INNOVATIVE INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Tony Quinlan   **Chief Storyteller**   **Narrate**

A crisis is too valuable to waste
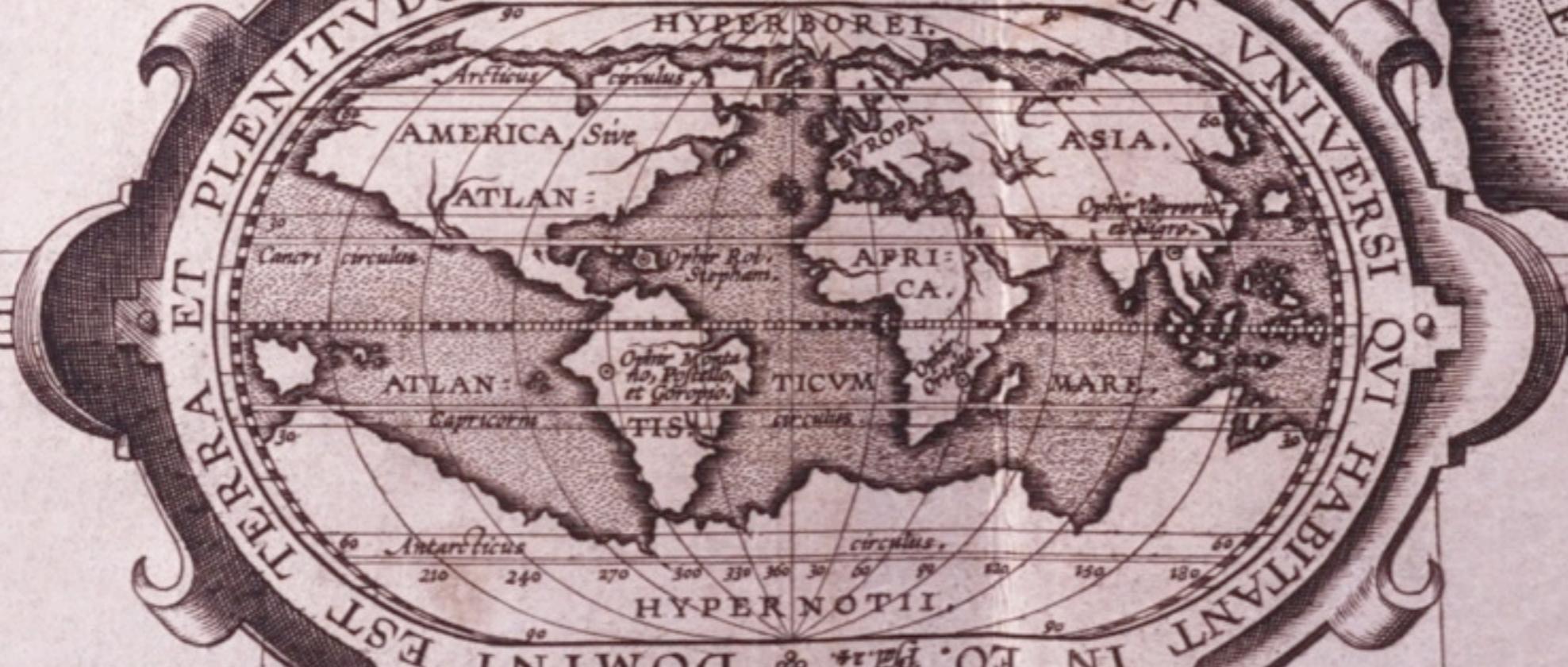
National Speed Limits (mph) - UK				
Vehicle type	Built up areas	Open areas single carriageways	Open areas dual carriageways	Motorways
Cars	30	60	70	70
Cars towing caravans or trailers	30	50	60	60
Buses and Coaches	30	50	60	70
Goods vehicles - under 7.5 tonnes loaded	30	50	60	70
Goods vehicles - over 7.5 tonnes loaded	30	40	50	60
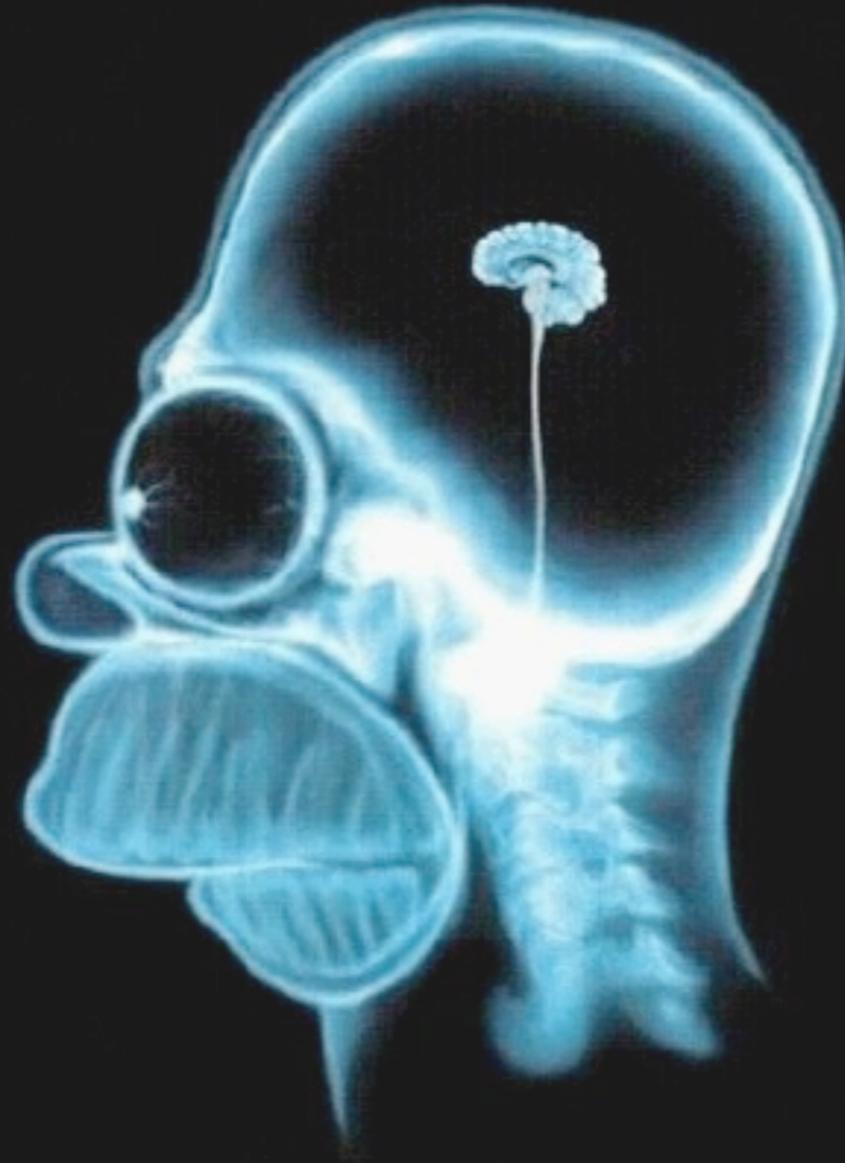
Gary Klein, "Sources of Power"

