

A glowing lightbulb is the central focus of the image, set against a warm, golden-orange background. The lightbulb is illuminated from within, creating a bright glow that fades into the background. The base of the lightbulb is visible at the bottom, and the overall composition is centered and balanced.

It's Like This...

10 Analogies to Explain Technology and How to Use Them

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A day in the life of a user...

- Helpdesk: How may we help you?
- User: I can't get my computer to show me my documents.
- Are you receiving any error codes or messages?"
- Something that said to click on OK, so I did.
- The issue could be any one of a number of things. If you're using the thin client a Java heap exception could be the cause, or an ActiveX control may not be installed. What version of Java are you running so I can check to see if you are at the right level of maintenance?
- 'click'

What they really think...

- Helpdesk: Why can't these stupid users get it?! This is the third time we've had to deal with them, and each time it's the same. If they'd get the information we need we could get them going. Like their grumpiness is going to get their computer fixed!!
- User: Why don't these geeks speak English?! It's always Java this, or IP that – I just want my computer fixed! All they do is ask me a bunch of meaningless questions and then tell me to reboot to waste my time.

The Knowledge Worker Paradox

- The more technical the information, the more urgent the need for the users to understand it. The more urgent the need for the users to understand it, the more abstract and technical the description is.

Examples of “the why”...

- Budget support
 - Why should we continue to fund this?
 - What happens if we stop funding it?
- Decision support
 - Decision-makers see reported results, technicians see risks
 - Example: A new software package is sought out for highly-sensitive information. Sales reports incredibly fast speeds for transmission, but utilizes a “best-effort” protocol (UDP, for example) instead of one that guarantees delivery of data. How do you communicate the potential hazards in a way that can be understood clearly?

Most importantly...

- Team support
 - We are all in this together, and need to have mutual understanding/respect
 - Users who understand “the how” will be able to more fully participate in troubleshooting and other activities to increase efficiencies
 - The primary way we have of engendering campus-wide support of the IT function is via a general understanding of what we do, why we do it and how it is important.

The Analogy

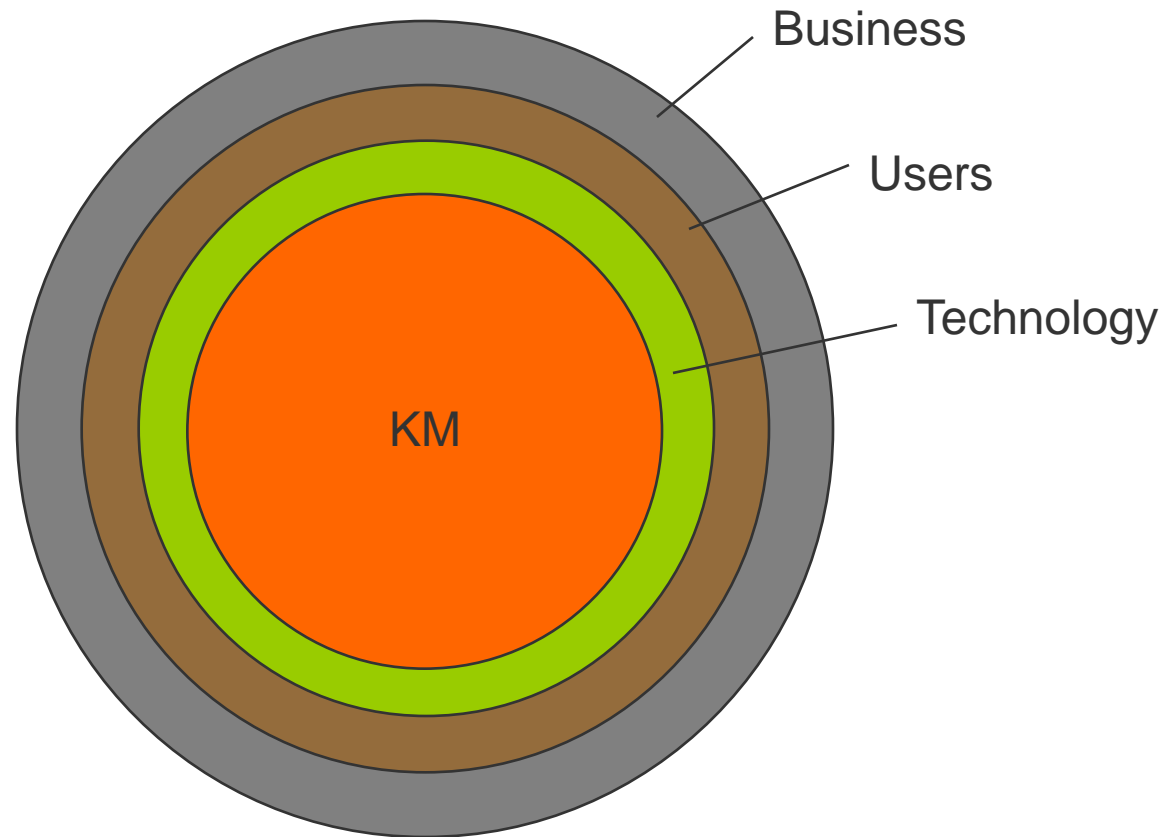
- What is an analogy?
 - A commonly-known item or action configured to represent something less well-known
 - A way to allow everyone to be comfortable with their knowledge of a concept or technology, in terms they are familiar with
 - A way of representing with things we can see the things we cannot

