Closing the Knowing Doing Gap
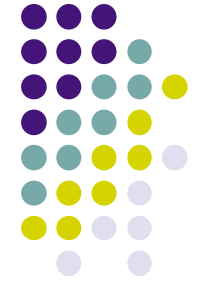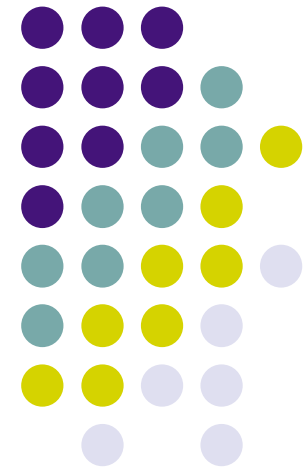
Lise Hvatum & Allan Kelly

SPA Conference 2008

Session format

- Introduction
- Split into teams - ~4 per team
- Question 1-4 on dialogue sheets
- Coffee
- (Short presentation)
- Questions 5-8 on dialogue sheets
- Group conclusions
- Review of findings

20 minutes

40 minutes

10 minutes

40 minutes

40 minutes

What is *the Knowing Doing Gap?*

- You learn something at this conference… you return to work… you say
  - 'I learned this great thing at SPA 2008'
  - 'From now on we should all do…'
- Does it happen?
- That is the Knowing-Doing Gap

We learn things…

- From
  - Books
  - Conferences
  - Discussions
  - The Web
- But you don't act on them
- You *know it*, but you don't *do it*

Allan's story

- I learnt that TDD was good
- I arranged for lots of TDD training
- But people didn't do it
- Some people did
- Others said:
  - Doesn't work here
 - I can't do it
  - I don't have time

Lise's story

- Organized training in company for 10 years
  - TDD, Use Cases, Agile Methodologies, Retrospectives, …
- Small pockets of practice
- …but mostly they do not last
- …or take years to become mainstream

- Why is this so different from sports?

Recognised problem

- Knowing Doing-Gap
  - Pfeffer & Sutton, 2001
- This session…
  - Not repeating book
  - Will draw on some ideas
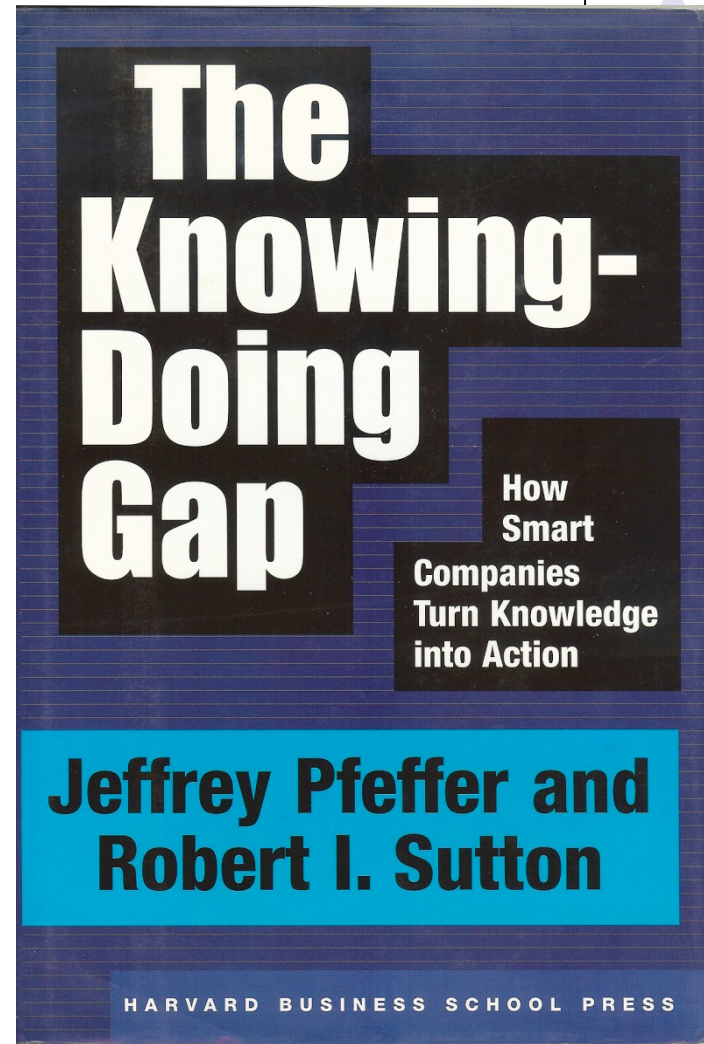
This session

