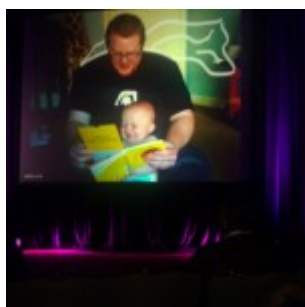


Five Enterprise 2.0 Superheroes

REBECCA PETZEL | NOVEMBER 17, 2011

Kristin and I spent the week at Enterprise 2.0. To be transparent, while we were both looking forward to connecting with inspiring friends and colleagues, we also came with a bit of trepidation. What if this conference was all technologists having highly technical conversations about architecting new tools? While we love a well-designed collaboration tool, we do what we do because we are inspired by creating thriving cultures, high-performing collaborations, achieving the unimaginable, and redefining the way work gets done to bring people alive. We're geeks, but more the "collaboration to unleash human potential" kind of geeks than "building new tools" kind of geeks.

Turns out we had nothing to fear. We have been in great, geeky company this week. I can't cover everyone who's inspired me, but I'll try and highlight five folks who I think are truly superheroes.



1. First and foremost meet [Tim Young](#), pictured here as a super-dad. His proposition is that simple tools unleash our inner superhero both at work and at home. Why is he creating and evangelizing for simple canvases, bravely swimming against the endless tide towards larger complexity? Because when he surveyed workers about their daily commute to work, 85 percent expressed a feeling of anxiety. On the way home, these same employees revealed a feeling of conflict between unfinished work and their family obligations. He found a system where work feels broken and workers are missing life. As he put it, "complexity will choke your community to the point of collapse," and Tim is trying to bring us back from that ledge. It's not easy, but with stripped down simplicity, he and Socialcast are [innovating simpler tools](#) to bring out teams' inner-superheros. And if you think what he's evangelizing for sounds too easy, remember these words of wisdom from [E.F. Schumacher](#):

Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex and more violent. It takes a touch of genius — and a lot of courage — to move in the opposite direction.



2. [Kevin D. Jones](#) was this conference's failure superhero. While this may not seem like a title to aspire to, he quite convincingly laid out the important role of failure in innovation. Even more skillfully, he highlighted how trust is important to support small failures, and the role of social in building trust. The equation he maps is:

trust → failure → learning → innovation → progress

Kevin Jones agrees with Tim Young that work is broken, which means progress in the workplace has never been more important. This [funny yet poignant video](#) of Kevin's kids discussing their dreams and ambition

in life really brings the point home.



3. Rachel Happe convenes the [Community Roundtable](#), and at this conference, she was our culture superhero. She made the audacious claim that culture is *the* competitive differentiator. She then outlined how social tools that build relationships and trust are transformative towards the bottom line. She was unabashed in discussing the soft stuff, illuminating how the soft elements (relationships, loyalty, forgiveness, patience, advocacy) translate into profits. As with all of my favorite Enterprise 2.0 participants, she was authentic and often hilarious. I am so thrilled to learn that [she is out in the world](#) “solving structural problems in organizations that unleash rather than restrain peoples’ potential.”



3. We were fortunate to break bread with Chris Grams, author of the [Ad-Free Brand](#). When Chris said very casually during dinner that “culture trumps structure,” I knew I’d met a man I want to learn from and with for many years to come. How he and his agency, [New Kind](#), are engaging communities through story-telling is impactful and inspiring. He is reminding us all that the best brands are really, at their heart, communities. He is also bringing authenticity, participation and collaboration back to the business of being a successful brand.



5. Finally, Molly Graham, the 29 year old female (my age) who simply wowed the Enterprise 2.0 conference. I am a “Millennial.” You may have heard a few things about what it’s like to work with Millennials, something about us being needy, impatient, unable to deal with authority, and a few other complaints I’ve failed to remember. Molly, who works at Facebook, illuminated all these stereotypes and then pointed out how, when re-framed, they could be considered the very reason Facebook has seen unprecedented levels of success. Keeping tabs on and helping support the supercharged culture of Facebook is no small accomplishment. This is a culture that moves fast, fails often, hosts all night hackathons for fun, will never accept no, and has taken the concept of “agile” to a whole new level. Commanding a room of established enterprise veterans at a male-dominated conference as a 29 year old female is also no small task. Molly accomplished both with humility and authenticity. I can honestly say I’ve never had so much interest in how Facebook might influence the culture of work for the better as I do today.