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AN ACTION RESEARCH JOURNAL on ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

I C A THE INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS: INDIA

IMAGE

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The Institute of Cultural Affairs: India is a private, not-for-profit organisation registered under the Societies Act of 1860. Its services are designed to catalyse participation in improving the quality of life by serving the need for self-development in organisations, agencies, communities and corporations. It is affiliated with ICA offices in 28 nations.

The Corporate Services Division is responsible for designing and facilitating programmes that promote the human factor in the private and public sectors. It utilises methods and techniques developed by the ICA: India for engendering creativity and participation around issues that are critical to the success and advancement of the institutions' respective missions.

The Action Research Journal, produced by the Corporate Services Division, is intended to communicate the designs and formats that have proven useful in its service. The Journal will draw on a variety of sources including other ICA world-wide offices to provide a spectrum of practical tools and constructs that facilitate organisational transformation. We welcome comments and articles from our readership.

ISSUE FOUR OCTOBER 1988

"Creativity and Innovation"

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CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

"The human mind is the last great unexplored frontier, the last unexploited resource in business. And the potential gains we might realise from understanding it and exploiting its potential could outdistance all that we have accomplished so far.

Several hundred years of progress in the Western business world have brought us to the realisation that we can organise, plan and manage human and capital resources fairly efficiently. We have learned how to orchestrate the factors of marketing, production and delivery of profitability and growth.

What we haven't learned is how to take advantage of what goes on between the ears of the average worker.

We have always known, at least semiconsciously, that most working people could contribute immeasurably more to their organisation than they are ever invited to contribute. Largely because of our unexamined assumptions that underlie many of our management practices, very few organisations ever really extend the invitation. And yet the need and the opportunity have never been greater.

Tomorrow's corporation must adapt. It must move with the times, respond to a changing environment and evolve to stay in touch with the factors that can assure its survival and progress. It is becoming more and more true in more and more industries that the ability to adapt is fundamental to survival, to say nothing of success and growth.

We are now at a watershed in management practice. We have arrived at the point of diminishing returns in the impact of "scientific management". The Frederick Taylor analytical approach of the early 20th century and the Harvard Business School philosophy of rational management which it spawned have worked very well indeed. But the time is fast approaching when we shall need a new paradigm for human organisations that do work. We are going to need some new tricks if we are to keep our organisations healthy, successful and competitive." preface to *The Creative Corporation* by Karl Albrecht with Steven Albrecht

This issue of IMAGE explores some of the latest work on applied creativity for organisations. There is a constant stream of books and articles in the field of creativity and innovation, some immediately practical and others exploring the frontiers of human potential. Every organisation must begin to master both the understanding of what enables its people to be creative and the techniques that channel that creativity into improving performance.

We have attempted to include a contextual framework for innovation as well as methods we have found effective for increasing creative participation. It is important to realise that the proper environment is foundational to creative thinking. The reader is directed to a previous issue of IMAGE on Organisation Alignment to understand how this environment functions and how it can be developed.

Included are excerpts and commentary on Roger Von Oech's book A Whack On The Side of the Head which provides delightful insight on releasing Ten Mental Locks which can "lock up" our creativity.

Tom Peter's Thriving on Chaos is filled with both provocative ideas and practical guidelines for business organisations functioning in today's chaotic and unpredictable times. We are including a summary of his chapter on **Pursuing Fast Paced Innovation.**

Of the many methods the ICA has developed, none has been more effective than **The Basic Workshop Method.** We are including a description of this tried and tested process for generating ideas while getting commitment for implementation.

One of the more helpful books on Organisational Transformation is Transforming Leadership, edited by Dr. John Adams. Included is an excerpt of an article called **"The Leader as Creator"** by Robert Fritz who is best known for his visualisation method called DMA. Another book is Karl Albrecht's The Creative Corporation from which we are reproducing one edited chapter on **The Process of Creativity.**

Two additional approaches to releasing creativity are included in a summary form. One is a more introspective process called **Active Imagination** from the book Inner Work by Robert Johnson and the other is Edward de Bono's **Six Hats Discussion Method.** We have found both techniques to enhance creativity.

These books and others we are recommending to be part of every organisations executive library have been gathered at the ICA office for reading and are available for members to borrow. We hope you will enjoy this issue and find it helpful in your search for increased creativity and innovation.

TEN MENTAL LOCKS

All of us were born creative. Especially watch a three-year-old operate, how easily he imitates, how quickly he learns a new language, how much he learns from those him around him. His favorite question is "Why?" He wants to know everything. Finally you send him off, "You ask too many questions, go play!

The lucky three-year old has someone to whom he can go who has many of the answers and will take time to answer and ideally lead him into a discovery process through which the child begins to find his own answers. The best schools and teachers encourage creativity, looking for the why questions and using them to teach through channels already opened by the youngster's inquisitiveness.

In most of our schools, no matter where in the world, we set about methodically to educate the creativity and playfulness associated with it out of a child's being. One way we do it is to teach him there is only One Right Answer says Roger Von Oech in his book on creativity, "Whack on the Side of the Head". He suggests our belief systems and attitudes lock our thinking into the status quo and keep us thinking "more of the same". Von Oech pokes healthy fun at the ways we allow ourselves to remain bound to that which prevents our natural creativity. He suggests approaches and techniques to break these mental locks.

ML-I ONLY ONE RIGHT ANSWER

So when we get it, what do we do; we stop looking for a second or third or even a fourth right answer, and there go new product/service opportunities. How many exams and tests have we taken in our academic lifetimes, nearly all of which require what? Right, only one right answer.

On way to break out of this mental lock is simply to ask yourselves and others, "what are other ways we could do this"? Ask open-ended questions; questions which require an answer other than Yes or No, which make us think, which opens consideration to any answer which comes to mind. To get useful answers, the context and framing of the question is critical. If you want a creative answer from me, you need to indicate the importance of considering new ways of thinking and doing and indicate you are willing to act on my creativity. One way you do this is by the way you frame the question. A ridiculous illustration of how the question shapes the answer:

Many years ago an East European village was struck by a plague which put those infected into a coma from which most did not recover. Somehow it was discovered that one of the victims who had been buried was actually only in a coma from which he recovered consciousness. The village held a meeting to decide its future course of action in order prevent a recurrence of burying someone alive. Two answers were proposed, the first, to put a hollow tube from the surface down to the coffin and to put food and water in with the remains of the unfortunate plague victim. A second group had another solution; to fit a 12 inch long sharpened stake to the inside of the lid of the coffin. It is helpful to analyse these two "creative" answers by identifying the question each group was answering. Group 1 was answering the question, How to save a victim buried who was not really dead? Group 2 was answering the question, "How can we make sure that everyone we bury is really dead?" Many of our questions, especially those designed to fix blame, are like the second question, not finally helpful nor creative.

Unlimited brainstorms producing over one hundred answers in the space of thirty minutes to a problem facing a group is one approach. There is no time for criticism. Anything goes, and people feel free to say what they think, especially if you seed a few impractical solutions which encourage members of the group to let themselves go. The magic works as members find themselves building on the ideas of others and discover that stimulated by their colleagues, they too can be far more creative.

