

The next chapter looks at how you spread em around, so that those working on the same ideas can share in the fun, even if they are not in the same time or place.

## Chapter 11

# Tools for Success I: Build and Use DOPSS

If we want to be able to teach each other, **we need to be able to share the luv.** If someone has an inspiration in Boston that can help someone working on the same problem in Altoona,

you can't stop duplicating effort and  
they can't help each other and  
you can't succeed by working more effectively, unless the Altoona person

**1) looks for it and**

**2) easily and quickly finds it.**

***This is why it matters that searching sucks.***

**This is why search engines that fit like a bad suit keep us from succeeding.**

**Gathering up the Boston inspiration and shoving it into a KM system is the same thing as taking it and sticking it in my attic.**

**I am the only one who knows it's there, if I even if I remember that I have it, and I certainly don't want to go looking for it.**

We have stuff - great, big piles of stuff. However, we can't find

## what we need when we need it.

What we need is a method for finding that stuff that is not too difficult for either the person putting the stuff **IN** or the person getting the stuff **OUT**.

**I think of information as a great big pile. In a perfect world, when I have an inspiration, I put it in a file with a couple of check marks on it, and toss it on a pile in another room and walk away.**

**When I need some information, I go to that room and say, give me an inspiration on how to sell widgets faster. A file or two flies into my hands and I go away happy.**

When I am trying, yet again, to do a mail merge, I ask Hepsa, who is a master at these things, how to do it. She tells me how it works with our system. The difference is that she is in San Padre and I'm in Hartford AND *I never knew her before I asked the system who I should ask for help.*

Susan and Mike have heard of a new, cool use of our Zowie 2000 phone product from customers. They check it out and, sure enough, it opens a whole new market. They are in Australia. When I come to work, I see the news on my desktop. A couple of weeks later, I am on the phone with a customer. This new use would clinch the sale, if I can explain it correctly. **I**

**need the details NOW.** With a few clicks - there it is (not 100,000 hits ... just 3 - the original and a couple of follow ups)... nicely laid out.

There is a question from my client - so I shoot a hail to Susan or Mike. Susan is up, provides an answer, while I am still talking to the client. **The deal closes!**

I write up the sales strategy and **throw it on the pile for others to use.** For the specific question I asked, I just copy and paste my online chat with Susan into the system, label it, and throw THAT onto the pile.

**The pile is growing, but it is not growing because some bozo in admin has decided I need this stuff.**

It is not growing because some geek in IT scoops up everything that moves and throws it into the system.

**It grows because I am USING the system. The pile has only stuff that I think ....or that other people doing the same kind of job think... is useful.**

***Dynamic growth from Use by Users.***

I call systems that allow this **DOPSS** - Dynamic Online Performance Support Systems.

DOPSS can completely revolutionize the way we work and learn. They put **learning in the hands of the learners**. There simply is not time to develop training - the target is changing too quickly. A DOPSS **allows us to teach each other**.

A DOPSS is at its heart a **communications system**. It **grows and changes based on how it is used**.

It is not a system like a boat - build it, smack it with a bottle of bubbly and send it steaming off into the sunset. **It is a garden** - continually growing, changing, and producing sustenance.

I've built a couple of DOPSS and have planned a couple more. They have great power. In some of the next few chapters, we will look at some of the pieces in more detail. Any piece can be used on its own. Each DOPSS is different, designed for the specific group that needs it. However, there are some commonalities. These include:

### **Communications tools:**

The killer app for the internet was and is email. **At its core, the internet is a communications tool**. These are simple, not sexy, completely essential tools. There will be different forms for different groups, but the usual are chat and some kind of bulletin board that allows having discussions on specific topics.. not just a big jumble.

### **Library (or pile) *BUILT BY USERS*:**

It **must** be easy for users to add items. **If it takes more than a few seconds to add something into the library, it ain't gonna happen**. It is **crucial that users add items**, because it is the folks in the trenches who are developing the innovations. They are busy. They need to be able to add quickly and easily. **This needs to save time, not cost it**.

