

Narrative in online relationship development

Draft Transcript: Yahoo! Messenger meeting 9-10 December 2005

Singapore: 6.00am - Saturday 10th
South Australia: 8.30am - Saturday 10th
NSW and ACT, Australia: 9.00am - Saturday 10th
NZ: 11.00am - Saturday 10th
Chandler: 3.00pm - Friday 9th
Huston and Chicago: 4.00pm - Friday 9th
Eastern US: 5.00pm - Friday 9th
London: 10.00pm - Friday 9th
Groningen, The Netherlands: 11.00pm - Friday 9th

Proposed Agenda

Short welcome
A round where everyone can check-in
Discussion on the group culture raised in the Freeconference meeting
Discuss and tell our stories
Share our experiences
Plan for further action
Completion

Present

Stephen Thorpe (New Zealand), Jon Jenkins (The Netherlands)

Apologies

Kathleen Curran
Eva Martony
Penny Pullan
Nancy Settle-Murphy
Hamish Brown
Chris Harkess

Transcript

Jon Jenkins: hi stephen ready?
Stephen Thorpe: Hi Jon, yes - arriving...
Jon Jenkins: whose coming this time?
Stephen Thorpe: Eva has just sent me an email to say she won't be able to make it
Stephen Thorpe: Penny has sent her apologies
Jon Jenkins: too bad
Stephen Thorpe: From the few emails I've recieved I think it may be You, me and Mark
Jon Jenkins: ok
Stephen Thorpe: I wonder if we're the only two?
Jon Jenkins: So far it looks that way.
Stephen Thorpe: Mark did say that he hadn't tried messenger out yet, but i'm sure he would have emailed by now if he was having trouble
Jon Jenkins: Do you have any other way of contacting people?
Stephen Thorpe: I have emails and postal addresses
Jon Jenkins: Do you think sending an email might help?

Stephen Thorpe: Perhaps I'll send a quick courtesy one to see if he's having any trouble otherwise I will assume we are the group

Jon Jenkins: ok

Stephen Thorpe: Done!

Stephen Thorpe: Well welcome Jon to our first chat bases session

Jon Jenkins: thanks

Jon Jenkins: glad to be here

Stephen Thorpe: The proposed agenda for today is:

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Jon Jenkins: ok

Stephen Thorpe: I thought I would start with a few words from a New Zealand storyteller Margaret Copland whom I interviewed this time last year about her storytelling which tends to focus accross cultures

Stephen Thorpe: What I asked her was - How can you tell that the stories you are creating are having an impact?

Jon Jenkins: sounds great

Stephen Thorpe: I was interested in knowing how she gauged the audience response and the posability that some of the same things might work online.

Jon Jenkins: really how?

Stephen Thorpe: I didn't really know what she might say, but I was very curious to get a inside view on her experience

Stephen Thorpe: She said "Well, there are a few indicators that I use when working with an audience".

Stephen Thorpe: "The eyes light up, some people smile, there may be silence or it may feel that there is a long engaging pause in people's bodies. People are breathing deeply, they or their heads may be leaning forward. I can feel the energy within myself.

I know when my stories are received because I get a sense of relief within myself. It feels like I can take my foot off the gas, I've got them and I am filled up with joy."

Jon Jenkins: funny I was thinking about my own interior response also but I am not sure that is always an accurate pointer to the audience.

Stephen Thorpe: Yes - I thought they would be interesting words for us to dwell on - we do have an internal experience - maybe there's a way to use it in our group

Jon Jenkins: I am sure it is one indicator.

Stephen Thorpe: I agree, shall we do a round of to and check-in with each other

Jon Jenkins: ok

Stephen Thorpe: i'd like to know what's happening in your world and share a bit of mine

Stephen Thorpe: who should go first?

Jon Jenkins: Ok, Today we signed the contract for selling our house. It has been on the market for 9 months and we are quite relieved. We have been working on a book for Jossey-Bass and this is the final blitz. We had a IAF board meeting about this time last night.

Jon Jenkins: I guess I would.

Stephen Thorpe: great

Stephen Thorpe: busy time for you

Jon Jenkins: yep

Jon Jenkins: what is happening with you?

