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*This **fictitious** story describes the power of knowledge management in action.
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Twelve hours of Knowledge:

How knowledge sharing helped Op SAGE

(Ottawa) On Monday 29 October 2007, the Canadian Forces' Humanitarian Emergency Relief Team (HERT) arrived in Haiti to help the island nation deal with the aftermath of a natural disaster. HERT was the first international force to answer Haiti's call for assistance. This speedy response, called Operation SAGE, was made possible by connecting people with people to share knowledge. Their story is below.

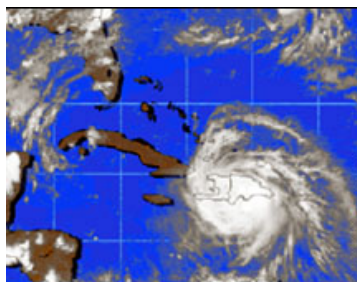
On Sunday, the Commanding Officer (CO) HERT awoke to the ringing of his personal data assistant. It was 0615 and his Operations Officer had just sent him a priority email. The note contained a news feed describing a hurricane, which suddenly changed course and was heading toward the small Caribbean island nation of Haiti. The CO was surprised by the news as he and his team had been watching the storm for a number of days and most experts believed the storm would not reach land.

After reading the note, CO HERT opened his tablet PC, inserted his Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) card and turned on his computer. Within minutes, through a wireless connection, the CO's personal knowledgespace appeared, which included a dashboard showing the status of his unit. The dashboard was a collection of critical data and information maintained by his staff. The presentation of knowledge in an intuitive manner allowed the CO to quickly decide if he needed to take action or make any decisions. He was delighted to determine that his command group was available, less one officer who was leading a reconnaissance team on another Caribbean island.

Next, he read news from several sites reporting on the conditions in Haiti and the weather forecast for the next 72 hours. Sensing that this may be a mission for the HERT, he created a collaborative

workspace for the contingency operation. The content of the workspace was based on the lessons learned from previous missions. After each mission, an After-action Review (AAR) identified the deficiencies and helped redefine the requirements of the workspace.

Returning to his knowledgespace, the CO typed the words *CF operations Haiti* and quickly rediscovered that the CF deployed to Haiti in 1997 and 2004. A synopsis of each operation was available as well as a series of links. To ensure this information was readily available to the other members of his team, he dragged the links into the contingency collaborative workspace. He also saw a list of *experts* on Haiti, including a policy officer from Western Hemisphere Policy, a member of the intelligence staff, a lawyer from Director of International Law and others. He added the list of names to the collaborative workspace.



Eye of the hurricane over Haiti

Next, he opened the staff list for the 1997 operation, but he did not recognize any of the names; in any case, he dragged the link to the staff list into the collaborative workspace. He decided to connect to the CF People Finder application to see where the 1997 battlegroup commander was now. Before being given access to the application, his profile was reviewed to see if he should be given access to the sensitive data. This is a relatively new improvement to the People Finder. In the past he

would have had to contact ADM(HR-Mil) to gain access to the information. However, in 2005 decided that a more trusted environment was necessary to support operations. To guard against potential abuses, a sophisticated algorithm monitors all accesses to the People Finder and will lock out and report abusers.

The CO determined that the battlegroup commander retired in 2006 as brigadier-general; however, he remained a member of the Supplementary Reserve and had agreed to be contacted for operational reasons. CO HERT added these details to the collaborative workspace. When he clicked on the 2004 staff list, he was surprised to find that a Staff College friend of his was the deputy commanding officer of the operation. Using People Finder, he determined that his friend is in Ottawa – this fact was added to the workspace.

The CO saw a small flashing icon beside his friend's name, indicating that he was online. Clicking on this icon an Instant Messaging (IM) box appeared and he typed a quick note to his friend. He asked if his friend had heard about the storm and received a quick response saying "AFK – WIMU 10" – which of course is shorthand for "I am away from my keyboard, I will instant message you in 10 minutes" – such shorthand is used when one is using a cellular telephone or other hand-held device.

