

development team, then about the development of whether or not the product that was developed would succeed in the marketplace. To achieve mutual understanding, the groups had to go beyond the formal meeting processes into a more personal level of dialogue to create opportunities to discover where they agreed and disagreed, and how their information sets differed in content. They had to become a temporary cultural island to become an effective working group.

The question of "what is information" is of especial interest now as encyclopedias are being replaced by network-based sources such as Wikipedia. Pure scientific criteria for truth are being replaced by a process much more akin to how DEC found truth—through proposal, challenge, debate, and ultimately resolution through survival.

Summary and Conclusions

One of the most important categories of culture is the assumption made about how reality, truth, and information are defined. Reality can exist at the physical, group, and individual levels, and the test for what is real will differ according to the level—overt tests, social consensus, or individual experience. Occupations and macrocultures differ in the degree to which they rely on moralistic traditional criteria for truth as contrasted at the other extreme with pragmatic scientific criteria. Groups develop assumptions about information that determine when they feel they have enough information to make a decision, and those assumptions reflect deeper assumptions about the ultimate source of truth. What is a fact, what is information, and what is truth—each depends not only on shared knowledge of formal language but also on context and consensus.