

**THIS ISSUE**

Recap on the year that was

December office Hours

Moyo awards

Reflecting on corporate memory

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Dear Santa,

Last year I asked for a thin body and a fat pay cheque.

Please don't get them confused again this year.

## Thank you for joining us!

Thank you to all who took time to join us for our end breakfast function on Wednesday 16th November— we hope those who attended enjoyed the all-too-brief break from the hustle and bustle in the pleasant and relaxed surroundings as much as we did!



Finding a time and venue which meets everyone's constraints is an impossible task, but we had made an effort not to allow the function to clash with work or family commitments and we were pleased at the turnout. It is seldom in our 'virtual organisation' that we have the opportunity to create an atmosphere of closeness, and we wish to thank all those who made the time to join us.

Having said that, of course, we do understand the difficulties and deadlines of the working environment, and hope that those who were forced to excuse themselves will be able to join us for our next gathering.

As much as he wished to merely mingle, Deon took a moment to welcome everyone, and briefly recapped on the state of the industry and the economy in general. It has been a hard year for everyone, and many of us are bone-weary after the past 2 or 3 years of constant challenge.

However, sYncWize is privileged to be able to look back and observe that despite the challenges, we

have continued to progress. This is measured as much by the calibre of our professionals as by traditional measures.

At the core of sYncWize remains our personal commitment to our team; it is our interest to provide you with the best possible placements, a service that enhances the ability of our professionals to perform, and always a personal connection. It is only through this commitment that we can inspire excellence, respect and collaboration.

Despite the best efforts of the trade unions and a Labour department which is curiously deaf to the logic presented by NEDLAC, we are pleased to see that the independent contracting model is not an endangered species. Nevertheless, we are poised to respond with creativity and alacrity when the relevant legislation materialises.

At the same time, we are continuing to explore business opportunities which will create new avenues for our professionals and are pleased to say that the establishment of our Enterprise Risk Management business—Avanon Africa—is progressing well.

So, as we look forward to the new year, let us reaffirm our collective dedication to ourselves and each other. Together, we shall continue to build a strong and unique sYncWize.

To those of you who will be travelling soon, buckle up, enjoy the ride and drive safely! We wish you and your loved ones good health, love and happiness in 2012!



**PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF OUR DECEMBER OFFICE HOURS AND YEAR-END PROCESSES ON PAGE 2!**

# December hours and year-end

The first half of December usually turns out to be frenetic for all of us, and this year is no exception.

There are a couple of things to bear in mind:

Firstly, most clients require early submission of timesheets for the December cycles and/or submission of projected timesheets up to year-end for project budget management purposes. Our office will be sending email reminders and calling you where necessary, to facilitate smooth processing in this regard. Once again, we will greatly appreciate your prompt cooperation as we are required to adhere to

deadlines and cut-off dates, and cannot expect lenience from the clients.

If you expect to be away during this period, please let our office know. This will allow us to plan and manage your paperwork accordingly.

Secondly, please note that the office will be closing on 23rd December at 13h00—once all the furor has died down—and will reopen on 3rd January at 8h30.

Should you have any emergency requiring our urgent attention during this period, please contact Christine, Lientjie or Cleon on their cellphones, depending on the na-

ture of the problem.

And thirdly, please note that Deon and Helen will be unavailable from 8th December to 9th January inclusive, and will only have intermittent access to email and cellphones.

Between 8th and 23rd December the office will be open but operating on skeleton staff: Christine, Cleon and Lientjie will be available to make sure all messages are relayed and to take action where needed.

Contact details for all staff are reflected on the last page of this newsletter.

## The short version...

- Keep in mind deadlines for December timesheet submission. Let us know if you're going away.
- Remember to provide projected timesheets to end December if required by your client.
- 8th December to 9th January: Deon and Helen unavailable; only intermittent email/cellphone access.
- 23rd December to 3rd January: Office closed.

## Another year in its moer-in

After the ructions and serious economic decline of 2010, all of us had hoped to see the beginnings of an upturn. We have seen some signs of this, but this has been accompanied by increased strain on everyone both in terms of workload and personal financial situations.

From our side, negotiations with clients have been slow, difficult and frustrating. Turnaround times on decision-making have slowed by an order of magnitude, increased corporate 'governance' has brought progress to its knees and clamps have been tightened, evidenced by the inclusion of numerous additional stakeholders in decisions. The fight for rate increases at renewal time has become bloody,

and ethics and honour in the workplace has faded to a memory.

