Information Flow

The Secret to Studio Structure
Jesse Schell
TSP Symposium 2014
Common Studio Problems

• I don’t know how to structure management!
• I don’t know how to manage this project!
• Another miscommunication with a client!
• We have too many meetings!
• Our team has low morale!
• Our game is LATE!
• Our game SUCKS!
The formation of a higher-level unit by integrating lower-level units will succeed only if the emerging organization acquires the appropriate “technologies” for passing information among its members.

– Thomas Seeley, The Wisdom of the Hive
INFORMATION AND THE NATURE OF REALITY
From Physics to Metaphysics
EDITED BY Paul Davies and Niels Henrik Gregersen
Courtyards which live.
The courtyards built in modern buildings are very often dead. They are intended to be private open spaces for people to use—but they end up unused, full of gravel and abstract sculptures.

Dead courtyard.
The Lens of Information Flow?
Individual
Studio
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Information</th>
<th></th>
<th>19</th>
<th>We're out of paper towels</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Project Changes</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>I'm out of office today</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>New Projects</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Let's get coffee!</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Studio Policy</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>I need advice</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Best Practices</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Benson is an idiot</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Events</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>This company is in trouble</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Project Status</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Resource X is not available</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>The long term plan is...</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I'm uneasy</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>The studio mission is...</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>I'm super confident!</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Here's how the client feels</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Red Flag!</td>
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<td>29</td>
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<td>I need help!</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>We're going to lunch now</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>I don't trust Benson...</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>I'm sorry</td>
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<td>Who is good at what?</td>
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<td>You're doing very well!</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>I have an idea!</td>
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Email Conventions

I say old bean, shall we dash over to offtopic?
Spatial Layout

Who sits where? Why?

Craft vs. Projects

Who needs a door?
A little distance can be a LOT of distance
Are you lonely?

Tired of working on your own?
Do you hate making decisions?

HOLD A MEETING!

You can:
- See people
- Show charts
- Feel important
- Point with a stick
- Eat donuts
- Impress your colleagues

All on company time!

MEETINGS

THE PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE TO WORK
Agile Development

- Product Backlog
- Sprint Backlog
- Sprint
- Working increment of the software

24 h
30 days
Other Rituals
Free Food Blocks Info!
Matrix Management:
Projects, Process, and People

(Black boxes represent staff engaged in project activities.)
Info Flow So Far

Four Persistent Structures
1. Email Conventions
2. Spatial Layout
3. Regular Meetings
4. Org Charts
What blocks info flow?

Too much trouble
I didn’t know!
NOISE!

So many kinds of noise!
1) Noise in my head!
2) Noise in the office!
   a) Interruptions!
   b) Lying!
3) Noise from the publisher!
Beeman’s Meddling Matrix

Success          Fail

My meddling worked!  I did all I could.

Gulp! I’m useless!  I should have meddled!

Meddling          No Meddling
What blocks info flow?

Too much trouble
I didn’t know!
NOISE!
Mental ruts
It’s a secret!
Fear
So Many Kinds of Fear!

- The boss will be mad!
- Sue’s feelings will be hurt.
- Everyone will laugh at me.
- I might make a mistake.
- The client will be disappointed.
- I could lose the respect of the team.
- Everyone will know I’m really a fraud.
Casciaro & Lobo’s Matrix

Competence

low

high

Likability

low

high
Collective Intelligence
Dr. Anita Wooley

• Three factors
  1. Social Sensitivity (the “eyes” test)
  2. Conversational turn-taking
  3. The number of women in the group
Three charts!

- Facts
- Opinions
- Emotions

- Projects
- Processes
- People

Org Chart
Project Hierarchy
Affective Hubs
NEVER CHECK E-MAIL IN THE MORNING

AND OTHER UNEXPECTED STRATEGIES FOR MAKING YOUR WORK LIFE WORK
Six Kinds of Jerks

1. The Inaccessible Jerk
   - I can’t get the info I need!

2. The Unreliable Jerk
   - I can’t trust your info!

3. The Rigid Jerk
   - You are ignoring important info!

4. The Disrespectful Jerk
   - You’ll spread bad info about me!

5. The Vague Jerk
   - Was that even information?

6. The Unfair Jerk
   - If I give you info, you’ll use it against me!
Studios with good info flow say...

• I know how to structure management!
• I know how to manage this project!
• No miscommunication with clients!
• We have the right meetings!
• Our team has great morale!
• Our game is ON TIME!
• Our game ROCKS!
If the energy is really flowing freely, the brush paints by itself, the camera photographs, the sculpture forms, the words write, the dance dances. The creator of the art, the subject of the art, and the expression itself merge into a single process in which there is no reflection or evaluation, just the art manifesting itself.

- Zen Master John Daido Loori
Thanks!
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