ML-II THAT'S NOT LOGICAL

The Left Brain is our rational side, the one which values and manipulates data and facts, analyses, picks flaws in others ideas and our own. In most of us, our left brain is so well-trained, it has caused us to forget we also have a right side from which comes creative, intuitive responses, new images, patterns, relationships and systems. The right brain is an artistic centre capable of extraordinary synthesis. How can we set it free?

First, we ask it to respond. The right brain is a direct line to our unconscious which is often imaged as a hotbed of repressed desires best left alone. When it is discovered that your unconscious is your friend, can be trusted and cares for you, you are on the way to opening up its potential. A widely used problem-solving practice for a thorny problem which defies logical solution is to meditate, allowing the right brain and unconscious to work on the problem apart from your conscious mind.

In a later book called, "Kick in the Seat of the Pants", Von Oech describes four kinds of creative stances; the Explorer, the Artist, the Judge and the Warrior. The explorer and the artist go beyond logic. To be creative, they need to be free from judgment and the discipline of practical implementation. Judgment can be applied later.

From an unlimited brainstorm, perhaps only two or three ideas out of a hundred may be immediately useful, but dusty corners of the mind have been cleared, new relationships exposed and perhaps several new avenues of exploration opened up which may produce creative results.

ML-III FOLLOW THE RULES

Most rules were created for a time which no longer exists. We tend to follow these rules and insist on others doing so we can maintain control. Controls have their place, but as Tom Peters says so succinctly, "Most systems are absolutely harmful and actually get in the way of innovation". He suggests for organisations which truly want creativity that only the basic integrity of the organisation be given the status of sacrosanct.

Encourage and set the example for breaking the rules for a higher purpose. You are after free-wheeling innovation. It can be helpful to joke about which rules have been most effectively broken recently. A manager gives permission for innovative efforts through his stance toward rule-breakers. If he himself is "bashing the bureaucracy", potential imitators get the message. Try a "rule inspecting and discarding" session to get rid of the most objectionable rules. Get your bureaucrats involved also. Their frustration with people who passively defy their rules may be as great as anyone's.

ML-IV BE PRACTICAL

Practicality comes with the roles of the judge and warrior, not with the roles of explorer or artist. The need is to generate ideas for a future about which we have no experience. To break this lock, create a Germinal Seedbed in which ideas flourish with constant fertilisation and stimulation and without shriveling blasts or blights.

Frequent "WHAT IF..." brainstorms are useful, for example, what if:
*We had to cut 1% from our costs every year for the next ten years?
*Our competitors just came out with a product better than our major revenue earner for half our cost?
*We had to export 50% of our production in five years?
*Our external source of technology dried up?
*The government just delicensed our industry?
*etcetra

You are out to alternate "germinal seedbed" or "blue sky" thinking with logical, judgemental thinking which chooses among creative ideas. You are out to programme for possibility and vaccinate against the despair often resulting from traumatic change. "What if's" become a helpful springboard to a pro-active organisation. Ideas become stepping stones. An example of this is a paint company what if-ing the question of paint removal from surfaces when the paint's useful life is over. Someone suggested they mix gunpowder with the paint and blow it off when the time came. This led to experimentation on chemicals initially incorporated in paint which when removal was desired required only a second appropriate chemical application to easily and cheaply remove the paint.

ML-V AVOID AMBIGUITY

Sounds reasonable, doesn't it? However, is it the way to get innovation? In giving directions, avoiding ambiguity is probably a very good idea. However, "if you tell people where to go but not how to get there, you may be amazed at the results." It is also very motivating. Some organisations have even gone to the point of having two or three development groups working independently on the same critical breakthrough arena without coordination for at least a while to expand the potential creativity spectrum.

Creativity is more likely to continue if you honour every attempt to release it rather than using resources to contain or eliminate it. Small starts, pilots instead of proposals respond to the ambiguity question helpfully. Many ideas can only be resolved in their doing.

ML-VI TO ERR IS WRONG

All who have ever worked in school for grades have learned to avoid mistakes and are conditioned to believe that failure is bad. However, it is the same energy which produces hits that also produces errors. What if you assume all errors are stepping stones, that errors are part of learning?

An IBM executive lost $10 million on a project. When reporting to his Vice President, he said, "I suppose you want my resignation!" His boss said, "Are you kidding? We just spent $10 million educating you!" This may be a little much for most companies, but you get the idea.

Even negative feedback from the customer or your boss is a positive indication the current approach is not working. This is not always easy to find out if your systems are not open to objectify negative feedback into positive corrective steps. Taj Hotels, for example, take infinite pains to elicit and remedy customer complaints.

ML-VII PLAY IS FRIVOLOUS

If necessity is the mother of invention, play is the father. Computer people use the term, "playing around with an idea" to see if it will fly. The Apple Macintosh group of youth, mostly in their 20's, described their task as if it was a great computer game when they invented the computer which revolutionised the American PC. Creativity arises out of freedom, and we are most free at play. Companies whose future depends on continual creativity have a culture in which people are always playing with new gadgets and improvements.

Children are good at play because they don't know all the "supposed to's". We often get our best ideas when doing something else giving our right brain a chance at the problem. It helps to take ourselves less seriously, a state of mind which releases creativity.

ML-VIII THAT'S NOT MY AREA

To be effective, you must specialise. It has been estimated that 100,000 bits of information bombard our nervous systems every second. Specialisation is good because it reduces irrelevant and trivial outside information letting you focus efforts. What may happen is that the ability to recognise an idea from one situation and apply it to another is lost.

Companies actually bring in people from other areas to do "naive questioning", to ask the 3-year old's "WHY" question. It is because we are all so good at what we do that we are often unable to view from another perspective.

Business learns from art, "All art is a series of recoveries from the first line". The hardest thing to do is to draw that first line.

What do managers do to tap wisdom from elsewhere? They read voraciously out of their field; science fiction, historical fiction from the near and distant past, novels from different cultures, how-to books from many perspectives. Strategists have read Sun Tzu's book, The Art of War, a universal strategy guide constantly quoted, both in military and management books. Winning sports coaches have a lot to teach managers. They read how other organisations have done it. Iococca's Chrysler story is fantastic for managers saddled with a sick company. Scandinavian Air Lines story about how they created and implemented a new Service Strategy provides a tremendous image for a company which has decided to align on the customer.

ML-IX DON'T BE FOOLISH

We all need to conform to get along in life. Try driving down a one-way street in Bombay the wrong way and see what happens. Conforming serves two purposes, 1) To live in society requires cooperation, and 2) In a situation where we do not know what to do, look to others.

The more serious danger is "Group Think", which may happen when we are most interested in the approval of others than in creative solutions. We need more non-conformists who are unpredictable, who play the role of the "Fool", who cut over against Yes Men, perhaps even make fun of proposals under discussion. It takes a very mature manager to play the fool or to insist the fool dynamic be played by someone.