- We want you to
  - Discuss the knowing-doing gap
  - Describe your experiences
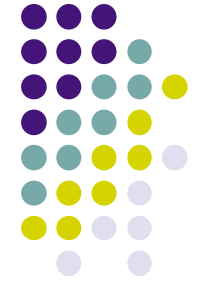 - Your solutions
  - Suggest new ideas

Dialogue sheets

- Aim to get everyone involved

- Instructions on sheets

- Take turns at asking the questions and moderating

- One question at a time

- For the question(s) closest to you:
  - Ask
  - Moderate
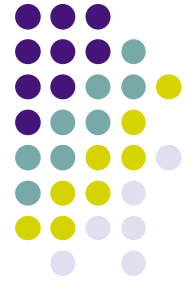 - Record

- Pass to next person

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Go!

- Q1 - 4

Coffee

Return!

Why the gap?

- Pfeffer and Sutton suggest 5 reasons
  - Talk over action
  - Memory substitutes for action
  - Fear prevents action
  - Measurement obstructs good judgement
  - Internal competition - friend become enemies

Talk

- Talk is cheap
- Talk makes you look clever
- Education system oriented towards talk
  - Talk in seminars, write papers
  - No need to act
- Companies talk about acting
- But don't act

Memory
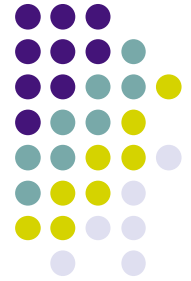
- Precedents of the past
- Do things the way they have been done before
- Written procedures and common practices
- Pressure for consistency with past
- Past success can make change more difficult

Fear

- Fear of being different
  - Not belonging to group
- Challenging management
- Acting on knowledge to change
  - Will we be punished for different action?
  - What if we fail?

Measurement

- Many measurements are flawed
  - Prevent change
  - Often managers know measurements are flawed
- 'What gets measured gets done'
  - Are you measuring the right thing?
  - Are you trying to do the right thing?
- Excessive focus on short term measures

Internal competition

- Competition between companies drives innovation and productivity

- Inside companies…

  - Reduces knowledge sharing

  - Places individual over team

  - Individual rewards discourages team work

  - Individuals resist helping others

Q5 - 8
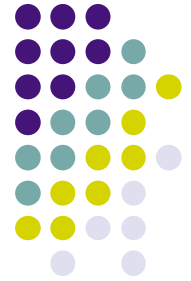
Summary from groups

Overcoming the gap

- Action oriented organization & culture
  - Reward action not discussion
- Trust people
- Coaching / Mentoring / Master-Apprentice
  - Embedded training - On the job training
  - Reduce gap between learning and doing
  - Repeat attention
- Simplicity
 - One or two things at a time

Overcoming the gap

- Leaders
  - Model behaviours they consider good
  - Take responsibility
  - Match actions and words
  - Listen to workers
- Shared values and principles
  - What do people in the company value?
  - Come to an understanding
  - Talk about values
  - Don't impose

Managers

- Not so much about telling people to do things differently
- More about removing obstacles
- Treating people right
- Remove internal competition
  - Single set of accounts
  - Global bonus pool
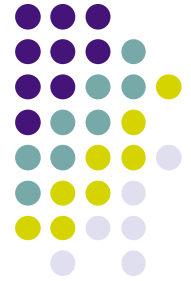
Further reading

- Knowing Doing Gap, Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000
- The Fifth Discipline, Senge, 1990
- Fearless Change, Rising & Manns, 2004
- Changing Software Development, Kelly, 2008

- The Living Company, de Geus, 1997
- Know Can Do, Ruhe, Blanchard, Meyer, 2007
- Leading Change, Kotter, 1996
- Our Iceberg is Melting, Kotter, 2006
- The Passionate Organization, Lucas, 1999

The end

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