SIX STEPS TO EMERGENT KNOWLEDGE

Matthew Hudson and Philip Harland

Out of the Woods

It is a late autumn evening in Normandy in 2007, and we have been watching a DVD of Stephen Sondheim's 'Into the Woods' with the late David Grove and several other colleagues. 'Into the Woods', you may remember, combines a variety of fairy tales into one psycho-active musical romp. David's favourite was 'Jack and the Beanstalk', because *everything changes with the discovery of the sixth bean* - and the number six, as you will discover, has a special role to play in the Emergent Knowledge story.

This evening we are keen to pin David down to clarifying some of the new terms he had been using in client sessions, seminars and discussions over the past year or so. He is pacing around, making excuses, and we can see that he is not very keen on explaining himself – collaborators round the world will recognize the scene. So we offer him our own understanding. He listens distractedly, then picks up a felt nib pen and begins an explanation on the flipchart that tracks back and forth, takes off into other realms and ends up somewhere else entirely.

Life with David was an unending journey of discovery. He would lead you into the woods of his imagination and leave you to find your own way out. But unlike Hansel and Gretel who had only stones to mark their journey those of us who walked with him and retraced our steps found a little trail of gems. Only after the sad loss of what Ernest Rossi called our 'gentle genie' have we become aware of the size of the forest there is yet to explore.

Our aim here is to present in as simple a form as possible the basic principles and processes of Emergent Knowledge as developed by David in the months before he died. The terms we use are his, though some ('downloading', 'meta-drivers', etc) may well have developed further in the normal course of events. Some will no doubt be modified as developers and followers continue to refine them.

The concepts, terms and processes of Emergent Knowledge and the Powers of Six were being incorporated into a website and training materials which David was working on with Matthew, and into a book he had invited Philip to write. That work continues, but it now seems all the more appropriate to share the basic version that David was using and teaching for people to make of what they will. Others may have variations of their own - inevitable given the transience of some of his collaborations and the open-source spirit in which he worked.

What is Emergent Knowledge?

Grove's revolutionary discovery and development of Clean Language and Therapeutic Metaphor enabled therapists to help victims of trauma reconnect to their true selves while avoiding retraumatization. Throughout this work he continued to ask himself: "Where do victims go when they dissociate at the time of the trauma?" The answer, he realized, was into a symbolic space inside or outside of themselves, a discovery which took him into an exploration of what became known as

'Clean Space' and the 'small world networks' of information formed from the knowledge held in a number of spaces. The next key element to enter the equation was the principle of *iteration*. In the context of a therapeutic intervention, iteration is the repetition of a question the answer to which incorporates the knowledge gained as a result of the preceding question. It is a systemic process. When enough nodes of information integrate – and the number, Grove discovered, was almost always six – a threshold is crossed and new knowledge emerges naturally from the system. The therapist or coach is neither the instigator nor the interpreter, but *the facilitator - the catalyst -* of systemic emergence.

Scientists, technologists, economists and psychologists are finding a huge variety of uses for systemic emergence.

In this article we introduce a basic application in the area of therapy, self-discovery and coaching.

The article is in three parts: **PRINCIPLES OF EMERGENT KNOWLEDGE**
BASIC PROCESSES OF EMERGENT KNOWLEDGE
RUNNING AN EMERGENT KNOWLEDGE SESSION

PRINCIPLES OF EMERGENT KNOWLEDGE

Mission Statement
Six Elements
Six Iterations

Mission Statement

A 'mission statement' is the focus of the session. It may be written or drawn. The statement represents the client's problem, goal, wish or need. To help the client choose what to write or draw, we can ask:

> *"Choose the size of paper you want, and write or draw what you want to work on."*

An important aspect of the mission statement is its *scale*, represented both by the size of the paper the client chooses and the comparative size of what is written or drawn. Facilitators should have a selection of sizes of paper from which the client can choose, all the way from Post-it™ notes to flipcharts. Clients will also represent their problems in different *forms* – written or drawn, big or small, easy to read or not so easy, in colour or black and white. Facilitators may draw their own private inferences about scale and form, but *should not draw the client's attention* to them, and *should make no interpretation*. The statement, its content, scale and form are items of information for the client only, and will interact with every other item of information that emerges as the session continues.