Paul Getty, known at one time to be the richest man in the world, set up a situation with a group of managers from one of his companies in which he suspected he had Yes-Men. He proposed a direction for the company he knew was faulty. Two senior managers agreed immediately and suggested that indeed they had been thinking along these same lines; one junior manager went along but was obviously reluctant. The fourth, also a junior manager was thoughtful, then said the direction would not work and said why not. Getty sacked the first two managers, gave the third another chance in a different company and put the fourth manager in charge of his present company.

ML-X I'M NOT CREATIVE

This is a self-fulfilling prophecy. A research group commissioned by a major oil company to discern why some people were more creative than others announced its findings. Boiled down, they were: People are creative who think they are creative. People are not creative who do not think they are creative.

Most big creative ideas develop from small ideas from people who thought they were creative and played with the small idea until they made it into a big creative idea.

If you think you can find the second or third or even fourth right answer, you are much more likely to do so. I'll leave you to your creativity.

FAST PACED INNOVATION

Tom Peters in his 1987 book THRIVING ON CHAOS has one of the most creative and systematic approaches to creativity in the corporation we have currently seen. It is engrossing reading with American and Japanese examples, but hard work if a reader is truly interactive with the author.

We recommend it highly, believing that Tom Peters' approach is practical for the Indian management situation now, (and certainly the one we anticipate tomorrow). Further, that the company able to utilise his approach will gain tremendous advantage. This book is written primarily for American managers, but the first shipment of books to India was sold out quickly suggesting that Indian managers are finding it relevant.

"Thriving in the midst of chaos is not good enough."

Tom Peters was going to name the book, Thriving in the Midst of Chaos, but decided that wasn't good enough. "In the midst of" suggests coping, a reactive stance, and the coming business environment requires more than that. He is talking from his experience with hundreds of companies about what it means to actually operate pro-actively with chaos, i.e. thrive **on** it.

"There is no such thing as a solid or even substantial lead over one's competitors."

Excellent firms don't believe in excellence, only in constant improvement and constant change; they cherish impermanence and thrive on chaos.

Tom Peters is describing what Harrison Owen in our earlier IMAGE (Issue two, Dec 87) in the article, The Journey of Spirit and Organisational Transformation, called an **Interactive Organisation.** He characterised an interactive organisation as, 1) Vision based, 2) One that sees itself as an organic whole, as related parts, a biological view, 3) Maintaining a total view of its environment thereby seeing all in a coherent picture, 4) One in which the world is no longer a threat, rather a part of the context for operating, 5) One which has superb flexibility and 6) One which has a profound sense of self and openness to the world.

"Each (of Peters') prescription(s) is really about attitude, how to change a company from inside out, how to make it porous to customers, distributors and suppliers, to turn the way it works upside down with participatory approaches".

BOOK OVERVIEW

The forty-five revolutionary principles come in five categories which he characterises with the letters **C, I, P, L** and **S**

C = CREATING TOTAL CUSTOMER RESPONSIVENESS, ten principles which point toward:
*Specialised products and services *New market niches ***Added value to maintain differentiation of product, even to the creation of wholly new product/service packages.**

I = PURSUING FAST-PACED INNOVATION, ten principles which encourage:
*Pilot projects rather than proposals *Team based product development *Support of product champions ***An incredibly interactive marketing system.**

P = ACHIEVING FLEXIBILITY BY EMPOWERING PEOPLE. Flexibility is the key to continued excellence and it is gained by empowering people. **"People must become the primary source of value added, not a factor of production to be optimised, minimised or eliminated".** This section focuses on: *Self managing teams *Eliminating blocks, "bureaucracy bashing" *Constant recognition for accomplishment, large and small. *Training and retraining.

L = LEARNING TO LOVE CHANGE, A NEW VIEW OF LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS. These principles describe the importance of:
*Vision which sets direction, yet encourages initiative *Visible management, a constant front line context *Becoming a compulsive listener *Evaluating managers on the basis of "what have you changed?"

S = BUILDING SYSTEMS FOR A WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN, Principles which grow out of a belief that **for the most part, today's systems cause real harm.** His admonitions are to: *Simplify everything ***Measure the right things and only the right things** *Sharing information in a way never before imagined *Create trust via systems.

Tom Peters constantly reminds us that his is an integrated system, that innovation on the lines described in his book are not feasible unless all 45 revolutionary principles are also cared for. The purpose of this article is to intrigue the reader to get the book and experience the excitement and affirmation we have felt while reading and studying THRIVING ON CHAOS.

PURSUING FAST PACED INNOVATION

I-1: INVEST IN APPLICATION-ORIENTED SMALL STARTS

* Go for constant experimentation, especially in small markets, find the mistakes here when they don't cost so much while you are locating growing possibility.
* Decide that unpredictability simply cannot be removed by excessive planning.
* Winners are customer oriented, although the path is tortuous. **The user-friendly application has an edge**, like the Macintosh computer which allowed Apple to maintain a remarkable standing against IBM.
* We all guess wrong about the future. Can you imagine Jack Warner of Warner Brothers pictures even in the 30's saying, "Who the hell wants to hear actors talk?"
* **Imitate nature where meaningful beginnings are almost always unnoticeable.** Small business units develop these unpretentious beginnings which can lead to the product or service of the future.
* Surround the big with small, informal groups outside the main planning and development process. There are tremendous stories about small, highly motivated groups which did a superior and fast job in a fraction of the time and at a fraction of the cost of big organisation bidders. Not to forget that **90% of the production coming out of the Los Angeles area comes from companies of less than 50 employees.**
* For small starts, genuine autonomy is required, otherwise the innovators may be blocked by dominant forces in the company.
* Believe it or not, too much money can impede innovation.
* Small starts have the great advantage of being quickly cut off or modified quickly if necessary without ruining a project's image.
*. "Prototype Strategy"- start small and learn one's way forward
* Timely second and third products are critical. To get them, a company may seed multiple starts.
* **The Japanese treat every product as an ongoing experiment.** They begin in almost all new markets with penetration of small application-oriented niches.
* Those most open to customer/supplier involvement and innovation are most likely to succeed.
* Eg submarines, the Russians build experimental platforms and keep trying new things. Americans imagine a grandiose new machine all at once.
* In some companies, each division is required to sponsor one or more projects from other divisions which need their support.
* **We're out to shorten the development cycle; it is necessary to flatten the structure and work across functional boundaries.**

I-2 PURSUE TEAM PRODUCT/SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

* The most important reason for delays in development activities is an absence of multi-function representation on development projects from the beginning.
* Blocks usually come from 1) Siloing in a vertical organisation, (that is a flurry of memos and minutes up and down) or 2) Sequential problem-solving which plays out the hierarchical forms to the detriment of development progress.