### **Search that doesn't suck:**

If this is to help at the moment of need, it is crucial that when I search for something, I find it. **If I am on the phone with a client, search, and end up with 100,000 hits, it's no help**. Give me one that is ok... or make me look at 2 or 3. More than that I'll blow it off. In the systems I have designed, I have moved away from using search tools that match words in the search with words in the document. Now I work with **filtering that uses customized meta tags or labels developed for the use by the group** to "strain out" all those items that do not meet my needs. (more on this later)

### **Matchmaking:**

Much of what needs to be known is already known by someone else in the organization. When you need to know how to forward a call using the new phone system, you turn to

someone sitting next to you and ask if they know how. They tell you to ask Marge, who understands the thing.

### **How do we know what we know? That is the job of matchmaking.**

Matchmaking can take many forms, from a detailed “Who Is” directory, to a skills and task database, to a human-based system (there's always someone who knows who you should talk to about just about anything “Oh, Bill was working on a project like that a year ago. Give him a call”).

### **Evolving:**

We'll talk more about Christopher Alexander later, but an essential element is the idea that when we build a system, it is *only our best guess* as to what the users need. **That guess is certain to be wrong both because we missed things and because the needs change** - often because of the system as it becomes used.

If we think of a DOPSS as something built and left, it will quickly become useless. The library grows based on use, but in addition, **the functions will change, based on use and needs**. The labels (tags) used for searching will change. **This is not a static system.** People who usually build

systems want you to spec out the system, turn it over to them, they will build it. Boom.. it's done. **That cannot be the way it works here.** This must be viewed AND FUNDED as an ongoing system.

### **Homogeneous information need:**

The web is world wide. However, **these systems are focused.** It is **not a matter of size, but a matter of orientation.**

In order to have a simple enough labeling (meta tag) set so that it is **fast and easy** enough to allow users to add their own objects to the library, **there must be a very focused set of problems that users would come to the system to answer.** My father used to say, “We can do anything, but we can't do everything.” **One size does not fit all.**

Major search engines HAVE to cast a wide net because they are used for so many different things. The computer on your desk can be used in many different ways by different people, but it takes a lot of effort to make it do what **you want it to do.** The computer in your car engine is tailored to one task and you don't have to do anything but turn the key to make it work.

**The requirement is singleness of information**

**need.** There were several hundred aircraft mechanics worldwide for the Naval DOPSS we designed. However, they had **similar needs, similar questions to be answered, similar problems to solve.**

### Unique:

**Every DOPSS is different because every groups' information needs are different.** The labels (meta tags) are designed based on the kinds of questions the group will bring to the DOPSS (more on this later). A DOPSS cannot be all things to all people. The functions each group needs **must be tailored to the group.**

Some may need a “Who Is” directory. Some may need a chat function. Some may need a “latest news” push feature. It depends on the group. **A DOPSS fits perfectly because it is designed for the group and continues to change - evolving based on use and changing needs.**

### Gardener:

A DOPSS evolves based on the use and needs of the target population. The functions and the labels change. Some items are added by the users. Some are requested by the users. Some matchmaking is automated. Some is not. **For a DOPSS to work, it must be staffed by people who understand**

**and respond to the needs of the users.**

**Think of librarians.** A library is not static thing. There are constantly changing volumes, displays and facilities. Much of the hoo ha of the web is **based on a lie** that we need only build one thing for everyone and sit back and let the money roll in. **To support a changing enterprise takes a human gardener, supporting and supported by the technology.**

Remember **Desk Set**, the movie with Hepburn and Tracy? A computer takes over the research department of a newspaper, but can't function because the **questions are too squishy.**

**Technology can help, but the adaptability of humans is necessary to keep a DOPSS in tune with the needs of the target group.**

