

# Lobstermen II

In Lobstermen II, the focus is on the recent purchase and implementation of a GPS (Global Positioning System). This technology makes it possible for the lobstermen to find and keep track of their traps. The new technology provides a set of unanticipated benefits.

The unanticipated benefits are the technology creates a form of organizational memory and learning. It permits new forms of knowledge transfer.

## Suggested Uses

Organizational Learning, Knowledge Transfer, Memory, and New Technology

The video can be used alone or with Lobstermen I. We have a preference to use it in combination with Lobstermen I. One basic theme in Lobstermen I is knowledge sharing between the father (George) and son (Carl). The father has lots of strategic knowledge that is tacit in nature. This means that it is very difficult for the father to articulate his know-how. He would like to, but can't, and the son wants to learn.

## Keywords

"Allows me to cheat"

## I. Learning

Use the video to illustrate the following:

1. What does learning mean in this context? Why is it difficult for Carl to learn what George knows about lobstering? What are the tacit knowledge and the explicit knowledge in this situation?

Explicit knowledge refers to knowledge a person possesses and can explain to others. Tacit knowledge refers to knowledge people have, but may not be aware of, and cannot explain to people. Some examples:

My grandmother was able to create excellent pastries, but could not explain to my mother how to create these pastries (tacit).

A designer explains to a new employee how to use a new computer system (explicit).

A designer can NOT explain to a new employee how he or she conceives of new products (tacit).

2. How does the dilemma of learning or transferring knowledge in lobstering compare with learning within organizations or in other work roles?

3. What are the differences between individual learning and organizational learning?

4. How does the GPS serve as a memory system?

5. What are other memory systems in organizations-social and technological?

6. Why are they critical to organizational functioning?

## **II. Strategy**

### *Scenario 1*

1. Show the second half of Lobstermen I, which begins with the introduction of Carl Johnson.

2. Use this to discuss questions 1, 2, and 3.

3. Show Lobstermen II. Either run the whole video-it is short, or stop the video after they discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the GPS. Then ask students:

- How a GPS system might facilitate knowledge transfer.
- How a GPS system might serve as a memory system.

Then show the rest of the video and work through the remaining questions.

### *Scenario 2 (Without Lobstermen I).*

Discuss the basic concept of knowledge sharing, focus on the issue of tacit and explicit knowledge, get examples from class. Explore why this distinction (tacit explicit) is important.

Set up Lobstermen II. Discuss what a GPS system is. Then follow Scenario 1, # 3.

In Lobstermen II, the GPS provides some unexpected benefits. It stores knowledge of where the lobster traps were placed and their yields over a period of time. This information is downloaded by Carl into his home computer and permits analysis, which will detect his father's strategic knowledge.

If one only wanted to use Lobstermen II, then you have to set up the discussion about knowledge sharing and tacit and explicit knowledge before you use the video. One could do this by:

- Providing a definition of tacit and explicit knowledge (see next section).
- Asking students to give some examples.
- Asking the students why some people think that tacit knowledge is critical to an organizations' complete advantage. How is tacit knowledge a complete advantage? What effect can turning have on tacit knowledge?