The Analogy, cont.

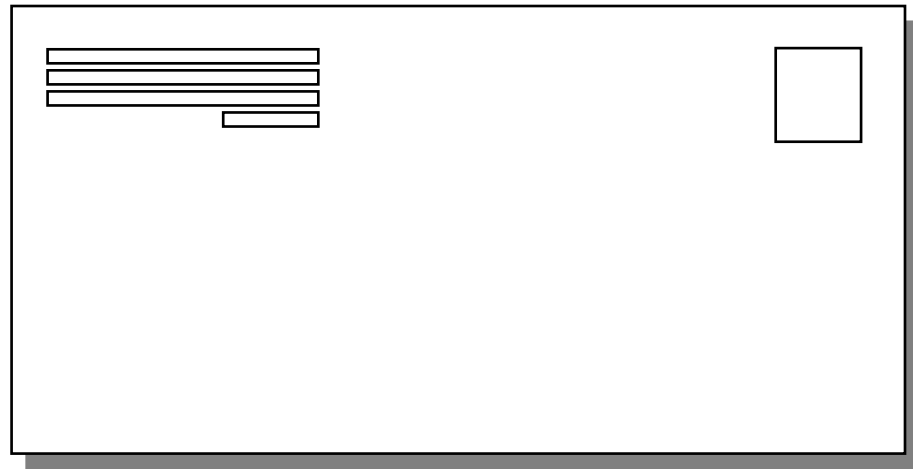
- What is an analogy NOT?
 - Always 100% accurate
 - Microscopic in scope
- Examples
 - Maps
 - Water is wet, yet the paper is dry
 - A regular map shows roads, but we don't make a map that shows only I-70
 - Photographs
 - Can't tell us how many fingers we're holding behind our backs
 - We don't carry pictures of our kids' noses