COMPLEX

COMPLICATED

CHAOS

SIMPLE

CYNEFIN DOMAINS

COMPLEX
Probe

Sense

Respond

COMPLICATED
Sense

Analyse

Respond

CHAOS
Act

Sense

Respond

SIMPLE
Sense

Categorise

Respond

© DAVE SNOWDEN

COMPLEXITY

Cynefin: contextual complexity

COMPLEX
Cause and effect coherent in retrospect do not repeat
Pattern Management
PERSPECTIVE FILTERS
Complex Adaptive Systems
Probe–Sense–Respond

COMPLICATED
Cause and effect separated over time and space
Analytical/Reductionist
SCENARIO PLANNING
Systems Thinking
Sense–Analyse–Respond

CHAOS
No cause and effect relationships perceivable
Stability focused intervention
ENACTMENT TOOLS
Crisis Management
Act–Sense–Respond

SIMPLE
Cause and effect relations repeatable and predictable
Legitimate best practice
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES
Process Re-Engineering
Sense–Categorise–Respond

COMPLEXITY VS COMPLICATED

- **Can you predict with certainty the end result of the process?**

(NB "Hope" does not count...)

THE IMPLICATIONS OF COMPLEXITY

- Small differences at the start can create big differences by the end … so different organisational cultures require different processes

- In retrospect, we can see how, where, when and why things happened … but prediction is impossible

ENGAGING, ASSISTING, INSPIRING

- Not about a guaranteed 12 step process
- There are no magic bullets
- Change is never efficient in the short-term

"Every person's map of the world is as unique as their thumbprint. There are no two people alike. No two people who understand the same sentence the same way... So in dealing with people, you try not to fit them to your concept of what they should be."

Milton Erickson

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS?

