



What's in it for you?  
Why emphasize explanations  
instead of information?  
[Part 2 in a series.]

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# Information vs. Explanation\*

## Information

- Facts.
- Emphasis on who, what, where, when.
- Supports action.

## Explanation

- Describes facts, and their consequences.
- Emphasis on how/why.
- Supports planning & analysis. Links action with results.

\*See Appendix, and also [Part 1](#) of this presentation for more details.

# Why does this matter?

## Why emphasize explanations?

- Explaining is one of the most important things we do.
- Explanations deserve more management and R&D focus: They're not being handled purposefully or explicitly.
- People need a practical way to find useful explanations buried inside other information.

# What's in it for you?

## #1. Communicate better:

- Draw more attention to your data & findings.
- Get faster adoption of your ideas. Be more influential & persuasive.
- Discover innovative ideas and new insights more easily.



# What's in it for you?

## #2. Design better software:

- Offer a better experience.
- Deliver better ROI.
- Help customers develop more efficient business processes.



# What's in it for you?

## #3. Use technology better:

- Get better software solutions.
- Create more compelling events and experiences.
- Develop more efficient business processes.



# For example.



By explicitly emphasizing explanations, you can:

- Deliver a better search experience (less information overload, more accurate results).
- Get higher-quality content from Enterprise 2.0 and Web 2.0 efforts.
- Improve your own content: Highlight important explanations contained in marketing collateral, tech support documentation, etc.

# A few more examples.

- Connect performance data to explanations of what is happening (e.g., “Why did we miss our Q3 numbers?”)
- Filter email & relieve inbox overload.
- Improve social CRM & idea submission.
- Blend fragmented information into cohesive snapshots of what is happening.



# ExplanationScience.org

Join this new community.

- Pioneering the science of explaining:
  - What goes into a 'good' explanation?
  - What technologies are best for developing explanatory information? Which ones are best for presenting explanations?
- [@ExplanationSci](#) on Twitter
- For details: [joinus@explanationscience.org](mailto:joinus@explanationscience.org)

# Who is Ugly Research?

Management strategy & software design firm.

- Our **Tiny Soapbox** methodology separates good explanations from ordinary information.
- Seminars and consulting services.
- [@UglyResearch](https://twitter.com/UglyResearch) on Twitter
- Tracy Allison Altman can be contacted at [tracy@uglyresearch.com](mailto:tracy@uglyresearch.com)

# More in this series.

- [Part 1.](#) How to stop delivering information, and start delivering explanations. [26-Oct-09]

Coming up next:

- Part 3. Software design: Where technology has failed, and what to do about it. [Nov '09]

# Appendix

- Definition of 'explanation'
- Overview of status quo for creating & searching for explanations

# What's an 'explanation'?

'Explaining' means:

- Linking cause & effect.
  - Making relationships evident.
  - Providing a why/how.\*
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- A good explanation should show us:
    - What things are related.
    - The supporting evidence.



\*[www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au](http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au)

# Status quo: Creating explanations.

Where do people put explanations together?

- Most anywhere they can create and publish content. Usually the result is something unstructured.
- Some software apps and web sites are designed to help people explain, but even then it's mostly free-form.

# Status quo: Finding explanations.

Where do people look for explanations?

- Broad searching/querying (docs, tweets, databases, etc.) delivers many results – but lots of those don't include any explanations.
- Searching explanation-rich sources delivers more targeted, but limited, results (PubMed, how-to sites, Wikipedia, Google scholar, etc).