Who We Are (Experts) and our Understandings

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Who we are....Biased?

“There are no neutral ways to present information.”

- Dr. Baruch Fischhoff, Carnegie Mellon University
Communicate with Others

How do I deal with my scientific/technical expertise?
Why Bother?

Your ability to **effectively** perform will relate to how well you reassure, inform, and serve patients, your public, or your customers.

Promote wider understandings! Git ‘er done.
A definition of science that I like...

“The systematic enterprise of gathering knowledge about the world and organizing and condensing that knowledge into testable laws and theories.”

-E.O. Wilson, in *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*
The flow of scientific understanding?

New Observations and Theories → Tests and Replication

- Reflect on Learnings and information
- Need Abandon or Modify?
  - YES – something new here
  - No need?

This process promotes shared understandings which meet tests

Elegant, shared Understandings!
“Other Ways” of knowing

Information, Observation, Personal Theory

Personal Litmus Test

Reflect on Learnings and information

Willing to Abandon or Modify?

Yes

UNUSUAL, OR AT LEAST HARD TO DO

No

NOT UNLESS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY

Confirm Personal Understandings!

This process satisfies personal worldview, self-worth, vision, or “common” understandings
The Power of Belief

- We ALL have Pattern Recognition Equipment

- Recognizing Patterns + Accumulated Observations = Science

- Recognizing Patterns + Personal Observations/Biases = personal knowing

The only “model” difference is “trusting and using the prescribed filter”
Dr. Robert Park – and his description of “The Belief Engine” in...
Science in our Culture includes:

- Junk Science
- Pathological Science
- Pseudoscience
“Tortured theories intended to befuddle jurists or lawmakers. What could be so, with little evidence to prove that it is so.”

Example: EMF power lines – how else to explain clusters?

Hard to “prove” a negative…. 
Pathological Science

-Dr. Robert Park

“..in which scientists manage to fool themselves.”

Examples: cold fusion (1989 claims)
Pseudoscience

-Dr. Robert Park

Whereby… (paraphrased)

There is no (scientific) evidence at all….beliefs are dressed in the language and symbols of science - and the practitioners may believe it to be science.

Relies on “uncertainty” for its credibility
The EXPERT Challenge

To effectively communicate you must know everything relevant, but provide only the information that helps.

So, how do I know what’s relevant and what helps?
Challenge, II

Knowing everything relevant = expert

Prepare yourself.

Provide only helpful information = up to you, the situation, and feedback received

Collaborate.

Enable two-way learning.
The Breadth of Expertise

A person with a solid understanding of:

- The expected range of questions/behavior
- What to do when out of the expected range
- The basis for the protocol, process, or chain of events, even if involved in a small part
- What is the goal of the current step/issue, and how it’s going so far
- The applied wisdom to keep us SAFE.
What do Experts have?

- Credibility
- Trust
- Familiarity
- Access
- Responsiveness
- Etc……..
Helpful Information Approaches

Tell a personal story

Give good customer service

Inquire for clarity and Embedded Question(s)
“Customer Service?!?”

Inquire, listen, refer, include, reveal, take initiative

Ask what they’d like to know vs. what you want them to know or what you think they should know

So that whomever you are dealing with is:

- Satisfied
- Cooperative
- Demonstrating understanding
- Stopping/slowing questioning
Helpful Info Guide

PITFALLS

- Impatience
- Jargon
- Dismissal
- The Expert Ego

CONSIDERATION

- Take your time
- Use general descriptions
- Few crazies
- Be willing to say “I don’t know” and don’t speculate
Ultimate Embedded Question:

Am I safe?
YES.

We don’t know yet (but we’re going to find out).
Expert Model Summary

- You are the expert (easy part)
- Develop a personal approach (hard part)
- Be flexible and responsive (collaborate – the hardest part)
Enlightened “Expert” Risk Communication Model

“Expert”

X is likely always X

Credible Personal statements

“The rest of us”

X could likely be X…
Communications Conflict Resolution Model

- Kenneth Thomas, “Conflict and Conflict Management”, from the Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology
COLLABORATION

- Appropriately used:
  
  People are committed to a shared outcome.

  High understanding needed.

  Win/win is desired.

- Not Appropriately?

  Solution not desired – people are not committed.

  Not enough time/energy
Sandman’s Four Stages of Risk Communication?

Relate to stages of Conflict Resolution:
- Stonewall Stage
- Missionary Stage
- Dialogue Stage
- Organizational Stage

Dr Peter Sandman, 1991
My humble Fifth (and most productive) RC stage:

Organization (internal communication) does not imply collaboration – it could be compromise!

What’s wrong with compromise?