

Lost in Knowledge Transfer? Finding our Way Together
September 28-30, 2008
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I feel I learned a lot about KT during the RTNA conference. I also believe I've been doing KT for a while without even realizing it! As an academic sociologist new to the health field, KT is something novel and exciting. As such, some of what I have learned may be old news for many. And even for me, some of the lessons learned are reminders of what I already know, but was lost along the way.

Meaningful Communication

As an academic, I live and breathe jargon. It's how I communicate with my colleagues in the hallways at work, my graduate students in class and in my publications in academic journals. At the conference, I learned how this can be a serious barrier to communicating the results of our research to others. And while I have recently learned the importance of jargon-free communication in my research working with others from different disciplines, we're still academics talking in code to other academics. In the workshop, we participated in an exercise to communicate three things about ourselves or our work as if we were at a cocktail party. It was harder than you think! The message I took away is to learn how to communicate to the audience in a way that everyone will understand.

The Power of Story Telling

I believe Elliott Churchill effectively conveyed to every person in the room Monday morning the power of storytelling. On several occasions there was not a dry eye in the room. In almost 30 years of being in academia, I have never seen a table of statistical results have that sort of impact on an audience -- no matter how big the betas or what the level of significance of the findings! I learned from this presentation how stories can be effective learning tools. That sharing personal experiences can help you to connect with the audience in ways that data, figures, tables and charts simply cannot. In addition to sharing stories, I found the use of images meaningful as well. I have been doing this in my presentations as way of adding meaning to the message and Elliott's talk confirmed for me the power of this approach in communicating the significance of our findings as well.

Building Real rather than Virtual Relationships

One of the key points I learned, or perhaps re-learned, highlights the importance of building interpersonal relationships and face-to-face interaction. I think in the current climate of rapidly changing technology, widgets and "toys" we have forgotten the basics of what it means to really work together. We email or text one another, rather than meet face-to-face. We send documents back forth to one another rather than discuss them as a group. One message I took away from this conference is to involve people in a more personal way in our research by talking, meeting and sharing ideas together, in one room, at the same time.

Effective KT is More than Simply Transferring Facts or Findings

Effective KT is more than sharing data. It means translating data into ideas, interpreting the results and explaining to your audience what they really mean and what is actually relevant or important to them. It can also mean proposing what action should be taken based on the results of the study. We should try and identify the main message from our work and make sure that it is clear to audience as to what it is and what it means. The audience or stakeholders typically want more than a summary of findings. They want to know what it means, how to use it and what to do next.

Don't Save KT until the End

As I am currently wrapping up several research projects over the next 6 months, KT has come to the forefront in terms of how to share what I've learned and translate it into action. I learned from the conference how important it is to think about KT before the project has even started -- in the planning and proposal stages. Moreover, it's important to involve the various stakeholders in the planning stages as well so that they participate in shaping the research questions and the direction of the project in ways that will yield meaningful results to them. This was described in several different ways in the conference, as an active approach to research rather than passive, as participatory action research, as evidence-based or evidence informed decision making and as embedding research in decision making.