Once the mission statement has been completed the facilitator says:

> *"Place that where it needs to be."*

Then:

> *"Place yourself where you need to be in relation to that."*

A client may place their statement out of reach. Another may choose to have their back to it. Some have been known to put it in their pocket or sit on it. Again, *no interpretation by the facilitator.*

Six Elements of Emergent Knowledge

The writing and placing of the statement sets up a situation with three components: an 'observer' at 'A'; the 'observed' at 'B'; and the space of 'C' between them (Figure 1).
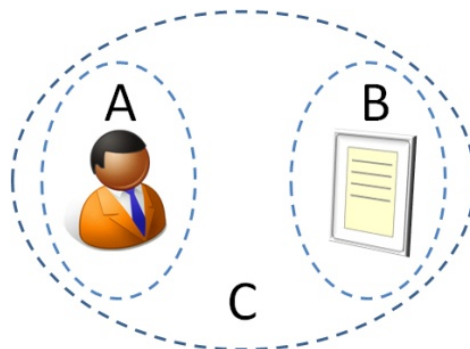

Figure 1

The space of 'A' holds who the client is and what they know here and now. Its separation from 'B' is how the space of 'C' comes to exist. Grove proposed that the space of 'C' is what keeps the client at 'A' from resolving the problem or achieving the mission at 'B'.

The Emergent Knowledge facilitator may now ask questions of 'A', 'B' or 'C' in the belief that not only does the client have information about the statement, but so does the statement itself and the space in between. Questions are not limited to what the client-at-A knows. Information is valuable whatever its source.

There are three further elements to this model (Figure 2):

'D' is the 'potential space' containing information outside the boundaries of the A B C system.

'E' represents the Emergent Knowledge that evolves from the interaction of A, B, C and D.

'F' is for the Facilitator, who monitors the structure of the process while remaining outside its content.
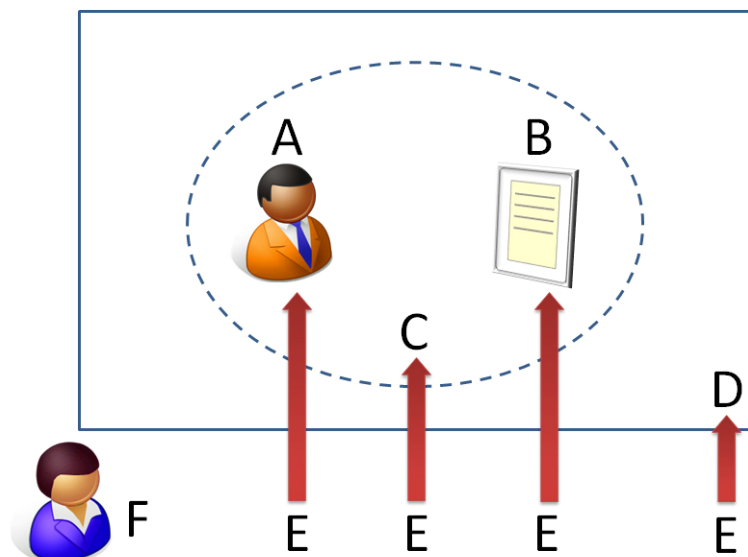

Figure 2

Six Iterations

Grove noticed a certain structure to the language clients used as they ran their process. Being asked the same question six times gave results that being asked three or four times did not, and that being asked five or seven times normally did not. He called this '**The Power of Six**'.

The Emergent question that starts off the iterative process is: *What do you know?*

Subsequently, there are five repeats of another Emergent question: *And what else do you know?*

1. In answer to the first question the client will tend to 'proclaim' their problem or desire.

2. With a second iteration the client will usually 'explain' what they said in 1.

4

3. With the third iteration the client will tend to 'reinforce' what they said in 1 and 2.

4. With the fourth iteration doubt or contradiction enters: there is a 'wobble'.

5. On the fifth iteration the original structure gives way: Grove called this the 'crash and burn'.

6. On the sixth iteration new knowledge or awareness is likely to emerge, phoenix-like, 'out of the ashes'.

This six-step epistemological exercise takes clients through a new kind of knowing. As soon as they have expressed their knowledge or understanding of one thing they are open to new knowledge and understanding of a second thing, and so on. Iteration is the key to this progression.

