Making Sense of Sensemaker®: Evaluating Development Initiatives through Micro-Narrative Capture and Self-Tagging in Kenya

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1. Background and Context
2. Core Elements
3. “Signification Framework” Example
4. Analysis in Action
5. Actionable Learning
6. Next Steps
7. Applications
Team

Learning by Design (methodology)

GlobalGiving (operating system)

Cognitive Edge (software)

Rockefeller Foundation (sponsor)

GlobalGiving - generate non-intermediated target group feedback flows
Learning by Design - find a methodological option for ‘seeing’ emergence
Cognitive Edge - test application in international development
Rockefeller Foundation - fund methodological innovation
What is GlobalGiving?

1000+ Organizations Worldwide
$32,000,000+ to 3,000 Specific Projects
Sustainability Depends on Growth
Effective Fundraising Platform
Low Threshold to Get Listed
Median Donation = $50
Median Project Funds = $5,000
Nice, but does it all add up to something?

Are we helping discovering “underdog” orgs and helping them become stars?
Are we helping organizations learn to be more effective?
Are GlobalGiving organizations different from others?
What is the risk profile of the 1000+ organizations on the GlobalGiving platform?
Are we delivering on our value prop to donors and organizations alike?

What can GG do to more efficiently respond to/enable/foster community efforts that aren’t getting the attention they deserve?
Self Reports
Visitor Postcards
Formal Evaluations
Crowd Feedback
Stories, stories, stories – but what does it all mean?
Quantity and quality Vary Widely/Project
No consistent structure for story capture
GG total staff of 25 based in Washington, DC
Radically improve usability and keep overhead reasonable through crowdsourcing?
Design Challenge

Problem with Statistics
- Unrealistic at GlobalGiving scale
- Hard to get at causes
- Difficult in complex cultural/geographical frames

Stories
- Few voices
- Self-selected
- Intermediary bias
- Questionable validity
- Quantity presents paradox of meaning
Design Challenge

Lesson from Slate: Instead of focusing on a few outrageous commenters, hotels and restaurants should be more concerned about the patterns that emerge from the totality of their reviews.
Design Solution

“A key feature is providing a decision maker with the ability to *see the world* through the eyes of their customer, their staff, their citizens or even their enemies.”

**SenseMaker® Suite**

Place Data in Narrative Context
Mass-Capture of Narrative Reveals Bias
Self-Signification Generates Quantitative Data
Signification Framework Generates Consistent Data
Analysis through Pattern Visualization
Information Capture in Natural Context - Stories
Information Analysis in Natural Context - Visualization

**Attempt to Hear What Really Matters to People**
Methodological Logic

- Prompting Question
- Stimulate/Dampen Patterns
- Story Capture
- Self-Signification
- Act on Signals
- Visualization
- Discussion
- Deepen Insights

Prompting question or image triggers a lived experience
Storyteller self-indexes story, gives meaning (can be done by others)
Software detects visual patterns among stories
Software enables deeper dive into individual stories
People discuss patterns and story clusters
Act on patterns, weak signals, phase shifts
Stimulate beneficial patterns; dampen undesirable ones
SenseMaker® in Kenya Pilot

Stage 1 – Signification Framework
Stage 2 – On-The-Ground Learning
Stage 3 – Mass Capture
Stage 4 – Analysis
Stage 5 – Completing the Learning Loops
Signification Framework – Prompting Question

Welcome to the GlobalGiving Storytelling Project

Can you share a story about one past community effort you witnessed or know about? Think of a “community effort” as any organized activity led by a person or NGO to improve the lives of a community.

Talk about one moment or experience that was part of this community effort. Explain what happened.

Please transcribe this story on the next page and answer some questions to help others learn from your stories, thoughts, and experiences.

How to trigger GG-specific stories?
Controlling for projects/organizations in/out of GlobalGiving network
Is this the best prompting question?
Signification Framework - Triads

Tell us your story about a community effort

**About your story**

Position each bubble within each triangle where you feel it best describes your story. Let the position represent the balance between the choices at the points. Your story can reflect a combination of these choices. If a question does not relate to your story, skip it by checking the box "N/A."

