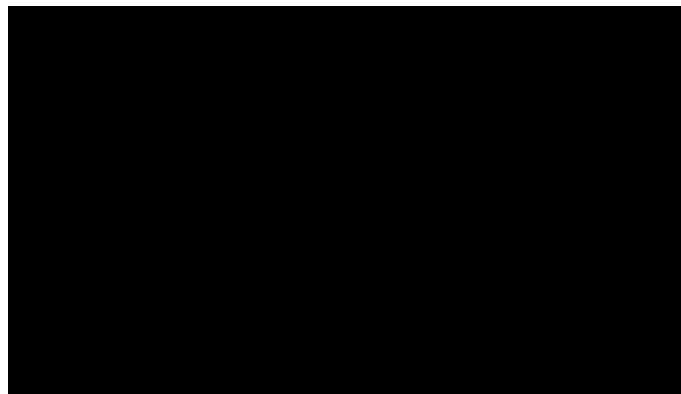


- FOREWORD
- I. INTRODUCTION
START HERE FOR INSTRUCTIONS
AND A MAP.
- II. PEERING INTO
LEARNING
ANY QUESTIONS AS WE GET
STARTED?
- III. MOTIVATION
WE'RE COLLECTING CASE STUDIES
ABOUT PEERAGOGY IN ACTION.
- IV. PRACTICE
PATTERNS YOU CAN USE IN YOUR
OWN PROJECTS.
 - A PATTERN
STORY
A CASE STUDY
- V. CONVENE
IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO BUILD A
GREAT GROUP.
- VI. ORGANIZE
HOW'S IT ALL GOING TO WORK?
- VII. COOPERATE
SOME CO-WORKING STRATEGIES
THAT WORKED WELL FOR US.
- VIII. ASSESS
IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO EVALUATE
HOW IT'S GOING, OR HOW IT
WENT.
- IX. TOOLS
QUICKSTART GUIDES TO
SOFTWARE AND MORE.
- X. RESOURCES
FIND OUT MORE – AND GET
INVOLVED!

Peeragogy in practice: Patterns, use cases, and examples

Posted on April 2, 2012 by ADMIN • 0 COMMENTS

Although a grounding in learning theory helps inform peer learning projects, Peeragogy, at its core, comes to life in applied practice. Even before convening a group for your peer learning project, you will want to take a look over the patterns we have collected here. You will likely return here many times as your project develops.



What is a pattern?

A pattern is anything that has a repeated effect. In the context of peeragogy, the practice is to repeat processes and interactions that advance the learning mission. Frequent occurrences that are not desirable are called anti-patterns!

Christopher Alexander: "Each pattern describes a problem which occurs over and over again in our environment, and then describes the core of the solution to that problem, in a way that you can use this solution a million times over, without ever doing it the same way twice." [1]

Patterns provide a framework that can be applied to similar issues but may be metaphorically solved in different ways, sometimes in real world or face to face events and other times in digital space. Outside of Alexander's own work in architecture, one the first groups to adopt a design pattern way of thinking about things were computer programmers. Writing in the foreword to Richard P. Gabriel's *Patterns of Software*, Alexander emphasizes that the key question to ask about any design approach is: does it help us build better?

Christopher Alexander: "What is the Chartres of programming? What task is at a high enough level to inspire people writing programs, to reach for the stars?" [2]

We think that Peeragogy stands a good chance of being a "killer app" for pattern-based design. Learning bridges physical and virtual worlds all the time. And, in fact, a *Network of Learning* was the 18th pattern that Christopher Alexander introduced in his book, *A Pattern Language*.

Christopher Alexander: "Work in piecemeal ways to decentralize the process of learning and enrich it through contact with many places and people all over the city: workshops, teachers at home or walking through the city, professionals willing to take on the young as helpers, older children teaching younger children, museums, youth groups travelling, scholarly seminars, industrial workshops, old people, and so on." [1]

Peeragogy can help to extend and enrich this network, and, as we shall see, patterns can be used by those involved to do ongoing "emergent" design, not only by building new structures, but by adapting and improving our catalog of patterns as we go. For consistency, and easy use, adaptation, and extension we present the patterns using the following template. The format is meant to be neutral and easy to work with — it's,

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Translators welcome!

intentionally, an outline that you might use to write a short abstract describing an active project.