Stephen Thorpe: yes I had a meeting a few hours after the IAF one organised by Carla our regional rep. She mentioned the ACT meeting to give some a better understanding about the IAF and it's structure

Stephen Thorpe: I made a plug for the journal to go in the next regional newsletter

Jon Jenkins: good

Jon Jenkins: I've been thinking about sending something after the book is done.

Stephen Thorpe: I am/ was a little dissapointed in the turnout today an I think I should be concerned - so I'm felling something there

Stephen Thorpe: I have a christams bbq later today with some people I built a website for early last year - nice to be invited

Stephen Thorpe: I am also helping Dale Hunter with referencing and images and things for her chapter in the upcoming IAF Book - another connection there

Stephen Thorpe: Had my parents over for dinner last night and my older brother and it was really nice to hear my father tell some stories from our childhood - he's often quite reserved and it really warmed my heart

Jon Jenkins: nice

Stephen Thorpe: I could probaly share the story

Jon Jenkins: ok that would be great

Stephen Thorpe: My brother and his friend who were 13 at the time really wanted to go to a Split Enz concert (they're a kind of soft rock band, quite famous in NZ)

Stephen Thorpe: Antony's (my brother) friend David (the kid accross the street) weren't allowed to go acording to David's dad without a parent and David's dad certainly wasn't going to be it!

Jon Jenkins: ok

Stephen Thorpe: Arnold (My Dad) saw the gleam of hope fade in the young boys as these words were spoken...and they hung their heds in disappointment

Stephen Thorpe: Arnold (my dad) took pity on them and said "oh I'll take them"...

Stephen Thorpe: So the two boys went off to the concert with Arnold and David's younger brother Andrew

Jon Jenkins: :D

Stephen Thorpe: It was a great concert, and Andrew (the younger brother, who was 11) told Arnold that "This is the bestest concert I've ever been to Mr Thorpe!"

Stephen Thorpe: "Oh" said Arnold, "How many concerts have you been to?"

Stephen Thorpe: "only one, and it's the bestest concert ever!" said Andrew...

Stephen Thorpe: This was the punch line during dinner and it it was just great

Jon Jenkins: :))

Jon Jenkins: nice story

Stephen Thorpe: yeah - Antony (my brother) is now 37 so it was nice for him to see as an adult what his dad had done

Stephen Thorpe: anyway that's me checked in

Jon Jenkins: Ok

Stephen Thorpe: Do we need to discuss anything raised in our group culture so far?

Jon Jenkins: Well I am concerned about participation

Jon Jenkins: this time increases my concern

Stephen Thorpe: yes - it's become a very small group

Jon Jenkins: yes and then there was one.

Stephen Thorpe: I wonder what would make a difference?

Jon Jenkins: I wonder two things. I am not sure people see why this is important or perhaps remembe why it is important.

Stephen Thorpe: Does a challenge need to be raised about people's accountability for participation?

Stephen Thorpe: This is certainly an issue in many online situations I've experienced

Jon Jenkins: I would first look communicating why we are meeting

Jon Jenkins: Why it is important for the participants

Jon Jenkins: I would ask about the times. Are there better times for people?

Stephen Thorpe: possibly too short notice?

Stephen Thorpe: I'm guessing but the time of year is possibly a factor

Jon Jenkins: perhaps - we could schedule things further in the future.

Jon Jenkins: I am more flexible this month as I am at home all month. Next month may be more of an issue.

Jon Jenkins: we are moving

Jon Jenkins: office and home

Stephen Thorpe: yes - no small feat

Jon Jenkins: no panic yet

Stephen Thorpe: that's good

Jon Jenkins: may be stupidity

Jon Jenkins: rather than calm

Stephen Thorpe: we might get to see jon under pressure

Jon Jenkins: not a pretty sight

Stephen Thorpe: I wonder if I emailed everyone whom I haven't heard from and surveyed their reasons - keeping it light hearted and inquisitive, curious in the interests of exploring online participation

Jon Jenkins: Exactly what I was going to suggest.

Jon Jenkins: It would be interesting to hear responses.

