

# TAXONOMY

## What is it Good For?

A taxonomy is a strategic arrangement of concepts intended to create a specific kind of understanding.

Effective taxonomies

- classify
- are semantic
- map knowledge

### Lists

Classify things together & make their relationships obvious.

- synonym rings
- simple hierarchies
- indexes
- chronologies

### Trees

Assign categories & relationships to concepts.

- hierarchies
- polyhierarchies
- specify inclusion and inheritance

### Matrices

Plot two to three dimensions across a grid.

- categorize and compare content systematically
- high predictability

### Facets

Combine multiple single-dimension taxonomies.

- post-coordinated organization schemes
- low information scent
- low predictability

### Maps

Specify free form relationships between concepts.

- mind maps
- concept maps
- process maps
- low predictability

### Structure & Organize

Well organized categories and consistent labels can make operational and content resources predictable and reliable.

### Establish Commonality

Taxonomies can counterbalance the fragmentation that comes from localized private idioms and processes.

### Span Boundaries

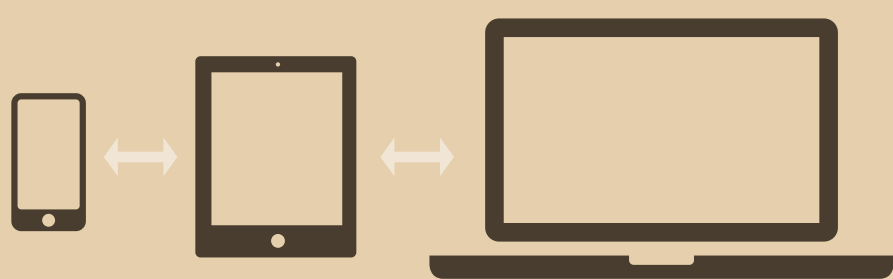
Taxonomies can act as boundary objects across heterogeneous communities where common ground is not possible.

### Make Sense & Discover Opportunity

Taxonomies can work to provide salience to particular dimensions and help to cancel out noise and confusion.

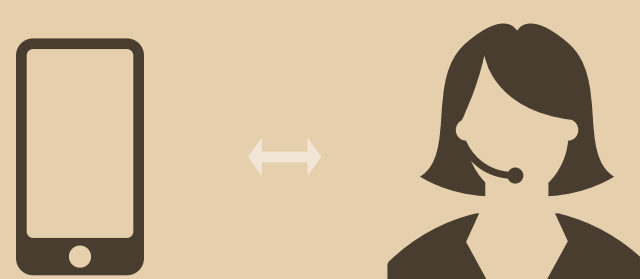
### Articulation

To a range of devices & information ecosystems.



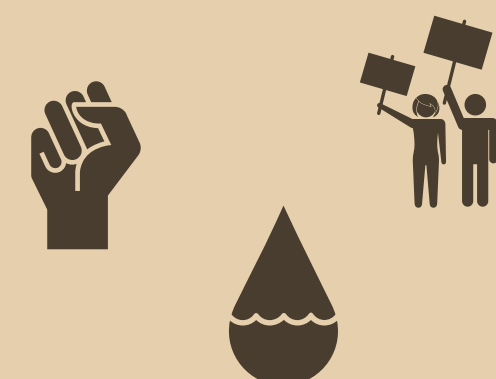
### Coordination

Across a variety of contexts & use cases.



### Exploration

Of new opportunities for innovation & unforeseen conditions of risk.



#### Source Texts:

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*The Accidental Taxonomist.* Heather Hedden. Information Today, 2010.  
*Hats.* Design Quarterly No. 145. Richard Saul Wurman. MIT Press, 1989.

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