HOW TO DO THE TEAM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

* **Simultaneously involve the creating, making and marketing functions from the outset.** Key members are full time from the start. "There is no such thing as a part-time passion."
* **Rewards to teams as a whole.** This means the team leader has to do the evaluation for the most part.
* Team members "live together", the same room with no dividers.
* Constant communication across "typically troublesome functional boundaries".
* "No substitutes rule"- substitutes on working teams from a given function must have the power to speak for the function.
* Dedicated resources, at least partially, to give open space to move.
* **Outside involvement from suppliers, dealers and customers will produce a lot of your innovation, (if you trust them and they trust you), by giving them all the information from the start.**

I-3 ENCOURAGE PILOTS OF EVERYTHING

* Strike some sparks with someone who has an idea that could work, help them develop it, put it forward carefully, continue to gather data. **The idea is to get several committed champions to own the idea and a few enthusiastic mid-level line persons in the field.**
* Chunk or segment the project; find a piece that can be mostly worked out quietly in the field.
* Piloting shortens the process by the encouragement of **field-designing.**
* The beginning of the process is most crucial; this is the time when commitment can be killed. **By definition, any new idea is disruptive.**
* Try, test, adjust, try again, fail, modify, scrap, start over, are the operative words in this process.
* If you find a manager wasting time working up the chain with proposals rather than working down, seeking pilot sites and champions far away from headquarters, you should worry.
* **Piloting is a data-based approach, a hard approach, rational and scientific. It embraces empiricism and the experimental method. Besides, piloting is cheap.**

I-4 PRACTICE CREATIVE SWIPING

* **The Japanese: "We are very sophisticated copycats".**
* Only the best steal from the best. When Honda launched Acura, it picked BMW. Its design team was given just one year to beat BMW.
* Become obsessed with competitors. Determine who the competition really is. Many are focused on old competitors, not potential new ones.
* Share the data widely within the firm.
* How is the competition organised? This gives a clue to its response time.
* **Put everyone to work on competitor analysis.** You could design a full-fledged suggestion system devoted exclusively to ideas from competitors.
* Share bad news with employees. To know the bad news makes it easier to accept it.

HOW TO COMBAT "NIH", NOT INVENTED HERE

* The **best leaders are the best note-takers, the best askers, the best learners. They are shameless thieves.**
* From Citytrust, "Somebody, somewhere, big or small, near or far, has introduced a service we could copy with enhancements - today."
* **Uniqueness most often comes not from a breakthrough idea, but from the accumulation of thousands of tiny enhancements.**
* Useful uniqueness depends on customer perceptions.
* **Creative swiping, which amounts to adapting ideas from unconventional sources, aims solely at creating uniqueness.**

I-5 MAKE WORD-OF-MOUTH MARKETING SYSTEMATIC

* **Word of mouth is governed by the 90-10 rule, "90% of the world is influenced by the other 10%".**
* A word of mouth campaign should be based on targeted communication.
* Most depend mainly upon a subjective evaluation of an innovation that is conveyed to them from other individuals like themselves who have previously adopted the innovation.
* The word of mouth process can be systematised. Focus efforts on highly reputable would-be early adopters.
* Look for the innovative adopters, not necessarily the big ones.

I-6 SUPPORT COMMITTED CHAMPIONS

* **Entrepreneurs overthrow establishments rather than establish equilibria.** They are the heroes of economic life.
* Only the unreasonable champion can succeed. Odds are low, so the successful champions need to have, 1) energy, 2) passion, 3) idealism, 4) pragmatism, 5) cunning, 6) towering impatience, 7) an unrealistic unwillingness to allow any barrier to set him back, and 8) love-hate relationships among his subordinates. Would you hire someone like that? Would you keep them on even when their integrity was under attack? However, **we need to innovate faster just to survive; we need many more people to sign up for projects with much lower odds for success just to stay even.**
* So, you need to become an executive champion, a nurturer, protector, facilitator and interference runner for as many energetic champions as you can induce to sally forth.
* **Many average people have a lot of passion in them, but it is up to us to find ways to unleash it.**

I-7 MODEL INNOVATION/PRACTICE PURPOSEFUL IMPATIENCE

* What you do will be modeled for or against innovation. So watch out with your style and actions. Do you encourage people to cut across bureaucracy? To cut across functional barriers? Do you encourage people to steal computer time for their project?
* Behave with purposeful impatience.
* **You want innovation? Just ask for it, with a timeline. "You've got two hours to come up with big savings without layoffs." It works!**
* Seek out and celebrate the innovators. Track them down and recognise their efforts. It's the best way to signal what you want.
* Demand your managers recognise innovations regularly. "If not, why not?"
* **Reward a lot of small innovations as well as big ones. Japanese suggestion awards average only 1% of savings - they think lots of small awards induce more tries.**
* Most improvements and time reductions in the product/service development process will come from turning the largely unseen supporting cast into committed champions. **Find a way to support the supporting cast.**

I-8 SUPPORT FAST FAILURES

* **Honda, "Many people dream of success. To me success can only be achieved through repeated failure and introspection. In fact, success represents the 1 percent of your work which results only from the 99 percent that is called failure."**
* Complexity + Need for Speed = Make more mistakes (or else).
* **"There is an almost irreducible number of failures associated with launching anything new. For heaven's sake, hurry up and get them over with!"**
* Talk up failure, send thank you notes to people who make innovative, fast failures.
* **Fail forward; demand something is learned from each failure, and that it be followed with a new modification.**
* How does this square with "do it right the first time!" Usually we don't because we haven't 1) worked with

suppliers on problems, 2) trained and encouraged our people to analyse existing problems and 3) assessed and updated systems which cause bottlenecks. So implementing "do it right the first time" means acknowledging that each job, routine and system is a hotbed of endless opportunities for improvement.

* **What happens if you do not support failure?** Where the fear of revealing even the smallest error is high?
1) Small failures are hidden until they cause bigger ones.
2) Data are faked so failures can be seen as successes.
3) Data are hidden from other functions who could help.
4) Those at the top are kept in the dark and make bad decisions.
5) No learning takes place.
6) Real tests are delayed while trying to insure the first ones will be good.
7) Truth, fun and speed go down the drain.

* **Managing risk-taking: Keep the waterline low so as much as possible is above it. (Above the waterline means anything that doesn't affect the basic integrity of the organisation).**
* As boss, consciously seek out opportunities to help in small ways. **View yourself as basher-in-chief of small barriers and facilitator-in-chief of trivial aids to action rather than "the great planner".** When you do this you are also sending powerful messages to all involved that you don't want barriers in the way of innovation.

I-9 SET QUANTITATIVE INNOVATION GOALS

* For every profit center, establish a uniform and tough quantitative target for the percentage of revenues stemming from new products and services introduced in the previous 24 months. As a starting point, consider a target of 50%.
* How to measure: Use a broad definition to highlight the small changes which may produce larger ones.
* **Most landmark products do not involve breakthroughs, instead they are a culmination of many small changes which finally lead to wholesale user adoption of the product.**
* 3M links compensation at senior levels to the percentage of sales which come from new products introduced in the previous couple of years. There is a need to arrive at a broadly agreed upon definition of what constitutes innovation. If that doesn't work change it until it does.
* Make every business unit's innovation target exactly the same. Because:
1) All markets are fragmenting,
2) Highly differentiated mature products are the best moneymakers,
3) Any product can be fundamentally differentiated or transformed.
* If it were not important to be uniform, you should make innovation targets even tougher for older and more sluggish divisions or units.