Title: *Encapsulate the idea – possibly include a subtitle*

Definition: *Explain the idea and the context in which it is meaningful. (You can link to other patterns, if they are useful for clarifying the relevant context.)*

Problem: *Explain why there's some issue to address here.*

Solution: *Talk about an idea about how to address the issue.*

Challenges: *Talk about what can go wrong.*

What's Next: *Talk about specific next steps. (Again, link to other patterns, if they are useful for clarifying the relevant context.)*

The pattern template also includes the following optional elements:

[**Objectives:** *Explain the purpose(s) of the proposed solution's functioning, if they aren't fully specified by the description of the solution itself.*]

[**Examples:** *Present example(s) that have been encountered, if this aids comprehension.*]

[**References:** *Citations, if relevant.*]

Notice the emphasis the active aspect of things — the “What's Next” section concretely links the patterns we discuss here to the Peeragogy project. If you adapt them for use in your own project, you're likely to have a different set of next steps. Although we think that these patterns can be generally useful, they aren't useful in the abstract, but rather, as a way for discussing what we actually do.

Patterns of peeragogy

Here is our index of the main patterns we've found so far (described in more detail after the jump):

- WRAPPER – Front end appearance to participants. Consolidate and summarize.
- DISCERNING A PATTERN – Found a pattern? Give it a title and record an example. (Woah, meta!)
- POLLING FOR IDEAS – Invite brainstorming, collecting ideas, questions, and solutions.
- CREATING A GUIDE – Overviews expose the lay of the land. Collecting content and stories.
- NEWCOMER – Create a guide for “beginner's mind” and help avoid need to introduce new members each “meeting.”
- ROADMAP – Plans for future work, direction towards a goal, dynamic
- ROLES – Specialize and mix it up. Play to participants strengths and skills.
- PROJECT FOCUS – Lightbulb moment: Most specific projects involve learning!
- CARRYING CAPACITY – Know your limits, find ways to get other people involved.
- HEARTBEAT – The “heartbeat” of the group keeps energy flowing.
- MODERATION – When leaders step back, dynamics can improve; moderator serves as champion and editor.
- USE OR MAKE? – Repurposing, tinkering, or creating from scratch?

We'll introduce three additional patterns in the chapter on RESEARCHING PEERAGOGY, and one more in a short CASE STUDY that appears later on in this section.

Anti-patterns for Peeragogy

And some “anti-patterns” (things to avoid if possible). Note that we use the same template to talk about both patterns and anti-patterns, but here, although the proposed solution may look like a good idea initially, but it doesn't work so well over the long term. Pay particular attention to the challenges that arise in practice!

- ISOLATION – A tale of silos, holes, and not-invented-here.
- MAGICAL THINKING – “One meeting will (not) change everything!”
- MESSY WITH LURKERS – What happens when joining is low-cost and completion is low-benefit.
- MISUNDERSTANDING POWER – The workload is almost never evenly distributed.
- NAVAL GAZING – “I have this really great idea...”
- STASIS – What is the driver behind open source, commons-oriented collaborative projects? (Because, let's face it, it doesn't always work.)
- STUCK AT THE LEVEL OF WEAK TIES – Can we deepen the connection?

What is a use case?

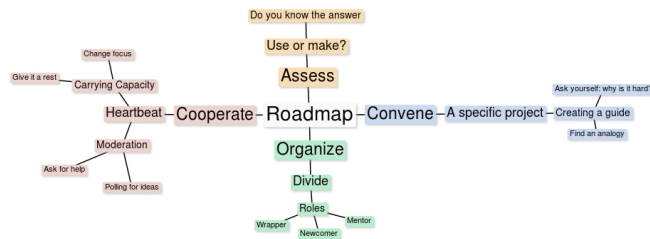
A use case describes someone (or something) who uses a given system or tool to achieve a goal. A use case can include a title, a summary of the problem, an actor, and a success scenario. Additional features can be added, such as alternate interactions or choices that lead to a variation on the result.

The use case considers a given persona (a characteristic role) in a given situation and shows how they works on a project/problem and how their process of work is resolved into a solution or solutions. Some activities do not have a single solution — these are often referred to as “Wicked Problems.” With detailed bookkeeping effort, recorded processes can be standardized into use cases that can then be employed directly or modified to fit the context of the activity at hand. In short, they are a lot like design

patterns, which they may contain in hidden or explicit form. Use cases are presented in vignettes that appear throughout the book (like the one at the end of this section).