It has been said that this recession has changed the world forever, and it certainly seems that this is true.

But we are still on our feet and fighting, and we are proud to be associated with a team of professionals who have demonstrated the winning quality through this period, that we seek to show our clients.

As the world continues to change around us, winners will be those who can roll with the punches and still come back fighting, and sYncWize has striven to not merely adapt but to find ways to set the benchmark. This year has seen us through a

structural change with changed roles and responsibilities, build and move to new premises, finally re-establish telecoms after months of 3G dial-up and cellphone communication, open the African office of Avanon, and begin introducing new independent contracting models which set us up to comply with looming changes to labour law.

We have further plans for 2012 and look forward to taking the journey with all of you.

But remember, as Deon always wisely says: "Don't overestimate what you can achieve in a year.... but don't underestimate what you can achieve in ten years."

HOE LANK NOG VOOR DIE JAAR OM IS???

I'm finished!!!

EK KANNIE MEER NIE MAN!

My lippe is teen die klippe!

EK't rus dringend nodig!





# Welcome!

This period we extend a warm welcome to the following professionals who join the sYncWize team for the first time:

- \* **Dewaldt Pretorius**
- \* **Bryan van Vuuren**
- \* **Bekhani Mchunu**

We also welcome two of our previous colleagues back 'home'...

- \* **Hilda Alves**
- \* **Kyle Stevens**



# Happy birthday

Once again, we have the privilege of sending many happy returns to a number of our professionals who celebrate their birthdays, this time in November and December.

Ladies and gents, we hope you have been spoiled rotten, and that the coming year is rich in the things that really



count... and perhaps some of those that just make it feel better, too.

So, all the best to...

- \* **Andy Lawrence**
- \* **Melanie Jones**
- \* **Monica Hepplewhite**
- \* **Lionel Pfaff**
- \* **Liezl Portmann**
- \* **Ian Scholtz**

# Taking the plunge



We hear through the grapevine that another of our team took the plunge, followed by an extended December honeymoon.

Congratulations to **Henry Huysamen and his bride, Annemie**. Let love never leave your hearts, and remember always to take joy in each other.

Good luck to you both as you embark on this new journey together.

# Recap on Moyo awards

As we've said, we know each of you personally. Granted, some we know better than others, for various reasons from pure logistics, to quiriness, to the particular challenges which each of you brings to our office.

For this reason, we used the opportunity of a rather larger gathering than usual, resulting from the breakfast at Moyo's, to single some of our colleagues out. They were each presented by a token of our affection commensurate with the nature of the reason for their being singled out.

For those of you who did not manage to attend the function, we reiterate the awards below.

**Anabella Ramos** is not our oldest contractor, but was our first, commencing

in early 2004. She is still on board, so we felt she'd definitely earned a bottle of champagne—we'll leave it to her to say whether the bottle is to be drunk in celebration or commiseration.

**Alex Moir** has been with us for a year or so, and is currently working at JD Group's premises in Randburg... travelling from the south of Joburg. He clocked up a whopper of a timesheet in October—in fact a record-breaker—earning himself an oversize Red Bull to keep him going in the few hours he has left for his family.

**Tanita Bezuidenhout** has also been with us for many years, and really feels like a family member. More so, because when she spent 2 weeks in our office a year or so ago while between contracts, she was heard to announce loudly to

Deon, "don't speak to me like that! I'm not your wife!" We presented her with a glittering engagement ring.

**Cornel Fourie** spent substantially more time in the office assisting with the development of an internal system. Although quite a character when he gets going, there was typically a deafening silence from his corner while he worked, irrespective of what went on in the office. He received a pair of earplugs.

The inimitable **Ivan Steyn** was unable to attend the function due to work pressures, but we presented his father, Andre—also one of our number—with a bottle of super strong 'Steyn' remover: after effecting a change to a Production system which inadvertently impacted all users, he has become known in some quarters as "The Steyn Factor".

# Reflecting on corporate memory

## Why and how does explicit knowledge sharing make a difference?

**Reflection:** in the fast and furious pace of Face-to-Face there is no time for deep reflection. An explicit documented exchange gives you the opportunity to review without the pressures imposed of 'thinking on your feet'. Many of our insights come from making connections and changing our internal models. There is something about 'seeing the text' that helps here. Perhaps it is the very process of moving thoughts from the brain to your finger tips as you type that does it?