I-10 CREATE A CORPORATE CAPACITY FOR INNOVATION

* **No skill is more important than the corporate capacity to change. The company's most urgent task, then, is to learn to welcome, beg for, and demand innovation from everyone.**
* The Japanese have created a corporate capacity for innovation. **Japanese management generally believes that a manager should spend at least 50% of his time on improvement.**
* Constant change by everyone requires a dramatic increase in the capacity to accept disruption.
* There is literally an unlimited number of innovation and improvement opportunities lying everywhere. **The ideas are principally on the front line, not higher up.**
* Does the innovation impede or accelerate the shift from adversary to partner?

Many of you are doing some, perhaps all of these things. New entrepreneurs who are rising fast are doing more than others. It is clear that noone else can chart an approach which is precisely right for you, but creative copying is open to us all. It will take tremendous innovation to find out what works best in the Indian context. Ten years from now, we and the rest of the world will be clearer about the uniqueness of Indian management style.

THE WORKSHOP PROCESS:

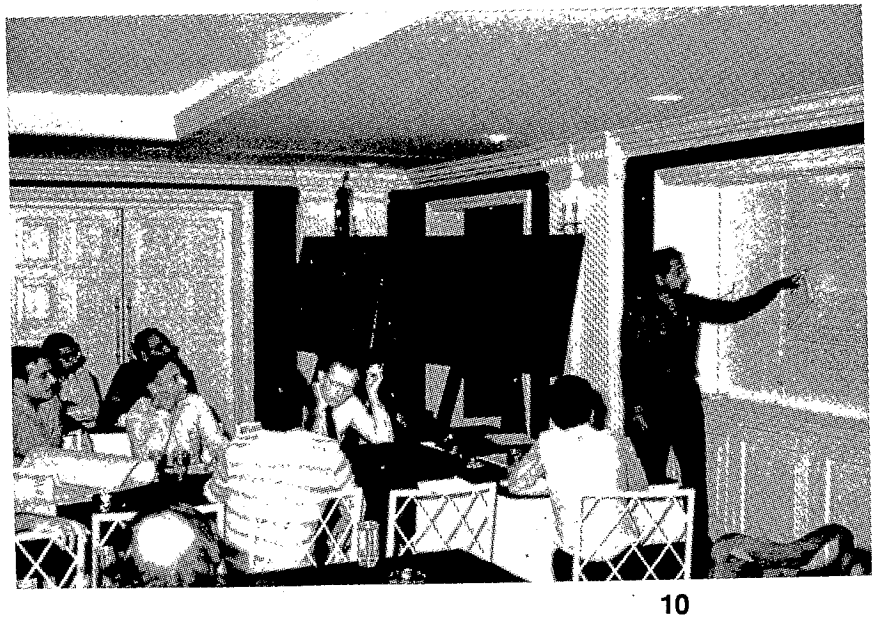
Only rarely does creativity come as a sudden burst of insight.

More often it comes through seeing things in a new relationship or a thought of one person triggering a new idea in another. To promote this kind of creativity within a group requires a method of proceeding and an understanding of how each step in a creative process can be carefully guided and facilitated. The Basic Workshop Method (BWM) is an instrument the ICA has used for years very effectively in its programmes. It includes the concept of Brainstorming but goes way beyond, empowering the group as it takes responsibility for its own conclusions.

The BWM consists of five steps, each designed to maximise creativity and participation. They are:

1. Contexting
2. Brainstorming
3. Grouping
4. Naming
5. Reflecting

In reality the BMW starts before these steps, as each workshop requires extensive preparation on the part of the facilitator. Not only should he carefully think through the topic to be considered, but prepare necessary materials (like flip-chart paper and markers), a conducive work space and room set up, allotted time frame and discern participants perspectives and anticipations. The following guidelines assume a one hour workshop.



Contexting

The Context is critical to the success of a workshop, enabling and preparing participants to give their whole-hearted effort. An effective context includes the following components: 1) A clear statement of the focus; why it is important enough to spend time on it, why this group is important to the process, and a chance for feedback on points of clarity, 2) Any guidelines on limits or "boundaries" to the workshop, for instance, "We're not going to worry about.....", or "Lets keep our ideas to those things we can do something about", 3) The end result we hope to achieve, 4) Guidelines for participation, eg. "we're out for creativity not judgments", 5) A quick outline of the steps, and 6) The amount of time we will spend. As simple as this may sound, it has been our observation that this step is the least understood and most often left out, resulting in confusion, frustration and an inadequate product. Usually 5-7 minutes is adequate for this step.

Brainstorming

The objective of Brainstorming is to generate as much data in a limited amount of time as possible. It requires rapid writing, an understanding by the group that comments on others' ideas are only for providing clarity, and the discipline of not "making speeches". It is critical that the facilitator receive the ideas of each participant, writing down exactly what he says. After much practice, one can learn how to shorten long answers, but attempts to "summarise" may lose the key point or insight and may result in the interpretation of the facilitator rather than of the participant. A skilled facilitator's role is to help participants develop rough insights into useful concretions.

Real creativity and new ideas often begin appearing only well into the brainstorm because our mind generates new ideas when it hears others perspectives or where it sees points not previously considered. Nevertheless, it is important to give the group time to work individually for 2-3 minutes so that the first ideas not will dominate or "color" everybody else's. A quiet time while the facilitator leads a "visualisation" can allow minds to journey into the creative realm of the future.

When facilitating a brainstorm, ensure all have an equal chance to contribute by going one by one around the table. This gives a sense of participation, drawing out the quiet ones and restraining the dominating ones. List all of the data on a chart or board so it can easily be seen, numbering each item for quick reference.

GENERATING INNOVATIVE IDEAS

About 3/4 of the way through the allotted time, stop, read back the list and ask people to consider what arenas or options might be missing. Usually this results in a fresh burst of ideas. A list of 25-30 items can be generated in about 20 minutes, including individual brainstorm time.

Grouping

Often in a brainstorm as people offer similar ideas, the tendency is to respond "we already have that one." This may be true, but there may be subtle differences or complementary ideas that will be important during later discussion. In Grouping you are now looking for those similarities and points suggesting connectedness. When ideas are grouped together one can begin to identify the revealed insights. Grouping makes the data more manageable and enables discussion in the Naming section to be comprehensive and focused.

Start by reading the entire list and asking "What are two items that are similar to each other?" Then ask for different pairs. Why? Because in trying to find additional items that relate to or are similar to the first pair, you run the risk of grouping so many together that you may lose a unique set. It is helpful here to get 4 to 5 pairs which represent a range of insights before allowing the clusters to become larger.