SIX BASIC PROCESSES OF EMERGENT KNOWLEDGE

A Clean Start
Over-Driving
Uploading
Meta-driving
Downloading
Action Plan

There are six basic processes that can be run in an Emergent Knowledge session. We will describe them briefly and provide a visual icon as an aide memoire for each (they will combine in Figure 9).
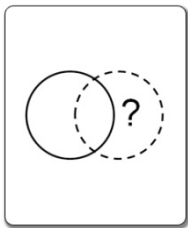
Process 1 – A Clean Start

Figure 3

A series of questions is reiterated, either in a formulaic sequence or at the facilitator's discretion, until a congruent affirmative answer to each question has been received.

The questions asked of the client are:

> *"Are you in the right space?"*
> *"Are you at the right height?"*
> *"Are you at the right angle?"*
> *"Are you facing the right direction?"*
> *"Is that* [the statement] *in the right space?"*
> *"Is that at the right height?"*
> *"Is that at the right angle?"*
> *"Is that facing the right direction?"*
> *"Is that the right distance between you and that* [the statement]*?"*

An attentive facilitator will notice that a client may say 'Yes' to any one of these questions while at the same time making a gesture or shifting their body position slightly in a way that may indicate an unconscious 'No'. The questioning might have to be repeated until the client has an unequivocal 'Yes' to each question.

A Clean Start may not be essential for a successful Emergent Knowledge session, but it certainly helps. Done thoroughly it elicits and defines the structural organization of the client's mission or problem, and ensures that the set-up is fully psycho-active.

The mere act of processing these questions is likely to be a microcosm of how the client lives their life. All of their issues may come up in this simple act.
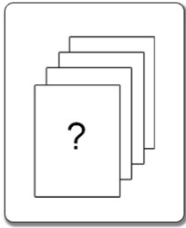
Process 2 – Over-Driving

Figure 4

A simple 'over-driving' question is asked of the client-at-A, the statement-at-B or the between-space-of-C.

> Question to A: *"What do you know?"*
> Question to B: *"What does that [the statement] know?"*
> Question to C: *"What does that space know?"*

The purpose of over-driving is to 'break' or 'pass through' the boundaries of A, B and C into D (see Figure 2) in such a way that new knowledge is encouraged to emerge.

As 'over-driver' questions drive the knowledge in the system they must be run as an iterative process. Thus each question is asked a further five times:

> Questions to A: *"And what else do you know?"*
> Questions to B: *"And what else does that know?"*
> Questions to C: *"And what else does that space know?"*

The information that emerges at the end of the full iteration is acknowledged with the 'upload' process.
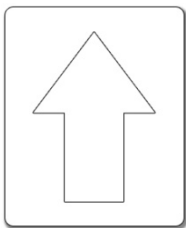
Process 3 – Uploading

Figure 5

'Uploading' was Grove's term for the process in which the client writes or draws their response to the 'overdriving' questions – directly onto the mission statement or onto a new sheet of paper. The invitation (gesturing to the paper) is to:

> *"Put that on there."*

The purpose of 'uploading' is to make sure that both existing and new knowledge is recognized, that it has 'residence', an 'address'. It gives the new knowledge a relationship to everything else. It allows

the client to let go of the information. And it saves both facilitator and client from having to remember what has been said.
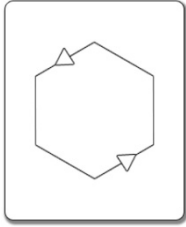
Process 4 – Meta-Driving

Figure 6

The 'meta-drive' process invites the client to move spatially:

> *"Find another space."*

The purpose of the invitation is to shift the client's locus of attention, and through the iteration of new spaces to create new spatial nodes in the network. In the space of 'A' a person may hold a particular view of the world that seems to hold true as long as they remain there. Once they move to an adjacent space they have access to the information the new space holds. This may be complementary information that helps fill out the picture, but equally people are capable of discounting everything they said in the spaces before.