**The Record:** so often we forget the bits and pieces that do not matter on their own, but when presented in context, when connected or experienced together, can deliver magic. Having a record you can return to, that reminds you of commitments, resurfaces tacit ideas and helps with synthesis is a major help. Often my clients find it is not the actual text that is important, it is the associated ideas and the insights that crop up and pop up that make this worthwhile.

**Getting in deep:** most groups, teams or communities of practice do not take the time to dig down to the differences that really matter. They gloss over assumptions, meld or skip different mental models, do not make the effort to clarify terms or wrestle with distinctions. Using language to 'bring forth another world' is an advanced skill that is enhanced by asynchronous virtual exchange. This approach can surface vision and build alignment that is often not easy face to face.

**Helping novices:** the biggest hurdle new folk face is understanding why: things are done this way, why we believe xyz, why we say abc. A written record (summarized at strategic intervals) goes a long way to bridging the gap between old timers and newbies. Conversations are a lot like stories, after reading through an on-line discussion, you have a different feel and appreciation for people, their beliefs, their interests, drivers, fears and their values.

**Communication:** how often have you not wished we had recorded the reason or taken notes of the other things we talked about? Having a sustained practice of recording the context behind key

## Sharing via explicit, evolving documentation is receiving more attention as wikis and blogs move into the enterprise

decisions, helps to spread the word, surface new connections and ideas, test assumptions, gives the group a decided leverage and advantage.

### Issues

- Capturing ideas, thoughts, context and rationale on the fly
- Adding and enabling notification & interactivity (connecting and annotation)
- Moving seamlessly between structured formalizations and informal conversation / critique
- Using the repository to elicit and capture evolving insights (idea generations)
- Validation, weeding, summarization, encouraging engagement, creative abrasion & critique
- Navigation and intuitive access
- Integration of news with archival functionality
- Making forward links, i.e. from existing documents to new stuff.

The key to building a corporate memory is not the content, not the review and 'editing' process, not the structure, ontology or indexing, not the meta-data and the search facility - *it is the informal affordance(s) that permit or allow access and empower annotation.*

Any repository that does not enable dialog, promote awareness, encourage back-channel connections, make it easy to connect to the source person, push notifications or foster diversity of opinion and offer affordances for annotation, is unlikely to survive.

*Extracted from blog on [www.Denham.typepad.com](http://www.Denham.typepad.com)*

## WIKIPEDIA'S TAKE ON CORPORATE MEMORY...

**Organizational memory** (sometimes called **institutional** or **corporate memory**) is the accumulated body of data, information, and knowledge created in the course of an individual organization's existence. Falling under the wider disciplinary umbrella of knowledge management, it has two repositories: an organization's archives, including its electronic data bases; and individuals' memories.

Organizational memory can only be applied if it can be accessed. To make use of it, organizations must have effective retrieval systems for their archives and good memory recall among the individuals that make up the organization. Its importance to an organization depends upon how well individuals can apply it, a discipline known as experiential learning or evidence-based practice. In the case of individuals' memories, organizational memory's veracity is invariably compromised by the inherent limitations of human memory. Individuals' reluctance to admit to mistakes and difficulties compounds the problem. The actively encouraged flexible labour market has imposed an Alzheimer's-like corporate amnesia on organizations that creates an inability to benefit from hindsight.

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# The best medicine



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A man with a bald head and a wooden leg is invited to a Xmas fancy dress party. He doesn't know what to wear to hide his head and his wooden leg, so he writes to a fancy dress company to explain his problem. A few days later he receives a parcel with a note:

*Dear Sir,  
Please find enclosed a Pirate's outfit. The spotted handkerchief will cover your bald head and with your wooden leg you will be just right as a pirate.*

The man is offended that the outfit emphasizes his disability, so he writes a letter of complaint. A week passes and he receives another parcel and a note:

*Dear Sir  
Sorry about the previous parcel. Please find enclosed a monks habit.*

*The long robe will cover your wooden leg and with your bald head you will really look the part.*

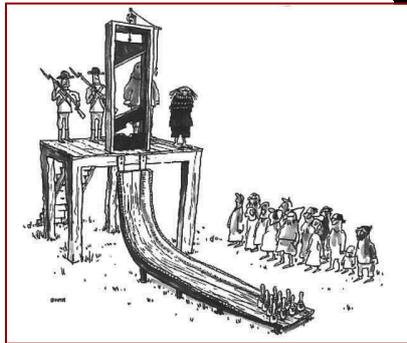
The man is really incandescent with rage now, because the company has gone from emphasizing his wooden leg to drawing attention to his bald head.