BETTER RESULTS ON LOWER BUDGETS

- Where are you on the Cynefin framework?
- No guarantees
  - Probe, sense, respond?
- Small budgets and testing new ideas

SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES
REGARDLESS OF THE SITUATION

- In communications, it's about people - making it a social process, not a business process

- Best practice rarely is

- Communicate to where they already are, don't force them to go to where you communicate

REFLECTIONS ON COMMUNICATION

- **Abstractions do not work as communication**
- **It's about what you tolerate, as well as what you will not**
  - **But even more about what you extol**
- **A decision is not a communication**
- **Illuminate the context**
  - **Speak about details, not broad brushstrokes**

BEING UNDERSTOOD

- Mind your language

  – Don't educate them about your language, use their metaphors and phrases where possible

- Assume as little as possible

DIVERSITY POLICY

- Engagement is not everyone thinking the same thoughts or the same way - it is everyone walking in the same direction

- Dissent is valuable
  - Where is it allowed?
  - How is it valued?
  - How do you communicate it?

PREPARE IN THE GOOD TIMES

- Get joined up - networks are crucial
- So is being in the know
- Room for dissent and debate
  - Boundaries and etiquette
  - Not discipline and stifling rules

GET ONSIDE FIRST

- **Convince the communicators and the campaign designers first**

- **Support the communications deliverers**
  - Build their confidence
  - Difficult messages can be scary to deliver

CHANGING THE LANDSCAPE

- Beliefs are not beaten by facts
- Changing myths can take a long time
  - Demonstrate real change
  - You need radically-different behaviour
- Some tools may be out of your reach

INTERNAL RESPONSES

NARRATIVE AND STORIES

- Carry context, knowledge and meaning
- Sharing stories is an inherently human, sense-making, knowledge-expanding activity

USING NARRATIVE IN COMMUNICATIONS

- Strategy - the narrative of your organisation
- Branding - the stories to attract outsiders
- Content - the material for your comms vehicles
- Vision - understanding and driving the way forward
- Knowledge - not losing the history and knowledge with redundancy packages
- Leaders - giving them examples to shift their focus and to shift other peoples' focus
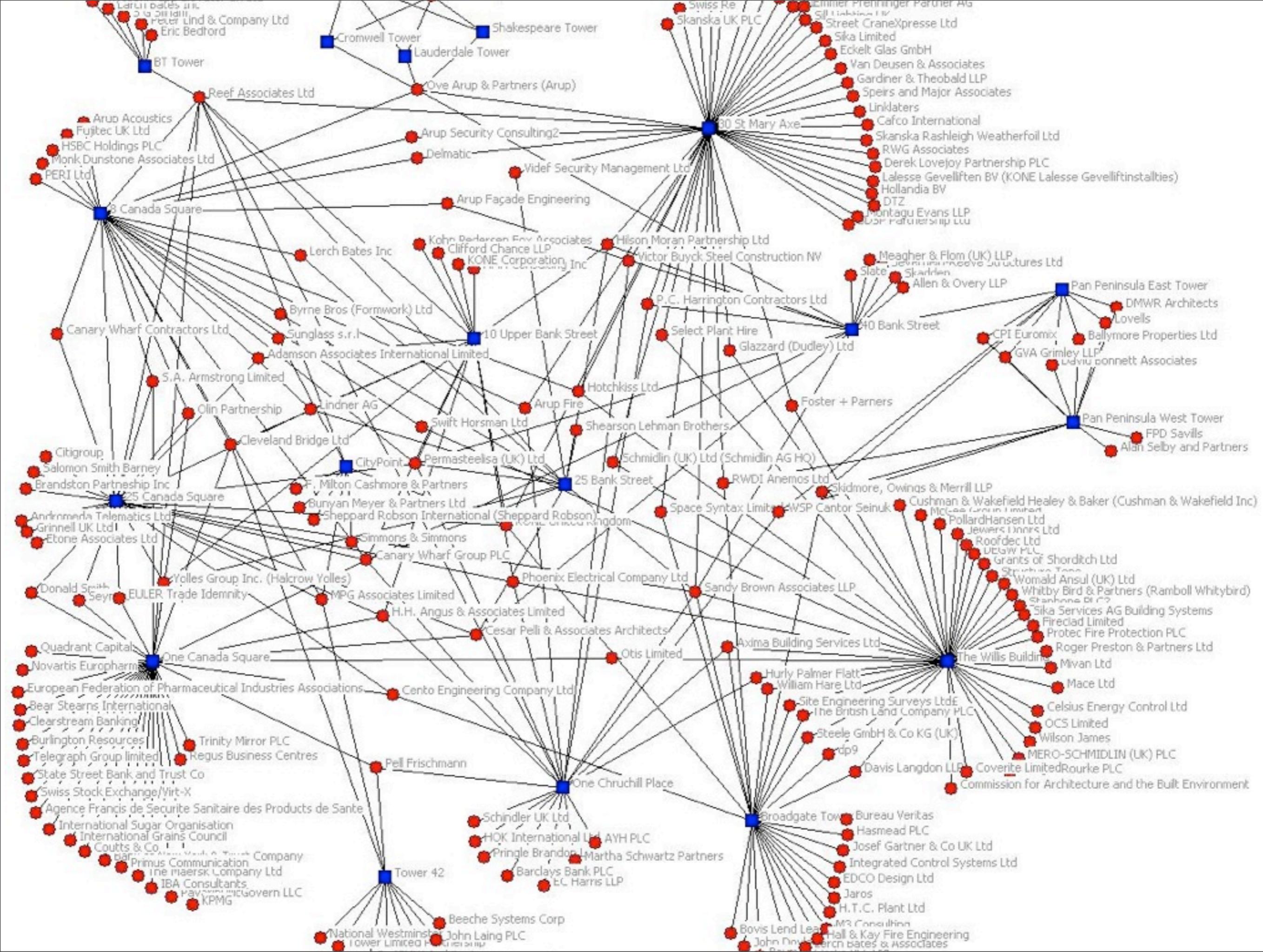
SOCIAL NETWORKS

