The use of stories and storytelling as knowledge sharing practices: a case study in the South African mining industry

By

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor Philosophiae (Information Science) in the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria

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To Whom It May Concern:

Language Editor Letter

This letter serves to confirm that I, Keith Archibald Hay, [ID number: 7202295753185], have acted as the final language editor for this thesis authored by Mr Peter K J Tobin.

This has been to ensure that, where possible, punctuation, grammar and phrasing conform to the accepted language rules.

This also confirms that I possess an MA Honours degree in English Literature and History, from the University of Edinburgh, conferred in 1994.

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I would be happy to answer any queries that you have.

KEITH ARCHIBALD HAY

MA Hons (Edin)
Abstract

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A great deal has been written in the management literature concerning the field of knowledge management. Some of that literature has focused on the use of stories and storytelling, including for the sharing of knowledge. However, the field of knowledge management is relatively immature in South Africa. In particular within that field, there is not a clear understanding of the use of stories and storytelling for knowledge sharing within the country. The purpose of the study was to improve that understanding through research into a case study within the South African mining industry, with a focus on world-class performance. To assist in the performance evaluation of the case study organisation, a framework for world-class performance was developed and used as an analytical tool in conjunction with a research instrument that was based on the findings of the non-empirical research into the fields of knowledge management and stories and storytelling. The empirical research then focused on the activities of a particular community of practice within the case study organisation and sought to understand the way in which stories and storytelling were used to support the sharing of knowledge in the organisation, as a contributor to world-class performance.

Whilst conducting the empirical research, assessment and analysis, it was identified that the case study organisation made use of a number of practices and tools to support the use of stories and storytelling, in particular graphical representations (storyboards) of the stories to complement their oral delivery. The analysis of the case
study data indicated that a significant opportunity existed to improve the extent of world-class performance for the use of stories and storytelling and a number of recommendations were made in that regard.

**Keywords**

Capability maturity model; case study; community of practice; knowledge; knowledge management; knowledge sharing; stories; storyboards; storytelling; world-class performance.

**Opsomming**

Heelwat literatuur is al gepubliseer oor die onderwerp kennisbestuur, en van dié literatuur fokus op die gebruik van stories en storievertelling, insluitend vir die deel van kennis. Die veld kennisbestuur is egter relatief jonk in Suid-Afrika, en veral die gebruik van stories en storievertelling vir die deel van kennis. Die doel van die studie was om ‘n beter begrip te verkry met behulp van gevaillestudie navorsing in die Suid-Afrikaanse mynbedryf, met die fokus op wêreldklas prestasie. Ter ondersteuning van die prestasie evaluering van die gevallengestudie organisasie, is ‘n raamwerk vir wêreldklas prestasie ontwikkel om gebruik te word as ‘n analitiese hulpmiddel in samewerking met ‘n navorsingsinstrument wat gebaseer is op die bevindings van die nie-empiriese navorsing in die velde, kennisbestuur en stories en storievertelling.

Dié empiriese navorsing fokus op die aktiwiteite van ‘n spesifieke kennisgilde binne die gevallengestudie organisasie, asook die verskillende maniere waarop stories en storievertelling gebruik word in die deel van kennis in die organisasie wat dan hydra tot wêreldklas prestasie. Gedurende die empiriese navorsing analise is daar gevind dat die gevallengestudie organisasie wel gebruik maak van verskeie praktyke en hulpmiddels om die gebruik van stories en storievertelling te ondersteun, veral grafiese voorstellings (storieborde) van stories om hul verbale vertellings te komplimenteer.
Die analise van die gevallestudie data het aangedui dat daar wel geleenthede bestaan waardeur die omvang van wêreldklas prestasie verbeter kan word in die gebruik van stories en storievertelling en verskeie aanbevelings is gemaal na aanleiding van die bevindings.