So he writes a really strong letter of complaint. A few days later he gets a very small parcel from the company with the accompanying letter:

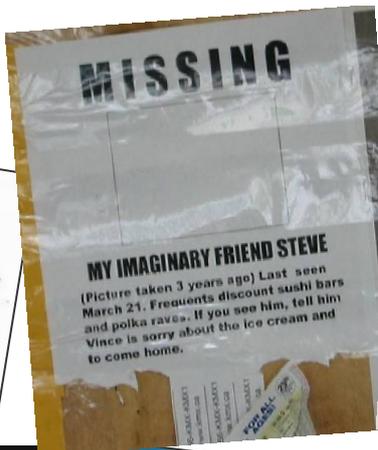
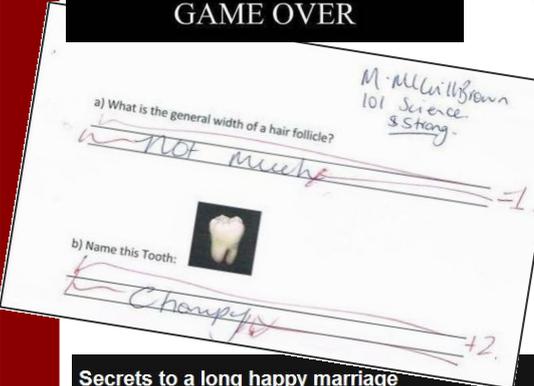
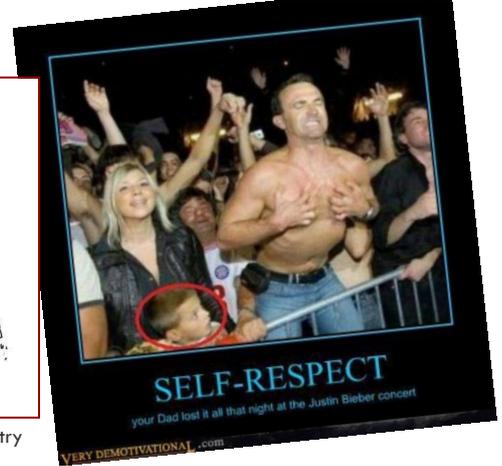
*Dear Sir,  
Please find enclosed a tin of Golden Syrup. We suggest you pour the tin of Golden Syrup over your bald head, let it harden, then stick your wooden leg up your ar#e and go as a toffee apple.*



THE SPEED IN WHICH A WOMAN SAYS "NOTHING WHEN ASKED 'WHAT'S WRONG?' IS INVERSELY PROPORTIONAL TO THE SEVERITY OF THE COMING STORM.



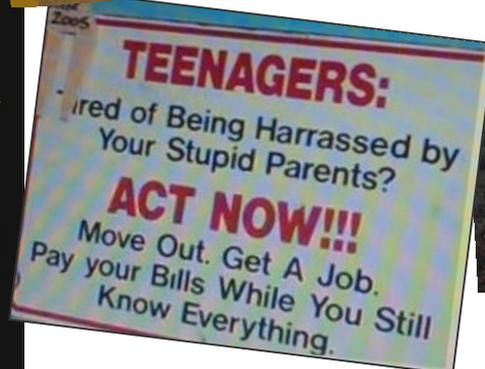
No matter what your job, you can always try make the most of it ....



### Secrets to a long happy marriage



A old woman was sipping on a glass of wine, while sitting on the patio with her husband, and she says, "I love you so much, I don't know how I could ever live without you"... Her husband asks, "Is that you, or the wine talking?"... She replies, "It's me... talking to the wine."



If you're travelling, go safely! Until our January/February edition...  
keep smiling, live your life in full colour, and may you be blessed daily!

The sYncWize Team

This newsletter is intended for sYncWize's contractors, and is published every two months as a means of conveying general information. We would love it if you would like to contribute to this newsletter, place an advertisement, or have a specific request for inclusion. If so, please contact Cleon Davids.

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