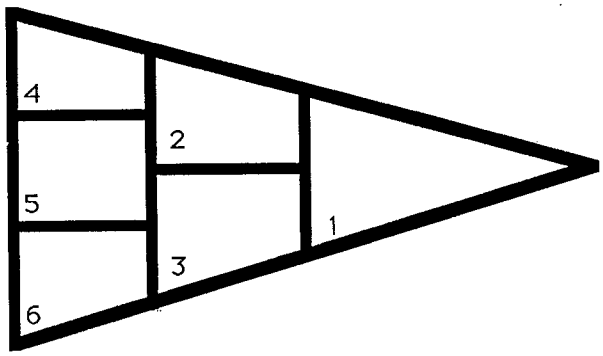
When identifying pairs, mark the numbers with a symbol (, O, X, • etc.) in a different color than the brainstorm list to facilitate differentiation. Aim for 5-7 clusters. Unless a single item is entirely unique, try and get all items into one of the clusters. This process should take about 10 minutes.

Naming

The fourth step is the most difficult to do well, but can be the most creative. The objective is to give the cluster a name that holds the total meaning and the insights behind the data. This is interpreting the data, <u>not summarising</u>. The group will be tempted to give a summary title which often loses the new insight from the data - the least common denominator. To offset this, don't allow a quick answer to dictate the name, but encourage the group to build on the insights of each other. It's easy to fall into the "either/or" trap here, holding onto "my idea over against yours". Ask questions that move beyond the obvious, like "As I read these items, <u>first</u> tell me the arena of these ideas and <u>then</u> what is the new insight contained within them?" Or you might say, "Give me a title that points to the new direction." Here you are working to develop consensus on a new understanding and prioritisation. Begin naming with the largest cluster and allow about 5 minutes for discussion. The rest will go more quickly. The naming process takes about 15 minutes.

Reflecting

Reflecting is the process of pulling together the results in such a way that the consensus of the workshop and its implications for future action are clear to all. It is helpful to prioritise the named clusters, putting them in the form of a "wedge" or "rocket" which gives a powerful visual impact to the results.



If it is not obvious which arena is the highest priority, a question like" Which one is the most catalytic?" or "If we could focus on one which would it be?" Then ask "Which 2 most strongly support the number 1?" The wedge has a highly "symbolic" value. You're after intuitive answers here rather than a prolonged, rational debate.

Quickly indicate next steps, such as who needs to do what or what will be done with this data and when. Make sure the data is recorded and copies distributed to all. It is important for each participant to have a copy of the objective data which documents the significance of the workshop and is a declaration indicating follow up. Allow a few minutes at the end for reflecting on the process as well as on the significance of the results.

A Final Word

Workshopping is an art, not a science. As a facilitator, your main concern is to elicit creative responses. In time you will learn to ask questions that push insights or draw out ideas that were only fuzzy notions or not seen as important enough to mention. A stance of affirmation is your best bet for getting creativity. Suspend personal judgement and treat all answers as significant, even if on first reflection they may seem wrong or too simplistic. You will be pleasantly surprised with the results, and, most important of all, people will feel "we did it ourselves".

THE LEADER AS CREATOR

This article is an edited version of a chapter by Robert Fritz, from the book Transforming Leadership, John Adams, PhD. General Editor, Miles River Press, 1986.

VISION

The word "vision" has caught on recently among those seeking fresh approaches to leadership. The actual concept thus far has not. One of the greatest misunderstandings of what true vision is deals with the relationship between vision and circumstances.

Most people attempt to derive their vision from the circumstances in which they find themselves. A clear example of this was presented in a recent management series on public television. A professor from Harvard Business School, commenting on strategic planning, urged his viewers to "analyse your resources, determine what your capital expenditures can be, examine what your competitors are doing, analyse market trends and from that analysis determine what your vision should be." "Derived end vision" seldom leads to a creative act, for the vision itself is limited by the analysis of current circumstances, limited by the biases inherent in the analysis, and subject to the influence of past aspirations and theories.

In order to generate real vision, the vision itself must be conceived independent of the circumstances. **The vision must also be conceived without reference to the apparent possibility of its accomplishment.** Since most people have been trained to think in terms of responding appropriately to circumstances, the unfortunate policy of limiting what one wants to what seems realistic and possible forms a common counter-creative habit. It is actually astonishing to discover how little ability most people have simply to describe what they want to create. And yet, the premier creative act is to conceive of what one wants to create.

Real vision is the conceptual crystallisation of a result a creator wants to bring into reality. If this vision does not come from an assessment of needs, a definition of the prevailing problems, or an analysis of market trends, from where does it come? Some people approach vision as if it were a deeply hidden treasure to be discovered and revealed. However, conceiving what you want to create is also not a revelatory process. Other people generate "brainstorms," which are designed to blitzkrieg through preconceived "mind sets" with fanciful free associations. But free association consistently misses the heart of the matter, which is the answer to the very simple question, "What do I want to create?"

How one conceives of what one wants is deceptively simple and profoundly sophisticated. It is perhaps the true secret of the creative process - a secret both directly pragmatic and philosophically astute. To those who have been raised to believe that circumstances are the driving force in one's life, this secret will seem to be either drivel or heresy. And yet every professional creator either consciously or intuitively thoroughly understands the principle of how a creator conceives of a vision. **The creator simply makes up the vision.**

Please do not miss the point. This is truly a remarkable insight into the deeper nature of the creative process. For creators make up the results they want to create and then bring them to full manifestation. Years ago I consulted with an engineering group in a high-tech organisation. When I mentioned to the engineers this insight about the creative process, at first they looked at each other with knowing grins. Then one engineer after another said, "That's exactly what we do. We make up what we create." One of them added, "But then we have to write technical articles explaining how we made it up in such a way that it doesn't seem made up." While creative people know that they make up what they create, there is a strange prejudice in society against this notion. One reason is that the act of making up what you want does not rely on rationale and justification, and therefore seems unconnected to the circumstances to which everyone is supposed to respond.

VISION IS NOT PROCESS

Rather than "make up" visions of desired results, most people have been trained to focus on process - methods of acting, steps to be taken, and forms to be followed. The process answers the question, "How do I bring what I want into reality?" This is a good question once you know what you want, but a useless question until you do. Most education, however, attempts to train students to consider process before any consideration of what the students actually want to create in their own lives. A typical approach to guidance counseling is to assess what a student has aptitude for and then to help the student design careers in which these aptitudes are presented as the major factors that should determine an entire life direction. Many students succumb to this advice and pursue careers consistent with their aptitudes only to discover 20 or 30 or 40 years later that they never much cared for a career they have spent a lifetime building. All of this emanated from the circumstance of aptitudes they happened to possess at age 15. The question "What do you want?" was never asked. Instead, the question, "What do you want to do among the alternatives available?" was substituted.

When most people begin to consider the question, "What do I want to create?" they substitute the question, "What, among the available alternatives, do I want to do?" Vision degenerates into process. Process then is elevated to a position of time-honored formulas and conventions or even further elevated to a position of metaphysical truth. Cults of process celebrating this methodology or that methodology convert people into believers and beliefs into cherished dogmas, and the "vision" becomes the perfect performance of the process. The concept of the end result recedes as the reign of process intensifies.

While certainly this is an exaggeration, more subtle and therefore more insidious variations abound in reality. Upon conceiving a vision, process must not initially be considered. Vision is best conceived independent of process, for upon conception, how you might create the results you want is best left an unknown factor.