**Sleutelwoorde**

Bekwaamheidsmodel, Gevallestudies, Kennis, Kennisbestuur, Kennisdeling, Stories, Storieborde, Storievertelling, Wêreldklas prestasie, Kennisgildes

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# Table of Contents

Language Editor Letter ........................................................................................................... ii
Abstract .................................................................................................................................. iii
Keywords ................................................................................................................................. iv
Opsomming ............................................................................................................................. iv
Sleutelwoorde .......................................................................................................................... v
Acknowledgement .................................................................................................................... v

## 1 Introduction to the research report

1.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1-1
1.2 Background to the research ....................................................................................... 1-1
1.3 Context of the research .............................................................................................. 1-3
1.4 Motivation for the research ......................................................................................... 1-4
1.5 Problem statement ....................................................................................................... 1-5
1.5.1 Sub-problem 1 ................................................................................................... 1-5
1.5.2 Sub-problem 2 ................................................................................................... 1-5
1.5.3 Sub-problem 3 ................................................................................................... 1-5
1.5.4 Sub-problem 4 ................................................................................................... 1-5
1.5.5 Sub-problem 5 ................................................................................................... 1-6
1.6 Overall research design .............................................................................................. 1-6
1.7 Abbreviations ............................................................................................................... 1-7
1.8 Research report chapter layout .................................................................................. 1-8
1.8.1 Chapter 2 .......................................................................................................... 1-8
1.8.2 Chapter 3 .......................................................................................................... 1-9
1.8.3 Chapter 4 .......................................................................................................... 1-9
1.8.4 Chapter 5 .......................................................................................................... 1-9
1.8.5 Chapter 6 .......................................................................................................... 1-10
1.8.6 Chapter 7 .......................................................................................................... 1-10
1.8.7 Chapter 8 .......................................................................................................... 1-11
1.9 Summary ..................................................................................................................... 1-11

## 2 Knowledge and knowledge management

2.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 2-1
2.2 What is knowledge? ..................................................................................................... 2-1
2.2.1 Knowledge definition ......................................................................................... 2-1
2.2.2 Knowledge as a resource .................................................................................... 2-5
2.3 What is knowledge management? ............................................................................. 2-6
2.3.1 Knowledge management definition ..................................................................... 2-6
2.3.2 Knowledge management objectives ..................................................................... 2-9
2.3.3 Knowledge management success factors ............................................................ 2-11
2.3.4 Knowledge management models and frameworks .............................................. 2-14
2.3.5 Knowledge management processes and sub-processes ..................................... 2-21
2.3.6 Knowledge management roles .......................................................................... 2-25
2.3.7 Knowledge management practices and tools ....................................................... 2-28
2.4 Knowledge management and strategy ....................................................................... 2-33
2.4.1 Relationship between knowledge management strategy and .......................... 2-34
4.6.4 Quality management summary 4-30
4.7 Capability Maturity Models 4-31
4.7.1 Background to Capability Maturity Models 4-31
4.7.2 Challenges of Capability Maturity Models 4-35
4.7.3 Capability Maturity Models and knowledge management 4-37
4.7.4 Capability Maturity Models summary 4-40
4.8 Summary 4-41

5 Research methodology
5.1 Introduction 5-1
5.2 Research philosophy 5-1
5.3 Research approaches 5-3
5.3.1 Non-empirical / empirical research 5-3
5.3.2 Qualitative / Quantitative approach 5-5
5.3.3 Deductive / Inductive 5-6
5.3.4 Subjective / objective 5-7
5.4 Research design or strategy 5-7
5.4.1 Research design alternatives 5-8
5.4.2 Case study research overview 5-9
5.4.3 Selection of the case study organisation 5-12
5.4.4 Case research data methods 5-15
5.5 Summary 5-25