- Not about the tipping person, the hub
- All about the environment
  - Are they aware of the need for change?
  - Are they primed for change?
- Better to prepare the ground, rather than hunt the key person

CHANGE REQUIRES NEW BEHAVIOUR AND DECISIONS

- Communication about change must represent a break from the past

- Not just new aspirations, but visible examples of poor behaviour no longer tolerated

- Answer the question: **"What do you want me to do differently tomorrow?"**
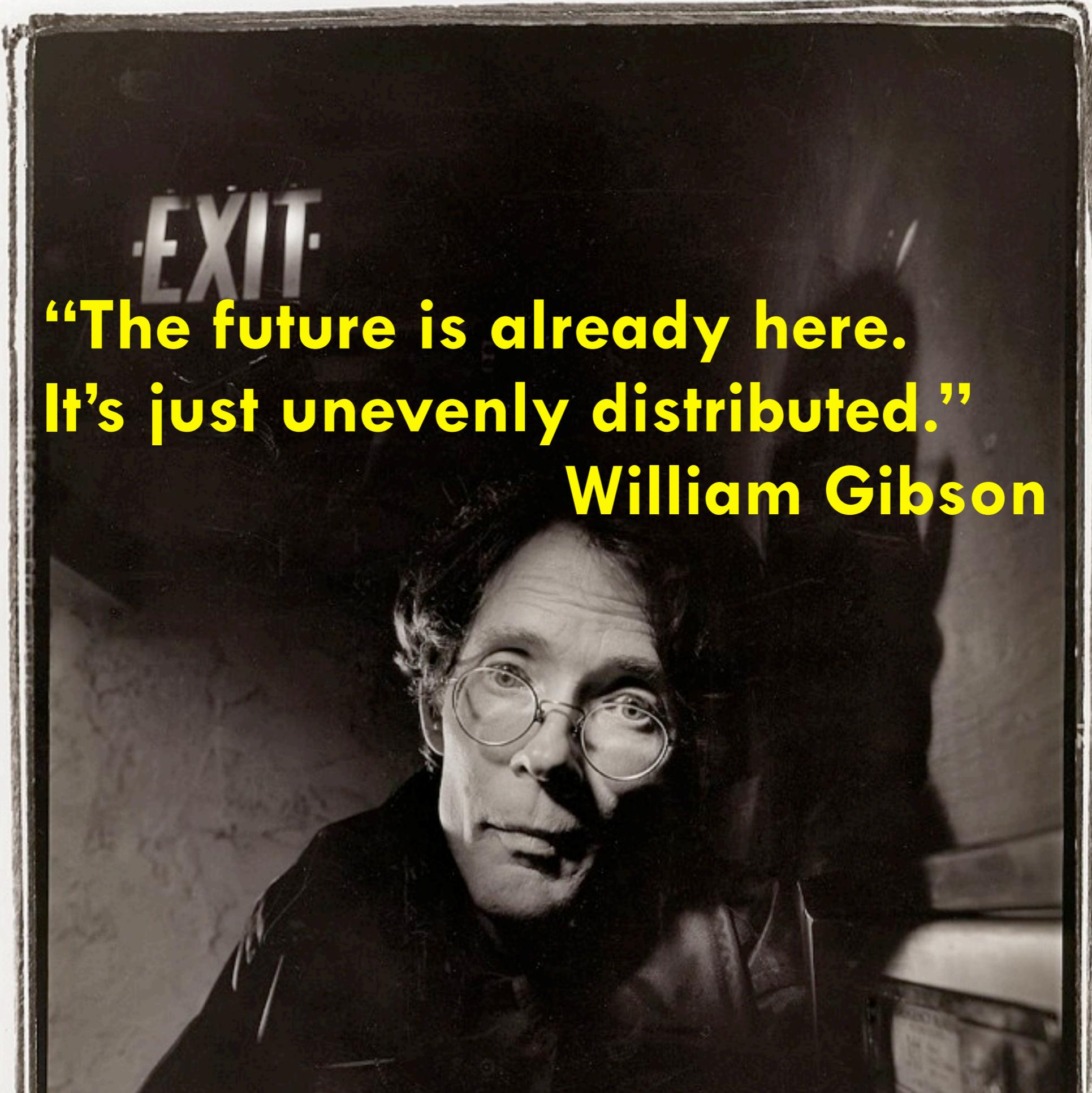
"The future is already here. It's just unevenly distributed."
William Gibson

