topic, new employee orientations, and **times when the intangibles of being together amount to more than the information** learned (building esprit de corps or group identity ... sensemaking and other good things) are **excellent** times for training. Training that can be **chewed in one's spare time** or **easily accessed at time of need** – these are all good things.

And remember, the skill set that is hiding in most training departments. This **ability to find out what your people need to solve problems** - what kind of information, how it should be “served”, ways to access it - all these abilities that **focus on what people need to be able to more effectively do their job** - has the potential for significantly improving your company’s continued growth and innovation.

Stop thinking of them as a training department and think of them as performance enhancers and innovation spreaders.

YOU HAVE THE WHEELS!

You just have to take them OFF your feet, turn them on their sides and let em roll!

One size does not fit all: Scale vs. uniqueness

One of the most captivating concepts with the web is the “**world wide**” part of it. Two guys in a garage can make a site that sells or searches or shows pictures all over the world. While it is true that the web introduces a means for communicating over great distances for a very small cost, **don't let that single option blind you to other strengths which may not be universal.**

There is an **inherent weakness in “universal” web applications.** They, by their very nature, involve compromises and watering down. **For a web site to be useful to the greatest number of people, it needs to address general and universal needs.**

Wait!! Before you file that in the “Duh!” file, think about the converse. That means it cannot be specifically tailored to a small groups’ needs.

Think about suits. If you buy them off the rack, you know a suit in “your” size will fit pretty well. However, it will *never* be as good a suit tailored for you. How many have faced the difficult decision when buying pants... the 36” that has fit for years is now uncomfortably tight, but the 38”..the 38”.. it's loose and there is that fear that if I buy them, I

might just “grow” into them.

Using a search engine **must** return so many things because when **I** search for star, I want a lesson plan on the sun and when **you** search for star, you want the latest word on teen idols. And the engine has to work for **both** of us.

Making something work for everyone usually means that it doesn't fit anyone exactly right ...but the misfit is small. Everyone is just a little off.

What we need to begin to explore are **tailored web applications**, which use the **intrinsic power of the web for communications and access to media**, but are made **specifically** for a **single group** with **similar information needs**.

Universal applications **must** be kind of vanilla. The way to embrace the twists and sharp edges necessary to distinguish a group is to set your sights on a smaller population. **Don't build poorly for everyone. Build well for a specific group.**

This is the way to use the tools of the information age to succeed. Make them fit YOUR needs. Don't make your needs fit the existing tools.

The only piece of clothing that is *one size fits all* is the **muu muu** - a bag with arms. **This might work in some situations, but is not the recommended attire for facing the challenges of the information age.**

Are you settling for muu muu web tools? **Don't stand for it.** As the fashion police say, “Be revolting or be revolting!”

Beware also of the opposite scale problem - when a model or procedure is designed with a small group in mind and to make it bigger, it is assumed that one just has to “add a few zeros at the end.”

Petroski talks of this problem in engineering. It is a common error to look at something in model size and forget that turning it into a full size thing cannot be achieved just by building it bigger. **As things become larger, their very size introduces new elements and problems.**

A beam that is strong at 10 feet will break under its own weight at 50 feet. A campground that is fine with 50 people cannot accommodate 500 just by multiplying the camping spots by 10. Roads in and out, garbage amounts, sewage amounts, food and food distribution are more than 10 times the difficulty of 50.

Strategies that will work to spread innovation within a group of 10 are

useless with a global organization of several thousand. **That seems obvious.** However, **many of our interventions are tested on one or just a few people...**if it works for them, then hey, let's replicate it world wide and it should work.

It doesn't work to scale up the size of a steel beam. Why should it work on something as complex as an organization of people?

How to cope with the problem of scale? Try incremental growth.

Look to the smallest group possible. Implement the tool or the change.

Then try for a bit larger. **Look not only at result, but at where the stresses have increased.**

Look for what becomes more difficult when the intervention is scaled. Scale up again and **look again for the breaking point of systems.**

Think about the stresses with different kinds of groups. A house with one bathroom may work with up to four people unless one of them is a teenager. When four relatives come to visit, the system breaks down, teenagers or not.

The most important tactic for dealing with the problem

of scale is to be aware of it. Try to develop systems (both human and technical) that allow for and rejoice in the differences between groups. One of the greatest powers of the internet is that it does not require clones replicating. All kinds of different computers with different systems can tie together in the net. The net provides communications protocols, so that the **different machines can talk to each other and help each other toward a common purpose.** By allowing this diversity, by allowing independent points to share information, the net can scale with fewer problems.



This is the last chapter in the first section of the book. In this first section, we have explored some ways in which our common world views, which largely stem from the industrial age, inhibit learning, innovation, and performance in the information age. In the next section, I will present some of the tools that have been developed to begin taking advantage of the information age. **These are not presented as “the answer”, but as directions. There is no one answer.**

The age of cookie cutter tasks and solutions is over.

Embrace the ambiguity.