



Source: Kindertrauma.com

# Watership Down

## *Memoirs of a Digital Humanitarian*

Heather Blanchard / @poplifegirl  
[www.iamheatherblanchard.com](http://www.iamheatherblanchard.com)  
American University of Paris

Open World Forum  
October 12, 2012



# Watership Down

- Threat to the warren, warned the elders
- Warnings rebuffed
- Adventured to find new home
- Challenges: ability to grow, power structures, staying true to vision
- Old warren destroyed
- Happy ending



Source: Kindertrauma.com

# Lesson #1

- **People:** We don't have technology challenges, we have people and policy problems



# Lesson #2

- **Money:** Disasters are economic opportunities. It's a business, even if you are a non-profit.



# Lesson #3

- **Competition:** Charities, academics, companies and even volunteer technology communities compete with each other. It is real. It is sad to experience and watch.



Source: Kindertrauma.com

# Lesson #4

- **Zero Independent R&D:** There is zero independent R&D dollars in disaster management today. Every dollar you give to a charity (or taxpayer funding) you want that dollar to go to the person in need.
- This is a mistake. Organizations need to improve and be able to adapt to new tools that will help them be better in the future.
- They need to be able to work on project which may fail and have independent evaluations of technologies.
- Right now organizations are just trying to keep the lights on.





# Lesson #5

- **Ignorance of the crisis management profession.** Just because you can search a #hashtag on Twitter, build a shiny toy or can watch the disaster unfold on TV doesn't mean you know anything about crisis management.
- Ideas without implementation, are just that, ideas.



# Lesson #6

- **Hamster Wheel of Disasters.** Millions of dollars are spent every year to write after action reports which go on a shelf and are not used. There needs to be a change management process that connects observations in after action reporting to the ability to change processes, justify staff and other needs to take the lesson from just observed in a report to actually learned.





# Lesson #7

- **Turtle-ism of crisis management practitioners.** The “stay in your box” approach. The structure and who is in charge are paramount.
- Apathy and fatalism to change what is wrong with the system.
- It’s not my job. “That’s above my pay grade.”
- “I’ve been around, so I know” attitude
- Mistrust of the public, inability to leverage public information to inform operations
- Boys club cliques



# Lesson #8

- **Act like a big dog, if you are a big dog.** Large institutions lack the political will to create a marketplace which meets their needs. Dependence on consultants.
- Solutions which are often used are for the masses not tailored for crisis management.
- Need to tell the story of what really happens and what is needed.



# Lesson #9

- **SWAT teams over crowdsourcing.** The idea that there is an independent crowd working to help disasters is over. During large disasters these people are informally affiliating with communities which now exist.
- Better to have 6 people working on what is specifically needed than 100 working without guidance or connectivity to official response systems.

# Lesson #10



- **You just don't know.** Just because you see what's happening on television and on Twitter, you really don't know what's happening on the ground. You have one side of it.
- If you are a crisis management practitioner and you don't have public information connected to your operational situational awareness—you have a blindspot in your Incident Action Plans.



# HFOSS

- Lack of people and policy that understand HFOSS
- Relationship to technology is vendor based
- Large institutions don't know they can change the marketplace through the procurement process
- Once system won't cure anyone's problems. They have to work with legacy.
- Development has to be consistent. Volunteers are additive not O&M
- Culture Divide



# Shared Services Model

- Mediation point, low cost, shared results
- Independent evaluation of what works and what doesn't
- Software development efforts
- Governance, best practices
- Permanent support, not project based
- Attracts developers & expertise within community
- Works with existing procurement systems
- Marketing, sharing
- Volunteer-based extension drives through partnerships





# Watership Down

## *Memoirs of a Digital Humanitarian*

Heather Blanchard / @poplifegirl  
[www.iamheatherblanchard.com](http://www.iamheatherblanchard.com)  
American University of Paris

Open World Forum  
October 12, 2012