ANECDOTE CIRCLES

- **Sharing experiences**
  - Great for gathering material for comms
- **Value for participants**
- **Share with KM* and OD** colleagues**
  - Especially share the budget!

*Knowledge Management
**Organisational Development

UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEES AND CULTURE

- Employee surveys usually the tool of choice

- Who uses them?

- Why do you use them?

- What do they tell you?

EMPLOYEE RESEARCH

- Lack of context reduces usefulness
- Free comments never are – guided by survey
- Preconceptions and narratives overwhelm data and facts

THE KEY QUESTION

- **What do you do in response to the results...**
  - ...if they're positive?
  - ...if they're negative?

WE LOOK FOR MORE MEANING AND SENSE

- We talk with our contacts, listen to opinion-formers

- We tap into the informal hierarchy

- To gather context, examples, details that are not in the survey results

SURVEYS

- Why do we do it?
  - Numbers - to justify ourselves
- Answering at random
- Questions can be leading
  - Gaming the survey
  - "Free" comments aren't

HOW MANY TIMES DO THE PLAYERS IN WHITE PASS THE BALL?

- 1-5?
- 6-8?
- 9-11?
- 12-14?
- 15-18?
- 19+?

BASKETBALL VIDEO

SURVEYS

- Why do we do it?
  - Numbers - to justify ourselves
- Answering at random
- Questions can be leading
  - Gaming the survey
  - "Free" comments aren't

- Meaning-less
- Only show what we're looking for

PFIZER CASE STUDY

- A serious problem - under-performing teams
- No clear reason why, but some suspicions
- A risk of not seeing the gorilla

PFIZER CASE STUDY

- 11 cities, 6 languages, 100 people
- 1700 perspectives on their own stories
- Pattern analysis - seeing what comes out, not interpreting the stories