6 Data findings
6.1 Introduction 6-1
6.2 Profile of the case study organisation 6-1
6.2.1 Establishment of Kumba Resources 6-1
6.2.2 Kumba Resources corporate vision and values 6-2
6.2.3 Kumba Resources business strategy 6-3
6.2.4 The Kumba Way 6-4
6.2.5 Kumba Resources operations overview 6-6
6.2.6 Performance indicators at Kumba Resources 6-12
6.3 Knowledge Management at Kumba Resources 6-17
6.3.1 Role of knowledge management in the Kumba Resources business strategy 6-18
6.3.2 Development of the knowledge management function at Kumba Resources 6-19
6.3.3 Kumba Resources knowledge management team initiatives 6-19
6.3.4 Importance of the Community of Practice to the Kumba Resources knowledge management approach 6-22
6.3.5 Continuous Improvement Community of Practice (CICOP) 6-24
6.4 Findings of the assessment of knowledge sharing and storytelling maturity in the CICOP 6-27
6.4.1 Knowledge sharing maturity in the CICOP 6-27
6.4.2 Stories and storytelling maturity in the CICOP 6-28
6.5 Findings on the use of storytelling for the sharing of knowledge in the CICOP at Kumba Resources 6-30
6.5.1 Corporate services divisions 6-30
6.5.2 Sishen iron ore mine 6-37
6.5.3 Thabazimbi iron ore mine 6-43
6.5.4 Grootegeluk coal mine 6-50
6.5.5 Leeuwpans coal mine 6-60
6.5.6 Tshikondeni coal mine 6-63
6.5.7 Rosh Pinah zinc mine 6-66
6.5.8 Zincor refinery 6-67
6.5.9 Glen Douglas dolomite mine 6-74
6.6 Summary 6-74

7 Analysis of findings
7.1 Introduction 7-1
7.2 Analysis of Kumba Resources 7-1
7.2.1 Kumba Resources organisation level analysis 7-1
7.2.2 World-class performance in Kumba Resources 7-2
7.2.3 Role of knowledge management in the Kumba Resources business strategy 7-5
7.2.4 Importance of knowledge sharing in Kumba Resources 7-6
7.3 Analysis of Kumba Resources knowledge management function 7-7
7.3.1 Objectives and activities 7-7
7.3.2 World-class performance in Kumba Resources knowledge management function 7-10
7.4 Analysis of the Kumba Resources CICOP 7-13
7.4.1 Objectives and activities 7-13
7.4.2 World-class performance in Kumba Resources CICOP 7-15
7.4.3 Maturity of knowledge sharing in Kumba Resources CICOP 7-17
7.5 Analysis of the use of stories and storytelling in the CICOP 7-22
7.5.1 Overview of the use of stories and storytelling in CICOP 7-22
7.5.2 Ownership of stories and storytelling 7-23
7.5.3 Executive sponsorship of the use of stories and storytelling 7-25
7.5.4 Objectives for stories and storytelling 7-26
7.5.5 Funding of stories and storytelling 7-28
7.5.6 Tools for stories and storytelling 7-28
7.5.7 Training and education for stories and storytelling 7-30
7.5.8 Measures of stories and storytelling 7-31
7.5.9 Success stories of the use of stories and storytelling 7-32
7.5.10 Benchmarking internally or externally 7-33
7.5.11 Reward and recognition for use of stories and storytelling 7-35
7.5.12 Stories and storytelling model 7-35
7.5.13 Capture and reuse of stories 7-41
7.5.14 Catalogue of stories maintained 7-42
7.5.15 Use of stories and storytelling internally and externally 7-43
7.5.16 Role of technology in stories and storytelling 7-44
7.5.17 Understanding of where not to use stories and storytelling 7-46
7.5.18 Stories and storytelling community of practice 7-47
7.5.19 Stories and storytelling value rating scale 7-48
7.5.20 Summary of the use of stories and storytelling in CICOP 7-49
7.6 Summary 7-50

8 Conclusions and recommendations
8.1 Introduction 8-1
8.2 Answering the research problem 8-1
8.2.1 Main research problem 8-1
8.2.2 Research sub-problem 1 8-2
8.2.3 Research sub-problem 2 8-3
8.2.4 Research sub-problem 3 8-4
8.2.5 Research sub-problem 4 8-5
8.2.6 Research sub-problem 5 8-7
8.2.7 Answering the overall research problem 8-8
8.3 Recommendations 8-8
8.3.1 Ownership of stories and storytelling 8-9
8.3.2 Executive sponsorship of the use of stories and storytelling 8-10
8.3.3 Objectives for stories and storytelling 8-10
8.3.4 Funding of stories and storytelling 8-10
8.3.5 Tools to be used for stories and storytelling 8-11
8.3.6 Training and education for stories and storytelling 8-11
8.3.7 Measures of stories and storytelling 8-12
8.3.8 Success stories of stories and storytelling 8-12
8.3.9 Benchmarking internally or externally 8-13
8.3.10 Reward and recognition for use of stories and storytelling 8-13
8.3.11 Storytelling model 8-14
8.3.12 Capture and reuse of stories 8-14
8.3.13 Catalogue of stories maintained 8-15
8.3.14 Use of stories and storytelling internally and externally 8-15
8.3.15 Role of technology in stories and storytelling 8-15
8.3.16 Understanding of where not to use stories and storytelling 8-16
8.3.17 Stories and storytelling community of practice 8-16
8.3.18 Stories and storytelling value rating scale 8-16
8.3.19 Summary of recommendations 8-17
8.4 Recommendations for further research 8-17
8.4.1 World-class performance framework 8-17
8.4.2 Expansion of the research base 8-20
8.5 Summary 8-21