- Community attitude about the effort in your story are...
- How would you advise a friend who wanted to organize a similar community effort? What part could be improved the most?
- The people involved
- The plan
Signification Framework - Polarities

Tell us your story about a community effort

About your story
Slide each bubble to a position that best relates to the context of the story.
If a scale does not apply to the story, select N/A. Not moving a bubble is the same as selecting N/A (the bubble remains grey if the response is N/A).

This story is about a community effort that...
Failed

This story...
would have happened anyway
without an organized community effort

Impossible without an organization's help
On the Ground Learning

Technology Problem (iTouch unrealistic, no computer labs available)
Effective Tech was Pencil and Paper (no bottlenecks, people-centric, partner-dependent)
Reliance on Incentivized Story Collectors (20 stories = 100 bob)
Events Catalyzed Story Collection (and sharing information back)
Mass Capture - Storytellers

VIDEO
Mass Capture - Actual Story
Mass Capture - Strategies

2,700 stories, 10 weeks, 50 collectors, $1,500

Collected on paper – then entered into online collection application
3000+ stories (2700 usable) in 10 weeks
50 volunteers earned $1,500 in incentives
Incentives matter, so does orientation and chasing
Target a focused time to trigger flood of stories
Used cell numbers and SMS for feedback and quality control
Analysis – Benchmarking GG Orgs

Core Goal

This community effort improved...

- Social relations
- Physical well-being
- Economic opportunities

GG Stories, N = 239

Non-GG Stories, N = 679

Visual combinations of triads, polarities, MCQ, demographics
SenseMaker Software: glance, browse, compare, range, distribute, cluster, graph, landscape
Analysis – What does failure look like?

Benefits -- stories about failure highlighted

Those benefitting from the community effort in your story are...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GG Stories</th>
<th>Non-GG Stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced marriage</td>
<td>School drop outs, early pregnancies, STD's, strong youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After giving birth while still at home to 2 kids, her father scolded her and proposed to marry the old man. TTSA tried to intervene but was in vain.</td>
<td>s school drop outs, early pregnancies, STD's, strong youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community</td>
<td>members need help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 240</td>
<td>N = 294</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abilities to drill down to individual stories
Enables discovery and enhances mind's ability to see patterns
Analysis – Self-Reports vs. Stories

Opinions
Community attitudes about the effort in your story are...

Stark difference between outsider tags of self-reports and community stories about the same projects
Community Members (n = 2530)

Experts/implementers (n=65)

#1 Food
#2 Shelter
#3 Safety
#4 Water
#5 HIV/AIDS
#6 Education

Differences between community stories and expert tags
Differences between predictions and actualities
Differences are instructive, but both perspectives are valuable
Completing the Learning Loop - Ushahidi

Importance of Online and Offline Feedback
Offline Workshops – Online Visibility/Recognition
Completing the Learning Loop – Project Wall

Importance of Feeding Info into GlobalGiving Marketplace
Org Incentives and Recognition
What Gichuki Learned

“It is a gap we are seeing. A gap between our service and the community’s awareness.”

- Francis Gichuki, Executive Director, Trans-Noia Youth Soccer Association on the absence of stories about their child rights program.
What GlobalGiving Learned

People Tell Stories and Want Acknowledgement

SenseMaker® Visualizations Work

Stories Help Organizations Learn

Self-Reports are Insufficient

Communities and Experts See Things Differently

Unfiltered Voices Can Be Heard
**Next Steps**

Refine Signification Framework  
Expand Geographic Scope  
Adopt as Fundamental GlobalGiving Tool  
Seek Peer Review of Methodology  
Use as Tool for Cross-Organization Learning  
Create Do-It-Yourself Feedback Toolkit  
Conduct Participatory Story Analysis Workshops
Applications

Organizational Aggregation from Diversity
Rolling Baselines
Cross-Organizational Comparisons
Focused Moments – MTRs, Final Evaluations
Understanding the Unanticipated