Those who would celebrate process inadvertently predetermine the results that can be created. Believers in process are seeking convention. Convention seeks to formalise the responses to circumstances. This mechanistic approach thwarts the true development of creativity, for in the house of the creator it is not convention but invention that is the most direct path to desired results.

The leader as creator understands that the spirit of convention will be prevalent in most organisations. Certainly common practice approaches to financial management, inventory control, secretarial support, distribution mechanisms, and so on are extremely desirable. They enable the leader to engineer systems that effectively and predictably maintain resources, strengthen organisational abilities, and heighten organisational readiness to help manifest the vision. But the mentality of convention too often fossilises archaic processes to the detriment of needed invention. The leader as creator sometimes entirely reorganises the forms and configurations or organisational design, and is only able to do so when the vision is independent of process.

THE POWER OF VISION

Vision is not the crystallisation of a process, but rather the crystallisation of the result the creator makes up. **If the vision is truly what the creator wants, it will have great power.** A creator brings into reality results that the creator wants to see exist and the power of the original vision emanates from the sheer desire to manifest the vision. The human spirit permeates the vision when the creator loves the vision enough to see it realised.

Vision also has power because in vision you can easily reach beyond the ordinary to the extraordinary. The inner eye of vision can see what is not yet there, can reach beyond the present circumstances and beyond any known processes and see what up to that point has never been there. It is truly an incredible human faculty that is able to see beyond the present and the past and from the unknown conceive of something not hitherto in existence.

The leader as creator is fluent in the vision, not because it is memorised or written in stone, but rather because the leader freshly asks and answers the question, "What result do I want to create?" frequently. Sometimes the vision changes, but most often it does not. And as the leader crystallises the vision with greater additive clarity, more and more people can see it, support it, align with it, contribute to it, add to it and join in its final creation.

The leader could never do this with an unclear vision or a vision based on a compromise. When the vision is established, the first component of structural tension is in place. Once it is clear where you want to go, the next question that establishes current reality - the other component of structural tension - is, "Where are you now?"

CURRENT REALITY

Current reality includes a clear and accurate description of where you now are in relation to the fulfillment of the vision. Current reality often includes disappointments, frustrations, pain, injustice, unkindness, and circumstances that seem hopeless. Most people would rather avoid suffering the discomfort that can come from recognising that such aspects of current reality exist. The leader as creator understands, however, the power of current reality - good, bad or indifferent, for structural tension is impossible without a clear view of where you now are. The leader as creator realises that at first, most people would rather leave certain aspects of current reality unrecognised. But the leader helps others to view current reality objectively, accurately, and fully. For only through such awareness can necessary adjustments be made. If you are painting a painting, the ongoing changes on the canvas need to be recognised in order to move to the next steps of the painting process. In a similar way, the leader as creator must maintain a fluency in knowing current reality as it changes subtly or obviously. The leader must also be able to discriminate which aspects of reality are relevant to the vision and which aspects are not. Clarity of vision helps enable the leader to determine instinctively and intuitively what is relevant from the sea of over-information available in today's "information society."

Current reality includes the tendencies of structural conflict and incorporates structural conflict into itself as a relevant structure in play. The structural conflict most common in everyone's life is formed by the component of desire on the one hand and an incompatible dominant belief in personal inability to fulfill one's desires on the other. **Conflict manipulation, willpower manipulation, and maintaining an area of tolerable conflict - the three strategies generated by structural conflict - each require a misrepresentation of current reality.**

Conflict manipulation portrays reality as worse than it actually is or exaggerates the negative implications of events that have taken place or may take place. Aspects of current reality that contradict the negative vision must be ignored or minimised in order to develop increased conflict.

Willpower manipulation portrays reality as better than it actually is or exaggerates the positive implications of events. Aspects of current reality which contradict the positive vision must be ignored or minimised in order to overcome the innate structural tendencies.

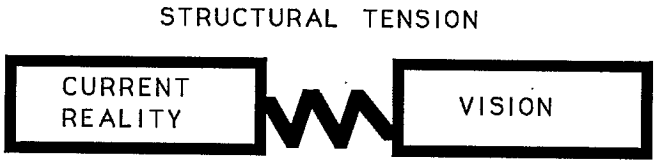
Maintaining an area of tolerable conflict misrepresents current reality by excluding or minimising aspects of reality outside of the area of tolerable conflict. Reality may be portrayed as either better or worse than it actually is, whatever is needed to avoid leaving the area of tolerable conflict.

In willpower manipulation, it is "See no evil." In conflict manipulation it is "See nothing but evil." In the area of tolerable conflict, it is "See neither good nor evil."

To the leader as creator, current reality is the foundation upon which the creative process takes place. Rather than misrepresent current reality, the leader is able to launch the creative act from solid ground.

STRUCTURAL TENSION

Structural tension has two components: vision and reality. From these components, a natural force is generated by the structure. The vision is a result you want to create. "Current reality" is a current and accurate awareness of what already exists that is relevant to the vision. In the beginning of the creative process, there will always be a discrepancy between what you want and what you have, because creators bring into reality what does not already exist.



The discrepancy between reality and the vision of the creator forms a simple tension-resolution system. This tension-resolution system is a higher order structure than structural conflict because it includes structural conflict as part of relevant current reality.

When the vision is held and reality is clearly observed, the tendency will be for reality to move to the vision. As reality moves toward the vision, energy is released, enabling actions taken to directly bring the vision into reality.

THE LEADER'S ALCHEMY

Alchemy was the act of transmuting "lead" into "gold." To the alchemists, lead represented innate potential. Gold represented the realisation and fulfillment of this potential. In this sense, the leader as creator is an alchemist, transmuting the natural potential inherent in current reality into the "gold" of fulfilled vision.

The leader as creator understands and respects the play of forces, including structural conflict and structural tension. The leader establishes the senior force of structural tension by clarity of vision and clarity of current reality. Once structural tension is established, the leader functions as both visionary and realist for others, enabling them also to establish structural tension. The leader does not impose his or her vision on others, but the leader's clarity of vision can encourage and inspire others to conceive of their own vision. Furthermore, the leader as creator helps enable others to master their own creative process.

The leader is best supported by others who are the predominant creative force in their own lives. Those whose visions are aligned or compatible with the leader's vision can easily join as a concerted force to invent processes that directly lead to the fulfillment of all of their visions. Those whose visions are not aligned and incompatible may have to create a better vehicle for the manifestation of their vision than membership in the leader's organisation. To the leader as creator, this is not a problem because the leader truly supports individuals creating what they each want to create. And beyond understanding, the leader as creator has the wisdom to allow the organic, natural processes of formation and disintegration to take place. It is all right for people whose vision is incompatible with the vision shared by those who are aligned to leave in support of both the organisational vision and their own. It is also all right to encourage all members of an organisation to be true to themselves even if, for some, that means departure from the organisation. Those who choose to support the vision join together in a powerful collective creative act, bringing into existence what they all truly care about.