While waiting for his friend to return the IM, he clicked on a link to the lessons learned library. The genesis of the library was an idea from a Community of Practice in 2005. With members from a variety of organizations that collect and analyse lessons, for example the Army Lesson Learned Centre, Director General Safety, Flight Safety, the community thought it would be a great idea to share information amongst each other. The

Director Knowledge Management built on this great idea by sponsoring a project to consolidate the various sources. Today with a click of a button, the CO is able to search a variety of knowledge stores.

The lessons learned library produced some very important lessons. First, he noted that during the 2004 operation, the battlegroup had problems using floppy disks to store data. It turns out that the sand from the island was corrupting the magnetic medium. Their solution was to use Universal Serial Bus (USB) thumb drives in lieu of floppy disks. Next, he discovered that in 1997 there had been a problem with the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) for the neighbouring country of Cuba. Other issues were also highlighted, all of which were moved to the collaborative workspace and flagged for the Operations Officer's attention. The SOFA issue was a priority so it triggered an automatic message to the Operations Officer, who reviewed the message and prepared a note to the lawyer identified by the CO as an authority in the area.

It was now 1000 and the CO's staff college friend sent him an IM. He asked his friend a number of questions about the previous operation. After a few minutes, the CO received an IM from the COS J3 in Ottawa suggesting a Warning Order was being developed and would likely be signed off before noon. The CO parted company with his friend and they agree that if anything else developed they would talk again.

The CO sent an IM inviting COS J3 into the collaborative workspace and he provided an overview of his morning. COS J3 remarked that *he did not know how they did it in the old days*. He suggested that the CO drive from Kingston to Ottawa for an afternoon classified briefing – they agreed to meet at 1600. The CO signed out of his knowledgespace to tend to some personal issues before departing for Ottawa.

At 1120, the CO received a priority message on his cellular phone. The message was from the collaborative workspace and it

stated that COS J3 had just uploaded the warning order. The CO signed into his knowledgespace, received the order, added some additional information and forwarded a message to his operations officer who knew exactly what to do based on standing operating procedures.



HERT's base camp in Haiti

At 1200, he grabbed his tablet PC along with a few other necessities and commenced the drive to Ottawa. At 1315, he was hit head-on by another vehicle and died instantly. At 1400, the COS J3 was notified of the tragic accident. After ensuring that all necessary arrangements were in place to help the CO's family, the COS J3 returned his attention to the operational mission at hand. Clearly, a new CO had to be appointed as the Prime Minister had just announced that the CF would be despatching the HERT within 24 hours.

The selection of the new CO was simple. Since 2006, the CF policy had been that all command positions must have identified successors. The nominated successor is informed of their selection and therefore is able to mentally prepare for transition. In this case, the successor was aware of her assumption of command in ten months and she had begun preparing to be a CO. Knowing that she would be the next CO, she had been thinking about the storm and wondering if HERT would be involved. She had also been thinking what she would do if she were CO. She remembered visiting the HERT in Kingston and being briefed on contingency plans.

The new CO HERT was informed of her new position at 1500. As she lived in Ottawa, she was able to meet with the COS J3 later that day. In the meantime, she was given access to the collaboration space and was able to review

her predecessor's work. She too, knew the battlegroup commander from 2004 and decided to make contact. The two agreed to discuss the impending mission. As soon as they met face-to-face, the CO realized that her friend was uncomfortable about something. Soon he began to describe the details of a tragic incident on the island. The sharing of this experience would turn out to be very important in the days ahead. In fact, the story was so powerful that the CO never forgot the words of wisdom from her friend. After the operation, during the after-action review, she noted that the *war story* had saved the lives of several soldiers – that is the power of sharing knowledge.

At 1815, CO HERT met with the COS J3, just 12 hours after her processor first heard about the disaster. She told COS J3 that she was up to speed and ready to go. HERT deployed the next morning.

The speed of response for Op SAGE was the result of the COs' ability to rapidly connect to the data, information and knowledge they needed to make decisions and take actions – this is the essence of knowledge management. This is a story of the synergy of technology, leadership and culture; this is a story of the power of sharing.

About this Story

*This is a fictitious story that describes the power of knowledge management in action. It was created with the permission of the managing editor of the **Maple Leaf**.*

For More Information

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Version Française

Il y a une version française de cette histoire, demandez au Dr. Girard
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