Franchising TV shows

In China, up to a few years ago, there were only a very small number of TV channels and most were run by the state broadcaster. Today over 3,000 different channels are available to the Chinese viewer, the majority being independent stations. Each new channel is faced with the challenge of finding exciting content to draw in an audience. Originally many of the channels decided that the way to succeed was to blatantly copy the most successful Western shows without any acknowledgement, some of these pirated clones were successful. More recently many channels have decided to actually license show formats from their creators in the West. For example the show "The Voice of China" is China's version of "The Voice", a show with more than 50 versions based in different countries all over the planet. The advantage of paying to officially become part of the franchise is that the producers get a "playbook" that explains the tricks and techniques employed to give a coherence to the show, they don't just see the final result, they get insight into how it is achieved. Now, of course, the show has to be adjusted to meet local standards, the censors in China, for example, have cultural norms they have to enforce. The playbook explains what can be changed and what must remain to give the best chance of success.

The people behind "The Voice" have had a lot of experience in matching their show to a wide variety of different cultures. One would have to guess that over the course of implementing the show in all those distinct environments a wide range of mistakes have been made. Surely, each lesson learnt is added to the growing collection so that new (and old) versions of the show don't have to go through the same pain. In many senses this assortment of lessons learnt, techniques for running the show and advice for how to provoke different responses in the audience **is** the thing that generates value. It is hard to create such a "body of knowledge", but once you have it (and once you've proved that it works by running the show in a few countries) then it becomes a very valuable piece of property. The goal here is to be comprehensive, to ensure that every lesson once painfully learnt is

documented to ensure it need never be repeated. In these circumstances brevity is not just a lower priority it is positively dangerous. A succinct description increases the chance of misunderstanding. The wide range of potential consumers means that every effort must be expended to clarify all the nuances.

Oil companies have the same type of issue when they describe their data governance. The different "cultures" of geoscientists, data managers, IT staff and executives all have to agree on definitions. Words and phrases like "metadata", "data owner", "master data" and even "well" that have different meanings depending on someone's background have to be either completely explained or carefully avoided. While there may be some benefit to creating an easy to understand version, to introduce staff to the ideas, this can only ever be a summary. A good "body of knowledge" should focus on being comprehensive rather than succinct.