

Managing with the Web

The W3C Working Style

Keep It Simple, Stupid!



Managing with the Web

KISS

- Managing People
- Managing Groups
- Managing Tools

Why "Managing with the Web"?

Well... Why "The Web"?

Cross space, time, organizations and platforms:

- Physically distributed organization
- Focus on people: pick them up where they are
- Technology must follow people:
Minimize assumptions, maximize interoperability

Connect people, knowledge and experience, in a word:

Enable "co-creativity"

No Process! (?)

- Processes limit creativity
- Processes provide certain guarantees
- ➔ strike the balance

As little process as possible
as much as necessary

- Solution: *people* need to manage expectations

Managing Expectations

- Live and show mutual respect
- Appreciate good intentions
- It does not matter, what A said – what matters is what B heard
- Keep records
- Give and take honest, constructive criticism
- Discipline and Punctuality are extraordinarily important for remote work

Tasks

- Are not assigned, but accepted
- Consequently, the "receipt of acceptance" is key, not the assignment
- Need a tangible, verifiable goal and a realistic delivery date
- Are tracked through the group meetings
- Are discharged by the requester (group or individual), not automatically by delivery

Motivation and Initiative

- There is nothing more important than motivation and initiative
- Motivation can not be bought or learned
- Only motivated people develop initiative
- Initiative requires shared understanding: who does/needs/wants what?
- Social catalysts help!

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"Legal" view: Charters define groups

- Goal: Mission, Scope, Criteria for success
- A Leader (Chairman)
- Resource Commitment (Duration + Participation requirements)
- Dependencies
- Meeting and communication mechanisms

"Biological" view: the living group

- Heart Beat: regular meetings
- Memory: the Web site
- Common context: A group homepage
- Nerves: mailing lists + chat
- Senses: liaison officers

Heartbeat (I): Purpose

Meetings serve three purposes:

1. Provide social coherence
2. Resolve hard issues
3. Sharpen the saw

Heartbeat (II): Stages

Meetings have three stages:

1. Preparation: Publication of an agenda
2. Meeting: Discussion (*or* information transfer)
3. Execution: Publication of Minutes, follow-up

Heartbeat (III): Technology

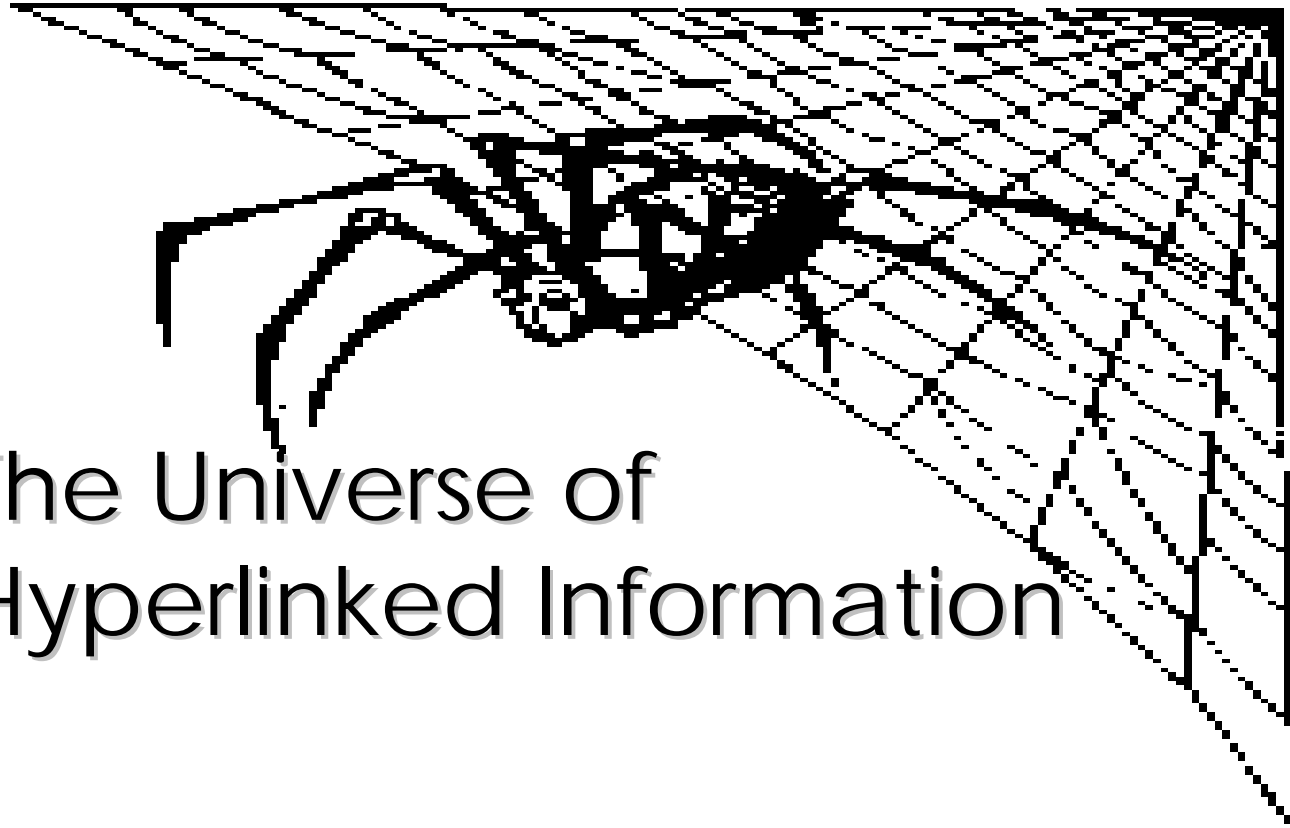
- Shared information space
- Telephone bridges
- Conference telephones
- Headsets
- Mute button 😊
- Creativity explosion through chat systems