Analogy 1: Cyber-geology

The Map

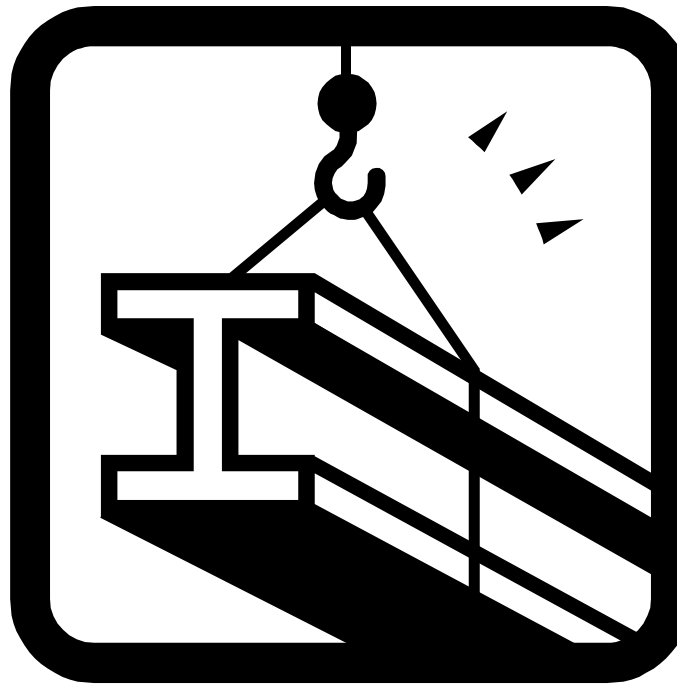


Analogy 2: IP Addressing Historical Reference



Analogy 3: Mainframe/ distributed computing

The Fable



Analogy 4: Viruses and spyware Food



Analogy 5: Data management The Dilemma



Analogy 6: The mysterious 7-layer model A Process

Application	Get a pizza
Presentation	English
Session	Phone call
Transport	Electricity
Network	Customer to pizza guy & back
Data Link	Speaking
Physical	Phone lines

Analogy 7: Wireless technology An Appliance



Analogy 8: Web-based apps Kids

ActiveX control not installed	Don't know how to do it!
Pop-ups blocked	I'm not going to do it!

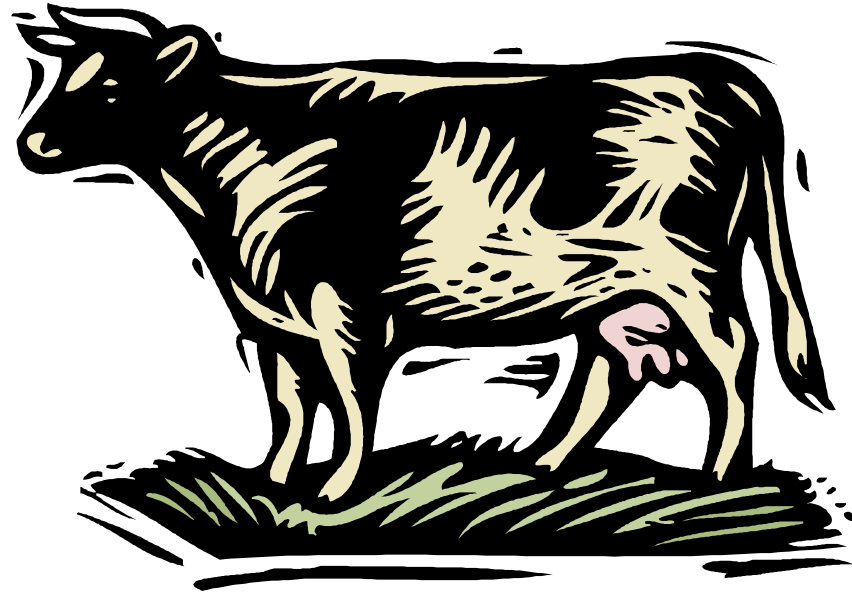
Analogy 9: Hipersockets Explain Technology with Technology

Sometimes the best way to explain one technology is with the use of another technology:

“A good model to use to understand hipersockets is the VPN. We initiate a connection that is secure, use it for as long as we need to – but no longer – then end it when we are done.”

This analogy originally heard during a presentation by Karl Freund, IBM's V.P. of the z Series

Analogy 10: File Size Wow Factor



Tying it all together

Perception is reality – if the clients perceive us as a center of understanding and assistance, they will view our efforts in a positive light. If they view us as obtrusive and ‘lords’ of knowledge, they will not deal with us in a way that is mutually beneficial. The more our users understand, the less we are called on to fix the things that happened when they didn’t understand.

If we know, but do not teach, we have learned nothing in the course of gaining our knowledge.

-Can you imagine what I would do if I could do all I can?

-Sun Tzu