A peeragogy pattern language

By looking at how patterns combine in real and hypothetical use cases, you can start to identify a *pattern language* that can be used in your projects. We can get a simplified view of these connections with the following diagram. It's important to clarify that everyone doesn't do it the same way. Here, the *Roadmap* is given a central position, but some peer learning projects will forego making a specific, detailed plan; their plan is just to see what develops. You can see here how peeragogy patterns often break down further into individual micro-steps: we'll say more about that shortly.

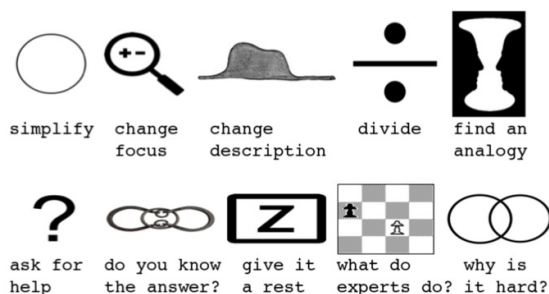


The subsequent main sections of this book — *CONVENE*, *ORGANIZE*, *COOPERATE* and *ASSESS* — represent big clusters of patterns that are likely to come up time and again in various projects. We can think of these as East, South, West, and North in the diagram above. You are of course encouraged to invent your own patterns and to connect them in new ways. Each project has a unique design, and it's own unique way in which things play out in practice. What we've put together here is a starter kit.

Christopher Alexander: These ideas—patterns—are hardly more than glimpses of a much deeper level of structure, and is ultimately within this deeper level of structure, that the origin of life occurs. [2]

Patterns and Problem Solving

Ten potentially useful things to do when you're solving a problem are described by the computer scientist Marvin Minsky in a series of MEMOS written for the One Laptop Per Child project. We can sum them up visually with the following diagram:



We can also see some interesting connections between these intuitive problem solving heuristics and peeragogy patterns listed above. This can help illustrate further connections between the patterns, and some of the ways that groups can apply them to solve real-world problem. To elaborate briefly:

- Simplify things for **Newcomers**. We don't expect a newcomer to enter at full speed.
- Use a **Roadmap** to guide us from one phase to another, while the project's central **Heartbeat** helps us attend to the central focus.
- Announce changes through a **Wrapper** who describes the new status or direction of the project. For the Peeragogy project, that often meant summing up the high points that we saw over a given period of time.
- We divide work up not only horizontally among different **Roles**, but also temporally by using the **Roadmap**. Someone who is moving ahead with the Roadmap is likely to be working at the leading edge.
- When we find an analogy, we are basically **Creating a Guide** for thinking about something. This can be used as a form of "exploration," as we look at how one form of engagement may or may not map onto other forms of engagement.
- When we ask for help, we may avail ourselves of some **Moderation** service that will decide how to deal with our request. One simple way to ask for help is **Polling for Ideas**. Obviously once we start to get help, we're working in a regime of "collaborative effort".
- If you know the answer, then you may be able to reuse it (which is the basic idea described in **Use or Make**).
- It is important to give it a rest so as not to over-exhaust oneself, busting one's own **Carrying Capacity**, or, alternatively, overwhelming the group.
- It seems that one of the things that experts are good at is **Discerning a Pattern**. This allows them to simplify their processing.

- Finally, again, if we know why it is hard, then we may be able to ~~Create a Guide~~ that will help get around, or at least better cope with, the difficulty.

References

1. Alexander, C. , Ishikawa, S. , and Silverstein, M. (1977). *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, and, Construction*, New York: Oxford University Press.
2. Gabriel, Richard P. (1996). *PATTERNS OF SOFTWARE*, New York: Oxford University Press. (Includes a foreward by Christopher Alexander.)

Post Revisions:

- 18 June, 2014 @ 10:48 [Current Revision] by admin
- 18 JUNE, 2014 @ 10:48 by admin
- 14 MARCH, 2014 @ 19:24 by Joe Corneli
- 14 MARCH, 2014 @ 19:23 by Joe Corneli
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