Stephen Thorpe: I've heard from Eva, Penny and Kathleen and know that Nancy, Chris and Hamish have tended reasons. It would be great to collect the other's experiences because I'm sure they are very relevant

Jon Jenkins: this is all about priorities. What would it take to move this up in people's priority list?

Stephen Thorpe: Yes - even if people identify that it's not a high priority it would be interesting to find out why and what it is in relation to. And if it is a high priority, what is holding them back.

Jon Jenkins: right and as you say this happens often in online groups - I've heard that the drop out rate of e learning is about the same as correspondence courses up around 80%

Stephen Thorpe: Great, I'll take that up as an email survey on participation as an action point

Stephen Thorpe: Yes I've heard similar

Stephen Thorpe: in fact I've quoted similar

Jon Jenkins: must be true

Stephen Thorpe: I'm getting conscious of time - and that it's after 12am your time

Jon Jenkins: yes

Stephen Thorpe: I did want to explore some stories while we're here - did you have a story that you wanted to share

Jon Jenkins: I would not mind leaving it here. I've gotten something out of it. I enjoyed your story. I have two.

Jon Jenkins: One was shared at the IAf Conference in Germany.

Jon Jenkins: The other is about email.

Stephen Thorpe: oh great

Stephen Thorpe: Perhaps we could add them to the agenda for the meeting on Monday-Tuesday?

Jon Jenkins: Pace

What I mean by spirit, in this sense, is the event when something happens to a group that occasions an image, a feeling of awe (the simultaneous precognitive experience of fear and fascination), and an act of will and leaves a kind of residue.

Jon Jenkins: I was a team leader for a community development project in a village called Pace in Mississippi. Pace is about 10 miles from where the three civil rights organizers were killed 10 years earlier. If you have seen the movie "Mississippi Burning" it was about these murders.

Jon Jenkins: The village was mostly black with a few rich white farmers. Members of both communities supported the idea of the project but there was tension. On the third day about 100 people were sitting in a large hall waiting for the plenary to begin. As the starting time passed and then an hour and then an hour and a half, we became more and more restless. We sang songs and told jokes.

Stephen Thorpe: yes I've seen the movie it was very moving

Jon Jenkins: One of the white rich farmers and a black teacher came into the hall and to the front of the room. They explained that a dilapidated building owned by the farmer and collapsed and killed the high school aged niece of the teacher. The girl had taken off from school to attend the consultation. She died on her way to the meeting. Silence filled the room. Images ran through my mind and a jumble of emotions ran through me: remembering the beautiful young woman, fear that an already tense situation could become dangerous,

sorrow for the mother, concern about the rest of the group, a picture of the old buildings in the block long business district and many others.

Jon Jenkins: The aunt then said that the funeral was to be held on the coming Saturday. It was to be attended by members of the community only. The girl's family were together and doing as well as could be expected. The farmer had taken a tractor and destroyed the rest of the old building. She then said that the girl's mother wanted the consultation to go on. It was too important to be stopped.

In this tragedy something magical had happened.

Jon Jenkins: The next story is more a reflection about email

Jon Jenkins: Email

Jon Jenkins: I am lazy and somewhat socially inept. I am shy and find social interaction difficult. I have moved dozens of times, leaving places, leaving friends, leaving meaning and going to an unknown place. I quickly develop surface relations and quickly recover from leaving friends. I seldom make in-depth friends.

Jon Jenkins: I have spent much of my life in meetings where everyone speaking is using a language I don't understand. I am comfortable in silence and alone. I have grown to appreciate all of this about me and feel little need to change. Those who want me to be friendlier do not bother me. I even pity them and their superficial noise.

Jon Jenkins: On an ordinary day, I sit in front of my computer, open the email and begin to delete all of those things I don't want to read. One morning there is a note from someone I hadn't heard from in 20 + years. I am horrified. Ghosts stand around the computer.

Jon Jenkins: I fear I haven't left all behind.

Jon Jenkins: The murders were very much in the minds of all of us from outside the community.

