

***Taxonomies – How can they improve enterprise search?*** (enterprise content behind the firewall needs better search) **Heather Hedden, [Hedden Information Management](#) with Larry Hawes, [Gilbane Group](#) (moderating)**

Case: To consider taxonomy design to facilitate navigation for finding information and content. The idea was to establish a controlling vocabulary for each concept for a particular domain to improve precision of search, & to help guided search or navigation.

Ideas and Issues Discussed:

- Would the taxonomy and user interface: hierarchical or faceted?
- This is a large management consulting firm with many presentations that need to be organized, so facets (geography, vertical industries, topical) might be most appropriate
- Taxonomies often stagnate or grow organically rather than systematically. So, for the proposed facets, how can they be better maintained? Industries and geographies are easy and obvious, but topical taxonomies get overgrown, or overly verbose. How should we cultivate them? Keep in mind that facets can be conditionally revealed depending on the search context. (e.g. in an e-commerce site for various products facets for clothing and shoes would have different ranges, and for household goods would be totally dependent on the type of product)
- Topics can get seven levels deep - how many are really practical before the user won't bother to navigate. Or do we need more facets?
- The design of the interface, the search engine, and the ability to expose the taxonomy in the interface all influence the nature of the content displays. Taxonomy has to reflect context with the audience in mind. The tools can dictate design. (e. g. Do we have access to personalization?) How should taxonomies be exposed and to what audience?
- Taxonomy design is an iterative process; there can be a relationship to folksonomy, which might be a feed for new terms.
- Taxonomies are not only for the use of people searching but also the indexers of content (applied to metadata) and consideration must be given to the control aspects (for indexers) and users (findability)
- Term format standards must be determined with the audience in mind. Multi-word terms can help disambiguate concepts but overly lengthy term phrases can be awkward. Ideal term length is usually three words or less (pre-coordinating); shorter terms (single words) require post-coordinating words at the time of search. (e.g. pre-coordinated concepts might be *Housing (Dwelling)* to disambiguate *Housing (Casing)*)