WHAT WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF THE SALES CALL?
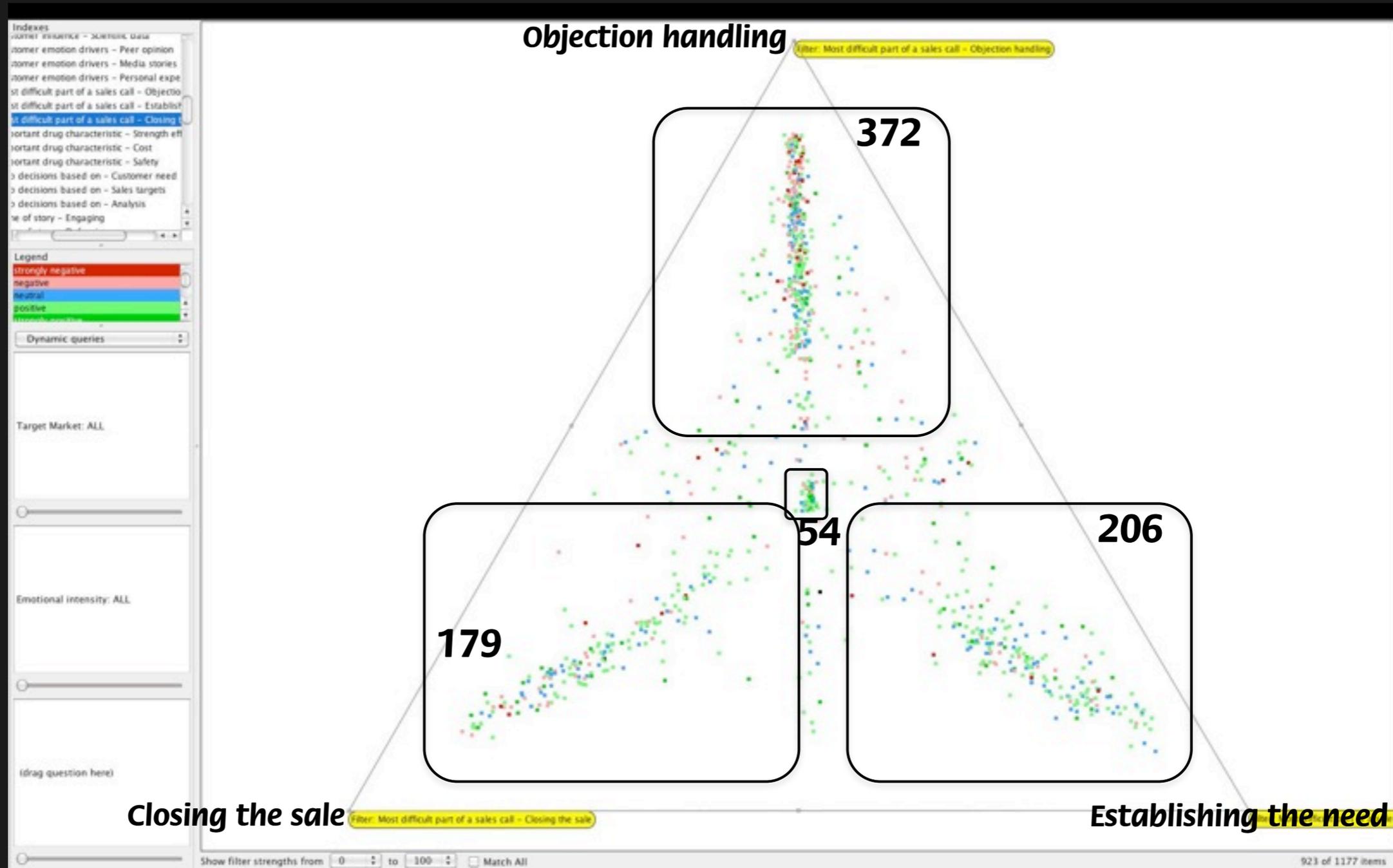
WHAT WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTIC OF THE DRUG IN THE STORY?
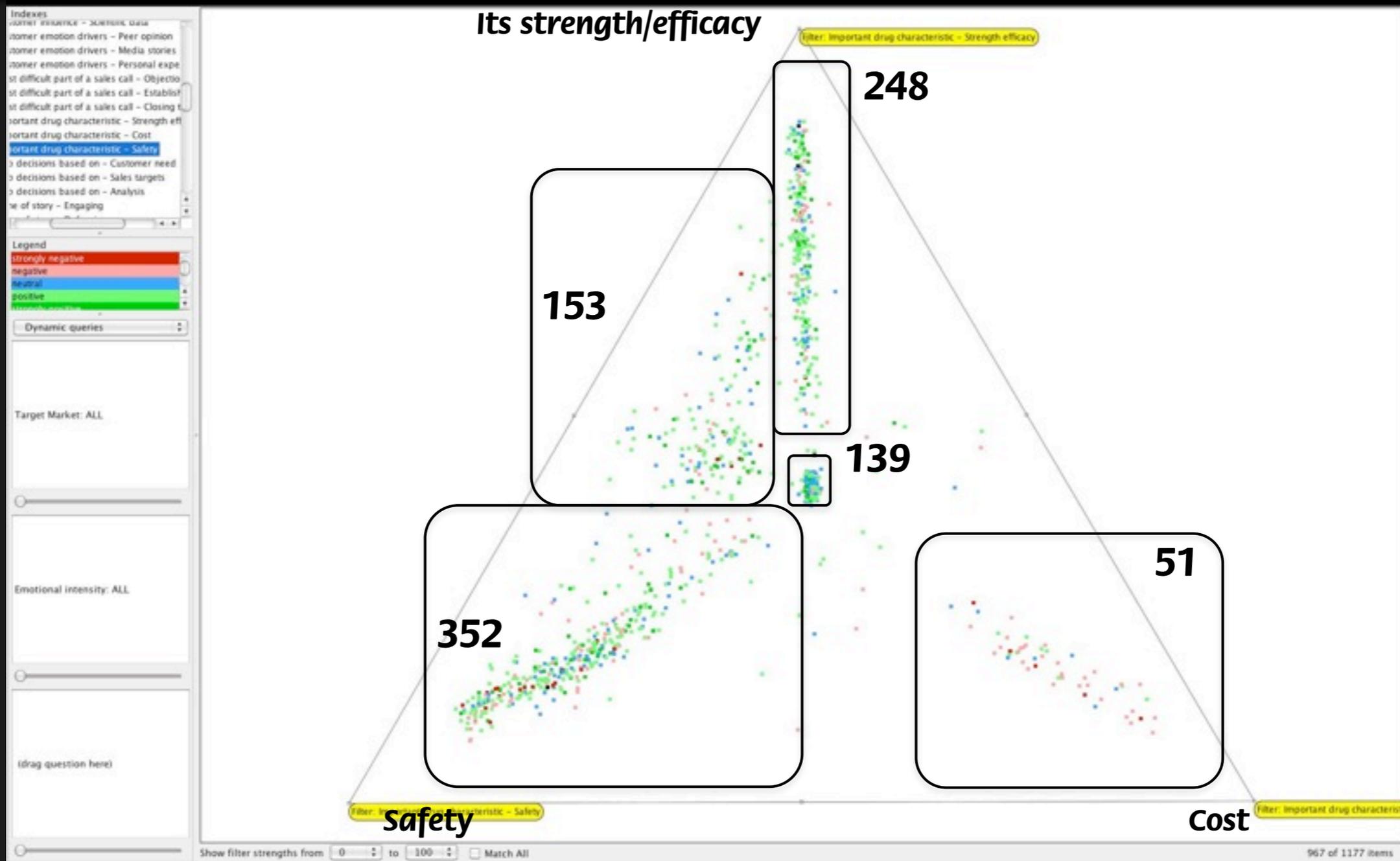
THE EVENTS IN THIS STORY STEM FROM...