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KISS

- Managing People: Manage Expectations
- Managing Groups: The Biological View
- Managing Tools

What is "The Web"?



The Universe of
Hyperlinked Information

Using the Web

"The Web works best when anything of value and identity is a first class object. If something does not have a URI, you can't refer to it, and the power of the Web is the less for that."

-- Tim Berners-Lee, Dec 1996

<http://www.w3.org/DesignIssues/Axioms>

- If it's not on the Web, it doesn't exist!
- If it's not linked, it's not on the Web!
- Links don't break – people break them! (Remedy: [Design your URIs!](#))

Its Web is the memory of an organization!

Designing URIs

What to leave out: Everything!

- Author's Name
- Subject
- Status
- Access Privileges
- File name extensions
- Software Mechanisms
- Version Info

Reference: <http://www.w3.org/Provider/Style/URI>

The Role of the Homepage

The glue to hold everything together

- Charter: Goals
- People: Chair, Webmaster, Scribe...
- Heartbeat: dates, agendas and minutes
- Web: history and current documents
- Nerves: entrypoint to ML archives

Managing Documents

- Every Document has a "Status"
- Often multiple URLs for the same "bag of bits"
- Security? → Backups, CVS.
- Confidentiality? → "We are one Team."
- The benefits of CVS...
- Use CVS mechanisms: \$Date: \$, \$Author: \$

Using Email

Email is the medium of technical discussion

- An email sent is not an email received
- State expectations clearly: [A story about four people](#)
- Important mail must be archived
- It must be archived on the Web (linkable)
- Mail should contain links as appropriate

A Story about Four People

This is a story about four people: Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was this important job to be done and everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure that somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was everybody's job. Everybody thought that anybody could do it, but nobody realized that everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that everybody blamed somebody when actually nobody asked anybody.

Using The Coffee Corner

The single most important difference between a localized and a de-localized effort!

- No coffee corner – no "by the way..." safety network
- + Coffee Corner = no contribution to the organizational memory

We need a "virtual coffee corner": a chat system (instant messaging: irc, ICQ, MSN, Y!, ...) and archive the discussions!

Exercise: New Processes?

(Usually, this is preceded by a discussion on a mailing list.)

New processes are considered known once they

- Were discussed in a meeting
- Are recorded in the meeting minutes
- Are linked from the home page

Summary: Tools

Social Protocol first

- Meetings: Heartbeat
- Web: Hyperlinks
- Email: Archives, clarity
- Chat: virtual coffee corner, logfiles

Form follows function!

Further Reading

- W3C Process
- "The Art of Consensus"
- TimBL: "Design Issues"
- TimBL: "Style Guide for Online Hypertext"
- DanC: "The Web: Sharing, Group Memory, and Communication"
- Covey: "The 7 habits of highly effective people"
- Watzlawick: "Pragmatics of Human Communication"
- Berners-Lee: "Weaving The Web"
- DeMarco: "Deadline"
- Capability Maturity Model
- 7 sins of deadly meetings

Thank you for your attention!

Remember:

- Manage Expectations
- "The Biological View"
- If it's not on the Web, it doesn't exist
- Technical Discussions in Email
- The virtual coffee corner