

THE STRAITS TIMES  
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**Data, information, and knowledge.**

It's all the same, right? Not exactly. Data are facts. Information allows us to expand our knowledge beyond the range of our senses. And knowledge is what we know. Today we live in a sea of data and information.

However, our ability to drive our own knowledge is greater than it has ever been. We can thank the 'Information Age' and crowdsourcing for this phenomenon, right? Sort of.

**Computers, and now social media, have given us a new means to quickly get data and information.**

There are a number of ways we learn. The traditional learning pyramid shows the various ways we learn, what we generally remember, and our level of involvement in the learning experience.

In my line of work, I coach teams and individuals to drive greater performance outcomes through learning and development. Several years ago, I came to one very important realisation:

**To be successful today and tomorrow, we must all become obsessed with learning.**

If you think you are useful today, simply knowing what you know, think again. *To stay competitive, you must be hungry for ways to expand your knowledge.* I argue you need to take it a step further, go beyond expanding knowledge, and **create knowledge for others.**

**The social economy rewards those who create knowledge.** Don't believe me? Here's a short story very relevant to how I even became connected with you, today!

A year ago, I wrote this piece on leadership. It carefully detailed out every rotten type of leader I had ever encountered. I poked fun and even

*The ABC's of Work & Life*

**K is for Knowledge**



**Katie Mehnert** gets hungry and thirsty for knowledge.

came up with funny titles to give each of them. The fact is, I was in so much pain dealing with these people I decided to laugh more and let go of my stress! I savoured the story, though for months, I had it tucked away in my computer for safe keeping, worried I was being too harsh. One day, I decided to be brave and share it online back when LinkedIn was just beginning to roll out its Pulse news platform. I posted it on a holiday, thinking no one would read it.

**I was wrong. Or was I?**

The Internet rewarded me handsomely. At 2am local time, my iPhone surged with texts, dings and beeps. Several hundred thousands of views, likes, and comments filled numerous websites. Overnight, people all over the world were engaging to agree with me. They honoured me with their war stories at the office, bad bosses, and the like. They connected on every channel, all because **I spoke the truth.** I created knowledge that people could relate with and understand.

In fact, I wouldn't be writing this

column had it not been for that viral post.

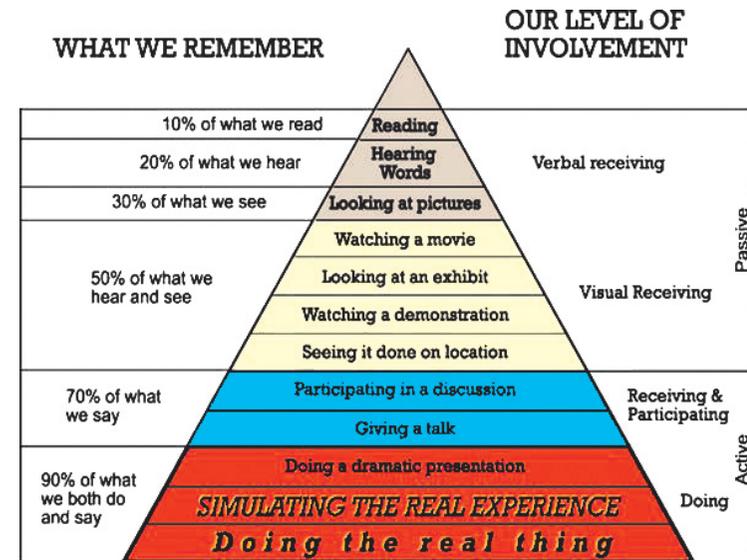
**So don't just expand your knowledge, create some of your own and share it.**

It's easy to think what we know today is all we need to know, quite simply because we were taught that way. If you think back to your days in school, what were they for?

One of my professional crushes, Seth Godin, says school existed to teach obedience. He's right. The data shows worldwide that we've been on a journey shifting *from an industrial economy to an intellectual, knowledge-based economy – and that we are never going back.*

**Be hungry for new things.**

In my career, I moved from processes and systems, to people. Across that spectrum, I increased my knowledge by taking on assignments that exposed me to projects and operations across multiple businesses. In the oil and gas industry, for example, I've seen both upstream and downstream processes, and lived in two very distinct business cultures. None of this would have been



possible without my personal obsession with learning, openness to trying new things, and need to learn by "going and seeing".

Is our educational system keeping up with these same principles? In America, I can confidently say, "No."

**Why should you care?**

Do you think because you don't have kids, you shouldn't care? Think again. Our kids are counting on us because they need to get the education and experiences needed to lead us into the future.

If we don't become obsessed about our own learning and changing the systems that these were built upon, like our schools, we are kidding ourselves if we want to be competitive, grow, and prosper. *It's as simple as that.*

**So I ask you:**

- How are you becoming obsessed with learning? Did you learn something new today?
- What was it? Can you think about it and shape a piece of knowledge

that you can share with others?

- Do you know what school was for and how we got here? If not, read Seth's manifesto, Stop Stealing Dreams or watch the TED talk.
- What are you doing to get involved in developing our next generation of leaders?
- What new piece of knowledge did you pick up in this piece? Drop me a line. You know I would love to get email from all of you.

*Katie Mehnert (pictured) is a global talent development and change executive with 17 years of helping people and companies get curious, connect, share, grow and perform better. She has recently been appointed CEO of Pink Petro; www.pinkpetro.com, a platform to connect women and men in the energy industry and advance females in her industry. Prior to her latest venture, Katie was a Director with BP, joining after the Deepwater Horizon incident and worked in various leadership roles worldwide with Shell. She's a dynamic speaker and author having been featured in LinkedIn, CEO.com, Business Insider, and Yahoo. As a work-in-progress marathon runner, wife and working mom, you can follow her musings on balancing it all on her blog at www.katiemehnert.com, or email her at katie@katiemehnert.com*