An optimistic attitude

**A pessimistic attitude**

**No targeting of prospects**

Too restrictive targeting

A rational approach

An emotional approach
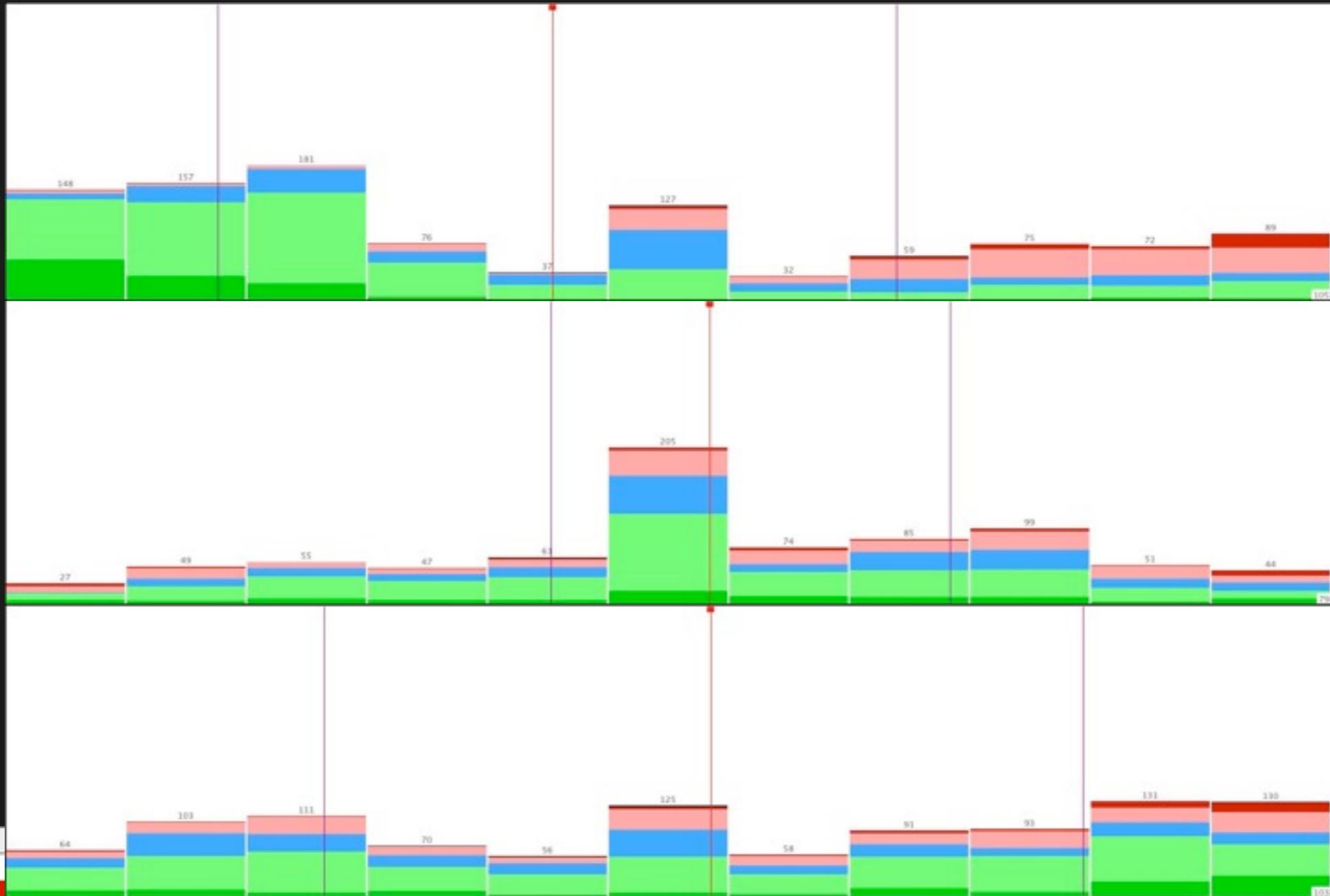
Legend
Emotional intensity
strongly negative
negative
neutral
positive
strongly positive
Multiple answers
No answer

Staff patronise children

Too much to see and its overwhelming

Rushed from place to place missed things

Staff are too child like & pathetic

...ough to keep ...nterested

...h time in one place

The museum stinks
I was embarrassed to be there
We never got to do anything
Why can't I have a go?
We were treated l...