9 Bibliography 9-1

10 Appendix
Appendix 1: Research template A1-1
Appendix 2: Continuous Improvement maturity model A2-1
Appendix 3: Storyboard profiles A3-1

List of Tables
Table 2.1 Knowledge definitions 2-3
Table 2.2 Knowledge management definitions 2-7
Table 2.3 Objectives for knowledge management initiatives 2-10
Table 2.4 Knowledge management success factors 2-13
Table 2.5 Knowledge management processes and sub-processes listing 2-23
Table 2.6 Integrated list of processes/sub-processes 2-23
Table 2.7 Consolidated list of knowledge management practices 2-29
Table 2.8 Consolidated list of knowledge management tools 2-30
Table 2.9 Knowledge management strategies 2-36
Table 2.10  Strategic implementation matrix 2-38  
Table 2.11  Generic strategies model 2-39  
Table 2.12  Knowledge management strategy selection 2-40  
Table 2.13  Knowledge management strategy implementation steps 2-43  
Table 3.1  Story formats 3-5  
Table 3.2  Structure of stories 3-7  
Table 3.3  Uses of stories and storytelling 3-11  
Table 3.4  Benefits of the use of stories and storytelling 3-14  
Table 3.5  Models for storytelling 3-17  
Table 3.6  Stories and storytelling implementation issues 3-25  
Table 4.1  Forms of benchmarking 4-17  
Table 4.2  Crosby’s Quality Management Maturity Grid 4-28  
Table 4.3  CMM level definitions 4-32  
Table 4.4  Continuous and staged representation comparison 4-34  
Table 4.5  Selected continuous and staged representation comparative advantages 4-35  
Table 5.1  Research paradigms 5-2  
Table 6.1  Locations and product types 6-7  
Table 6.2  Membership of the CICOP 6-25  
Table 6.3  Structured interview topics (knowledge sharing) 6-28  
Table 6.4  Structured interview topics (storytelling) 6-29  
Table 7.1  Consolidated list of sources for knowledge sharing issues 7-18  
Table 7.2  Objectives for the use of stories and storytelling in the CICOP 7-27  
Table 7.3  Story characteristics according to BSI (2003a) 7-37  
Table 7.4  Story characteristics according to Parkin (2004) 7-37  

List of Figures  
Figure 2.1  SECI Model 2-19  
Figure 2.2  Strategic gap model 2-37  
Figure 4.1  World-class performance framework 4-2  
Figure 4.2  Service performance and practice matrix 4-5  
Figure 5.1  Research philosophy alternatives 5-1  
Figure 5.2  Research design alternatives 5-8  
Figure 5.3  Choice of case study type 5-12  
Figure 6.1  Kumba Resources group operational structure 6-6  
Figure 6.2  Participation in maturity assessment interviews 6-27  
Figure 6.3  Kumba Way storyboards 6-36  
Figure 6.4  Sishen mine original storyboard 6-42  
Figure 6.5  Sishen mine revised storyboard 2004 6-42  
Figure 6.6  Thabazimbi mine storyboard 6-49  
Figure 6.7  Grootegeluk mine storyboard 6-57  
Figure 6.8  Grootegeluk mine storyboard 6-58  
Figure 6.9  Grootegeluk mine storyboard 6-59  
Figure 6.10  Grootegeluk mine marula tree storyteller 6-59  
Figure 6.11  Zincor Žimisele project storyboard 6-73  
Figure 6.12  Zincor corporate storyboard 6-73