

### **35 Useful Maxims for knowledge sharing, leadership, and personal growth**

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For more information, see:

- KM Home Page <http://stangarfield.googlepages.com/>
- Weekly KM Blog <http://h20325.www2.hp.com/blogs/garfield/category/Maxims.html>
- Implementing a Successful KM Programme [http://www.ark-group.com/home/xq/asp/pubid.B7384A92-6C72-430A-8E0D-F4455F508E31/pTitle.Implementing\\_a\\_successful\\_KM\\_programme/qx/Publications/Publication.htm](http://www.ark-group.com/home/xq/asp/pubid.B7384A92-6C72-430A-8E0D-F4455F508E31/pTitle.Implementing_a_successful_KM_programme/qx/Publications/Publication.htm)

I developed this list in response to a discussion led by Verna Allee and hosted by the Association of Knowledgework (<http://www.kwork.org/Stars/allee2.html>). Verna asked community members “what, for you, are the tried and true ‘classics’ and what are the newer or ‘emergent’ maxims that you find yourself relying on in your current conversations?” Verna’s question, and the ensuing discussion, prompted me to create the following list.

#### Knowledge Sharing and Re-use

1. We are stuck with "knowledge management" as a recognized term, but we can use better terms when we communicate, such as "knowledge sharing and re-use."
2. Place more emphasis on connecting people than on collecting documents.
3. Despite our stated goal of learning from past mistakes, we keep repeating them.

#### Innovation

4. The sooner you can try out an idea, the better.
5. A prototype or pilot can be useful immediately, and you can learn how to improve it from the users.
6. Prolonged study and planning cycles are not as useful as rapid prototyping and frequent incremental improvements.

#### Communities

7. Be as inclusive as possible in community membership, rather than restrictive.
8. Take some time to stimulate community conversations.
9. Face-to-face knowledge sharing is not a luxury (from Bruce Karney <http://km-experts.com/tenthings.htm>). It is essential to building and sustaining trust.

#### Killer App for Social Networking

10. Find a killer application for social networking within your organisation, analogous to external ones such as Facebook, MySpace, or LinkedIn.
11. A killer app will get people to voluntarily sign up and maintain their personal information and networks.
12. Link your key knowledge sharing and re-use initiatives to this killer app (e.g., reuse tracking, community building, etc.)

#### Leadership

13. Leaders should be open, honest, authentic, accessible, and responsive. People want to follow good leaders who are inspirational, straightforward, and fair.
14. Bad leaders eventually get what they deserve, although it often appears to take too long for this to happen.
15. Set no more than three goals, and keep them simple and easy to remember.
16. You can't make yourself a leader by proclaiming that you are in charge. You must command respect through your words and deeds, and by leading by example.

#### Communications

17. Good communication matters. Use language carefully, correctly, and clearly.
18. Avoid buzzwords, confusing jargon, and corporate speak.
19. Tell the truth. People can easily tell when you are lying.

### Participation

20. Most community members, meeting attendees, and conference call participants are reluctant to speak up. They are glad to lurk and listen, but they prefer that others lead discussions.
21. People are more willing to enter questions and comments electronically during a conference call than to speak up and ask a question on the phone. So provide a way for them to do so, preferably, anonymously.
22. People are more willing to talk about a success story than they are to fill in a form to report on it, even if filling in the form takes less time. So find ways to get them to talk about their successes, and fill in the forms for them.

### Crowd Behavior

23. People jump on bandwagons, follow fads, and use the latest buzzwords.
24. If you send out a legitimate message to a large distribution list requesting input, you will receive a limited number of replies.
25. If you send out a message perceived as spam and include the distribution list in the TO or CC fields, many people will reply to all asking to be removed from the list, asking others to stop replying to all, or saying "me, too."

### Workforce Reduction

26. The people who are affected by downsizing are often the people with the most critical knowledge and skills. As a result, laid-off workers often have to be brought back as consultants or contractors.
27. Many of those who survive downsizing are not valuable to the organization, leading the rest of the organization to wonder why these people are still employed.
28. The people who send spam and reply to all (as described above under the third point in "Crowd Behavior") are good candidates for downsizing.

### Personal Growth

29. Don't hide – engage. Take a risk, get outside your comfort zone, and challenge yourself to try something new.
30. Submit an abstract for a presentation at a conference. Write a paper and send it to a publication. Start a blog. You will be rewarded by the results.
31. Try out tools and processes yourself. Learn first-hand what works well and what does not. You will be able to empathize with other users, learn useful techniques, and become recognized as an expert. Be hands-on, use the tools of the trade, and practice what you preach.

### Networking

32. Reach out and expand your personal network. Talk to other people at conferences. Post to discussion forums. Contact other people, including those whom don't know you and those who are famous. You will be surprised at how many people will be glad to interact with you, become part of your network, and join a community that you lead or participate in.
33. Share relentlessly. Look at each piece of information you receive, read, or create and ask "who else could use this?" Then send it to them.
34. When you contact someone else, even if just sharing a minor piece of information, often it will lead to an unexpected benefit. They will be prompted to ask you question, share an idea, or make a suggestion that will be helpful.
35. Rely on your colleagues. Ask them to review what you are working on, and they will give you good advice. If you do good things for others without concern for what's in it for you, your colleagues will be glad to reciprocate.

And here is one final maxim:

36. Pundits are usually wrong.