When were in the insect house I wanted to use the models. Mr Smith kept telling us about them but didn't let us touch them until the end and there wasn't any time. He can play with them anytime and I missed my chance because of him, its not fair.

EXTERNAL AUDIENCES TOO

- **Pakistan stories**
  - Colonial history means people are hostile to the UK?
- **Mexico stories**
  - Desire for change, so social activism tools are needed?

WHAT NEXT?

PILOT OFFICER

RUNNING PILOTS

- Forgiveness or permission?
- Attention and time, not €budget
- Use and encourage the enthusiasts
- Pilots are experiments, failure is acceptable as long as there is learning
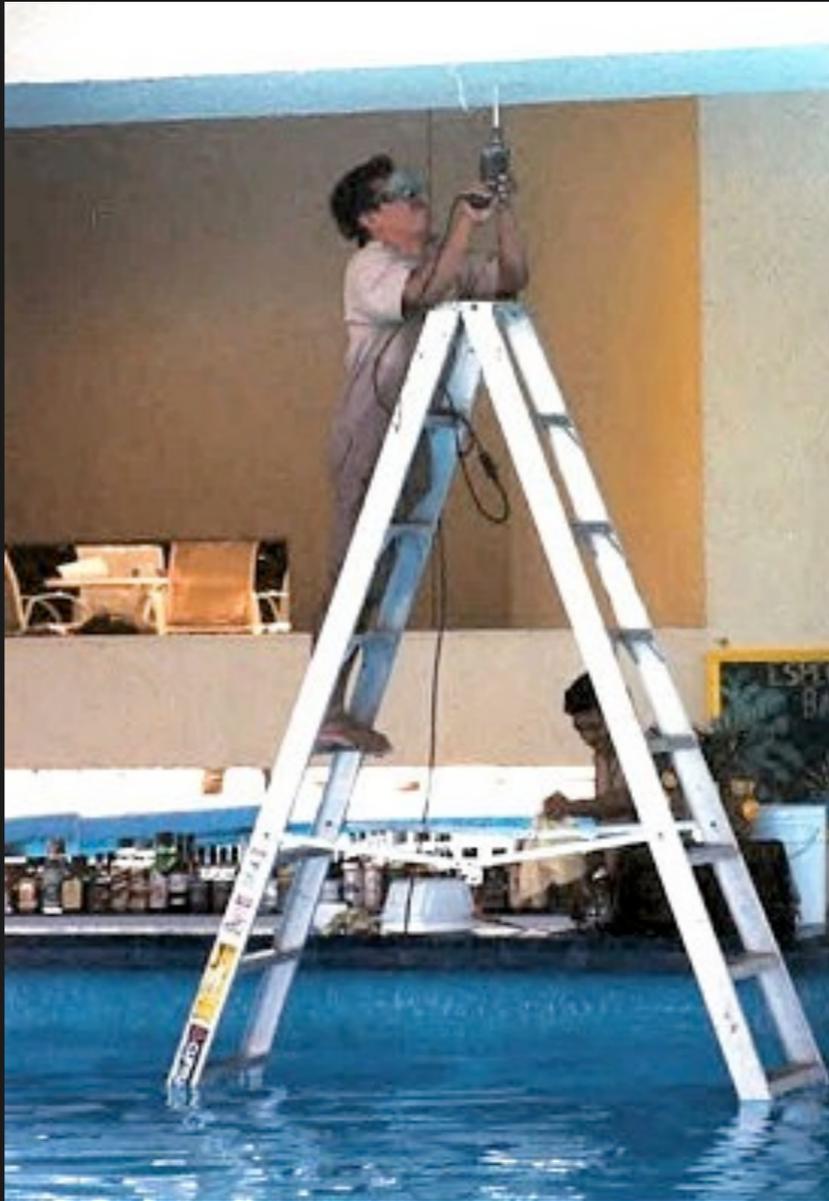
BACK YOURSELF

LOOK AROUND

FAIL OFTEN
(BUT FAIL SAFE)

BE BRAVE

Tony Quinlan   **Chief Storyteller**   **Narrate**
tony@narrate.co.uk   *www.thenarrateblog.com*