

Utilizing Tacit Knowledge Grids to Organize Informal Learning Instances

KEY FINDINGS: Universal vs Context: GRID 3

Through a constructivist Grounded Theory¹ approach, six supervisors and 11 line staff from two different resorts in the northern province of La Union were interviewed. The primary purpose was to help them look back over their hospitality career and identify key informal learning² instances that assisted in their career growth. The data was synthesized through three tacit knowledge³ grids that gave rise to five major informal learning categories: **Job skills**, **Career skills**, **Communication skills**, **Customer skills** & **Interpersonal skills**.

Grid 3

Universal vs. Context Specific

A report entitled 'Tacit Knowledge in Everyday Intelligent Behavior' by Richard Wagner⁴ is where the idea for the grids originated. As stated in the literature review, I developed a modified version of Wagner's matrix (Wagner, 1987). He was looking to develop a tacit knowledge framework and his experiments led to the development of the matrix.

His matrix consisted of three axis: 3 kinds of content; 2 contexts; and 2 orientations and was configured something like this:

Content

- managing self – self motivation & work performance perceptions
- managing tasks – specific work related tasks
- managing others – interactions with one's subordinates & peers

Context

- local – focus on short term accomplishment, task at hand
- global – focus on long range objectives (how fit with bigger career picture)

Orientation

- ideal – focus on how good (ideal) a solution may be
- pragmatic – focus on how workable a solution may be

As you can now see, my [highly] modified version only retained (for my third grid) Wagner's context section. However, you may have noticed that elements (or language) of Wagner's content and orientation categories were scattered through my Five Categories.

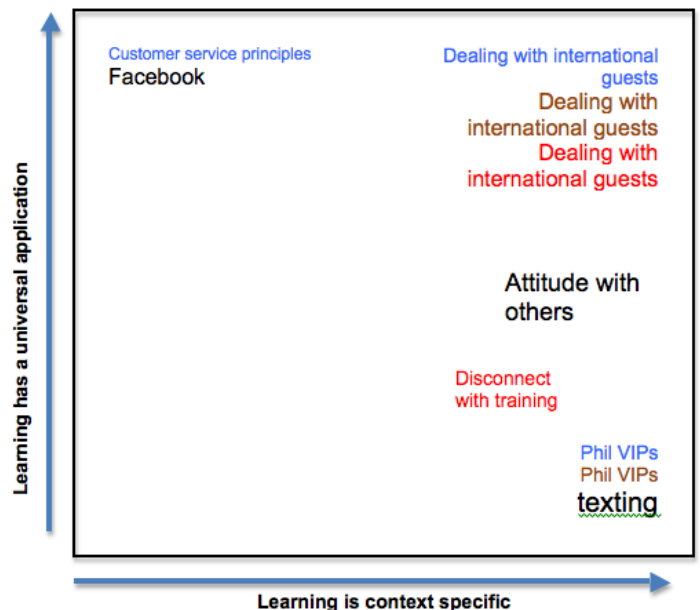
My version of the context grid still uses the 'local and global' aspects but with a slight twist. My 'local' axis is **labeled Learning is context specific** and though still focuses on the task at hand, takes the concept a step farther to culminate at knowledge only related to the context of hospitality workers in the Philippines.

The other axis, '**Learning has a universal application**' looks at those aspects of what has been learned that could transfer to any hospitality job in another part of the world.

The study concluded that a steady stream of informal learning among the staff takes place in these properties; that it augments whatever formal training happened at hiring; and that there is a vast amount of useful knowledge that is sitting dormant (or buried) in the minds of the staff.

References

1. Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. Sage publications.
2. Eraut, M. (2004). Informal learning in the workplace. *Studies in Continuing Education*. Volume 26, Issue 2, Jan 2004, Pages 247 – 273.
3. Polanyi, M. (1966). *The Tacit Dimension*. Doubleday Anchor Book.
4. Wagner, R. (1987). Tacit Knowledge in Everyday Intelligent Behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Vol. 52, No. 6, 1236-1247.



Grid 3: Context vs. Universal learning

Color corresponds to skill group & font size represents frequency mentioned.

High universal / Low context

Customer service – theory of customer service principals (see grid 1)

Facebook – Philippines

- 8th most users in world
- use to keep connected with guests

High context – Low universal

VIPs – staff informally discuss needs of each VIP and how to approach them

Texting – only a small % have smart phones or own computers so texting is the may form of interpersonal communication (and cheaper than phone calls)

High context / High universal

Blue- dealing with complaints is biggest single issue

Brown – understanding foreign guests

Red- networking with guests

High context / moderate universal

Attitude with others

- management vs workers
- workers vs worker
- worker vs company

Disconnect – surprisingly high proportion don't have a hospitality degree