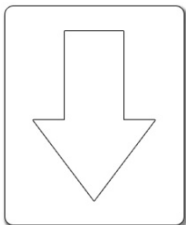## Process 5 – Downloading

Figure 7

At the end of six iterations a new Emergent question is asked to bring the client back to here and now, and to 'download' their learning:

> *"And now what do you [does that] know?"*

The purpose of 'downloading' is to mark the end of a full iteration. It also confirms and consolidates the knowledge the client has acquired. Now they can process the information and self-reorganize.

A final 'upload' complements the process:

> *"Put that on there."*

The new information can be written or drawn onto the existing papers or onto a new sheet.

8

Process 6 – Action Plan

Figure 8

The client is invited to write down six simple behaviours they will perform that will take them closer to their goal, or help them resolve the issue.

> *"Taking into account your last statement, write down six things that you will do when you leave here. Where and when you are going to do them. And who if anyone you are going to do them with."*

The purpose of an 'Action Plan' is to confirm and consolidate the cognitive and emotional changes the client is making, and bring them into the reality of everyday life.

Each of these six basic processes can be used in a variety of combinations in a session as required, or they can be pulled together into a simple formula.

RUNNING AN EMERGENT KNOWLEDGE SESSION

> **Starting**
> **Applying a Formula**
> **Ending**

Starting

Invite the client to create their 'Mission Statement'. What would they like to work on? Invite them then to place the statement. And then to place themselves in relation to it (see under 'Principles' above).

Applying a Formula

The basic processes can be applied in several formulaic ways. Here is one of them: 'The Six Steps' (see Figure 9):

1. Run a Clean Start
2. Over-Drive A (with Upload)
3. Download A
4. Meta-Drive A
5. Run parts 2, 3 and 4 five more times
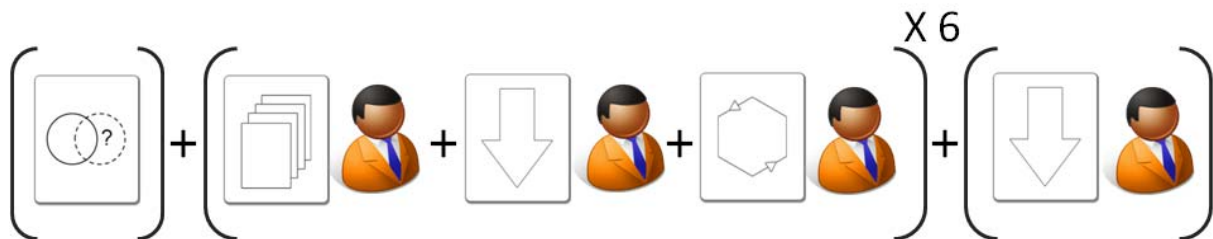6. Download A

Figure 9

This particular formula over-drives, downloads and meta-drives 'A'. The same formula can be applied to 'B', although not within the same iteration. We recommend keeping each iteration as simple as possible, enabling the client to add their own complexity.

Ending

At the end of the session it is useful for the client to take a meta-position to the whole system. The facilitator asks:

> *"Knowing what you know now, what do you notice about the difference between your initial statement and your last statement?"*

Finally having the client complete an 'Action Plan' (see 'Basic Processes') – or giving it as homework – concludes the session.

Summary

There is a great deal more to Emergent Knowledge and The Power of Six than we can present in one

short paper. Our intention here is to provide a description of the building blocks of David Grove's basic process. Its strength lies in its simplicity. It provides an ideal base for further growth, and indeed David was working on a number of variants and innovations to the end. We ask anyone who makes use of these processes to acknowledge Grove as their creator. And we ask that any developments of Grove's work be made available in the same open-source spirit in which David contributed his discoveries to the world.

And What Else?

'Six B Starts' is an Emergent formula in which the client creates six versions of their issue. It is available as a download from www.uniquechange.com/training.html. Case studies of Power of Six processes in use with clients will be the subject of another article. Philip's version of David's work will shortly be available in a book 'The Joy of Six'.

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Acknowledgements

Authors

Matthew Hudson is an NLP trainer and therapist who was David Grove's assistant. For more on their collaboration, visit www.self-alignment.com.

Philip Harland is a psychotherapist who worked closely with Grove and co-facilitated clients with him.

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They will be running a workshop on the Power of Six at the world's first Clean Conference in London in June 2008. Details www.cleanconference.co.uk