Stephen Thorpe: Wow! my heart is filled, I'm still taking in the first story - I've been in rooms like that. and then your second one is like poetry

Jon Jenkins: thanks

Stephen Thorpe: My thinking for this session was that the storyteller could then interview the audience

Stephen Thorpe: what is the storyteller interested in knowing about the audience

Stephen Thorpe: and then to have a space for the audience to interview the storyteller

Jon Jenkins: I think that could be really interesting. It might be interesting for the audience to share stories of similar experiences.

Stephen Thorpe: yes, I had a few memories sparked

Jon Jenkins: I am sure they would add to the whole experience for everyone.

Jon Jenkins: This might be a way of creating community online

Stephen Thorpe: yes - I've never been to Mississippi, but have seen prejudice and racism here in NZ and in Australia and in Texas and in Fiji and a few other places I've had a glimpse of

Stephen Thorpe: I think it may somehow be the key to participation too

Stephen Thorpe: i like your idea of creating community online - I've not thought about our group that way - it's liberating

Jon Jenkins: When we lived in Japan we experienced it with our oldest son. He went to preschool in a Japanese school. He one day came home one day crying. We asked what had happened. He said he was selected as the demon in the school play because he was white.

Stephen Thorpe: You also mentioned stories about facilitating in India that sparked my curiosity

Stephen Thorpe: Oh your poor son

Jon Jenkins: It might be interesting for participant to see themselves helping build community.

Jon Jenkins: The teachers had no idea what they were doing.

Stephen Thorpe: yes - I know what you mean

Jon Jenkins: I'll try to think of a Facilitating in India story.

Stephen Thorpe: well maybe I don't exactly know what you mean but I might know a similar story

Stephen Thorpe: and I think they both touch the same deeper humanity in us

Jon Jenkins: This is an important aspect of hearing and sharing stories.

Stephen Thorpe: I think a depth of sharing will call forth a depth of hearing and this may attract a depth of participation

Jon Jenkins: I like that

Stephen Thorpe: Upon reflection, I was thinking that perhaps there needed to be only two at this time and place for me to learn that perhaps bigger may not always be better and that the depth is actually available with two - small and deep

Jon Jenkins: I think this is a good experience but I am not sure the size is necessarily important.

Jon Jenkins: I want to find ways to touch deep dimensions of our collective thinking.

Stephen Thorpe: Great!

Jon Jenkins: That is one dimension of facilitation that needs work.

Stephen Thorpe: I wonder if what the two of us have achieved today will ripple out through the group - thus the work of the two impacts on the whole

Stephen Thorpe: well early today for you

Jon Jenkins: I would hope so. This should work at a couple of levels. We are changed and that should have some small impact. If the transcript is shared that might help people understand.

Stephen Thorpe: Yes - I wonder how we can share in a way that will be enrolling for Monday-Tuesday

Stephen Thorpe: I think, if you agree, I will put the transcript in an attachment rather than having it through a downloadable link

Jon Jenkins: I think that is good

Jon Jenkins: The two things that came up were the stories and our reflection on them and the concern about participation.

Stephen Thorpe: Yes - perhaps I could create, via email with you, a summary of what we have discussed and call for responses

Jon Jenkins: sounds right to me

Stephen Thorpe: great

Stephen Thorpe: In terms of completing this meeting...

Jon Jenkins: yes, I am ready to complete

Stephen Thorpe: I know it's getting late at our end

Jon Jenkins: both ends you must be approaching lunch

Stephen Thorpe: yes - I would like to take the essence of what we have covered into our next meeting on Monday...

Jon Jenkins: Ok any suggestions?

Stephen Thorpe: In closing I would like to acknowledge the stories that we have begun to share, the people in our stories, and the relationships we are beginning to forge in our work today.

Jon Jenkins: I would like to acknowledge these things also

Stephen Thorpe: For those who are reading this transcript, the invitation is open to you to join in creating our community online. Participate, explore and take any leadership you need to take us forward.

Jon Jenkins: thaks very much for this opportunity

Stephen Thorpe: Thank you Jon

Jon Jenkins: take care Stephen

Stephen Thorpe: Take care Jon, chat to you on Tuesday

Jon Jenkins: ok bye

Action Points

Create an email survey on participation
Suggest process for post-stories reflections
Share the summary and transcript from our meeting and call for responses