THE PROCESS OF CREATIVITY

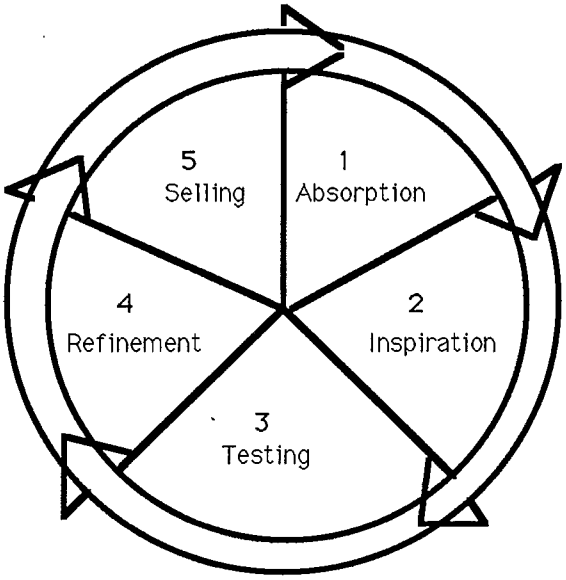
The following article is an edited version of a chapter from the book **The Creative Corporation** by Karl Albrecht.

FIVE PHASES OF INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

There are five stages or steps by which a creative person takes an idea from an electrical impulse in his or her brain to a proven reality. Such a person may not always be highly conscious of the process, but it is usually in the background of the thinking process. To illustrate this concept, we will use a diagrammatic model, showing each step of the innovative process at the individual level. Later on, we will see how the process of organisational innovation mirrors the individual process.

As you study this five-phase process, relate it to your own creative experiences. Recall some of the creative contributions you have made in terms of the five phases of the process. Ask yourself how conscious you are of each of the phases in your own thinking patterns. How well do you do each of them? The five steps in the process of innovation are:

1. Absorption
2. Inspiration
3. Testing
4. Refinement
5. Selling



We can represent the process as a cycle Which progresses from step 1 through step 5, as shown by the diagram above.

1. Absorption - Tuning in to Your Outside Environment. Creative people spend a great deal of their time and energy paying attention to their surroundings. They are enormously curious about many different things, and are continually inquiring into new and unfamiliar subjects. They constantly educate themselves in a variety of ways, such as reading books and articles, talking with interesting people, and going to interesting places. Because they take in so much information, they tend to be well versed in current affairs and they can discuss a wide range of subjects.

The stereotypical image of the absentminded creative genius is largely a myth. Some great thinkers were capable of enormous concentration and could tune out their environments for certain periods, but very few of them cut themselves off from their surroundings as a matter of habit. Virtually all of them were intensely involved with their environments, almost feeding on their experiences as a source of stimulation for their minds.

Even Conan Doyle's fictional genius Sherlock Holmes studied a wide variety of subjects, scanned the papers meticulously, and educated himself on an amazing number of pursuits. His main quirk was that he channeled all of his interests into the study of crime. He was not the Renaissance man, who was educated for the joy of knowledge; he was the quintessential well-informed detective.

Why is taking in the environment so essential to the creative process? Because the creative mind needs raw material to work with. Problems exist all around you, and the elements of the solutions are there, too. If you supply your mind with plenty of raw material-ideas and information-it will process that material automatically and transform it into new ideas and new solutions.

It is interesting to note that people who read very little tend not to be particularly creative. Their lives and thoughts tend toward the mundane. Motivational speaker Charles "Tremendous" Jones contends, "One year from now you'll be the same person you are right now, except for the books you read and the people you meet who influence your ideas."

Creative people are more interesting because they are more interested.

Creative thinkers absorb information around them by being open to many possibilities and ways of thought. They get more out of their brains because they put more into them. They routinely take a look at new ideas, use their imaginations, make a few corrections and arouse their curiosity - one of the raw materials of creativity itself. The ideas they take in are constantly colliding and interacting in their thinker brains. These collisions lead to the second stage.

2. Inspiration-A Semipassive Brain Event. Inspiration is difficult to define and difficult to observe, because it happens so quickly and it arises from beyond the realm of momentary consciousness. Once you have supplied your brain with the raw materials for the creative process in the Absorption stage, it begins working on the elements in ways that are largely invisible. Fragments of ideas, bits of information, odd facts, feelings, impressions, and hunches, all float around in the back of your mind, usually while you are thinking about something else entirely.

These bits and pieces may happen to collide in some quasi-random way and cluster together into a concept that offers promise for solving a problem. When that happens, some unknown circuit in your brain rings a bell and forces the matter into your conscious awareness. The flash of energy and the joyous, excited feeling you get are your body's somatic reaction to the mental event. When Inspiration happens, you feel almost compelled to dwell on the idea. It has a certain innate novelty for you, a beauty that makes it seem exquisitely valuable at that instant.

People who value creative thinking and develop it in themselves soon come to the point where the Inspiration process is no longer a semipassive event. They no longer depend on the sudden flash that comes at rather rare intervals. Coming up with new ideas, new insights, new realisations, and new options becomes an almost voluntary process for them. They have accumulated such a wealth of understanding that they can react quickly to a new problem and generate a number of possible options for solving it. Those who have developed their skills to that level no longer see creativity as a mysterious and passive process beyond their control. They begin to see it as a rather ordinary skill they can use on a day-to-day basis.

3. Testing. When you have an idea or a new way of doing something, you must develop and test the idea for its value. People who are effective innovators are willing to put their new ideas to the test, without unnecessary ego involvement. They know they will have plenty of new ideas, as their ideas revolve around the success of the most recent idea they have had.

Testing is a necessary and dispassionate process. If the idea works, fine; it not, the creative thinker asks, "What might make it work better?" This person can accept the successes or the failures of the idea and continue on in either case.

This determination is the biggest difference between the "flake" and the really creative thinker. Flaky thinkers only talk about ideas; creative thinkers test their ideas and put them into practice. Creative thinkers learn from the testing stage and do not concern themselves with ego involvement. As Louis Pasteur said, "Others tell you to prove you are right. I say try to prove you are wrong."

Notwithstanding Pasteur's good advice, a certain amount of proving does go on during the Testing period. You must eventually prove the worth of the idea to yourself and to your peers if it is to succeed. There is also a time to stick to your guns as you work with the idea in the face of criticism and discouragement from the idea killers, some of whom may be your closest associates. The key is to be open-minded enough to discern truth and determined enough to persist in trying to make your idea work.

4. Refinement - Removing the Rough Edges. If the idea survives reasonable tests of its feasibility, it still might have some major drawbacks. It might need a good deal of modification and refinement to get it into salable form.

Mentally passive people often suffer under the misconception that innovators somehow come up with an entire idea in its final form in one creative flash. They have no idea that, for most innovators, the real hard work begins when they have the first inkling of the idea. Important ideas seldom materialise as finished products. Most of them need a great deal of evolution, modification, and refinement before they become blockbusters.

When Thomas Edison made his famous statement, "Genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration," he meant exactly that. Edison was, above all, a worker. He knew that having an idea to begin with was fun, but the real key to his success was the effort and determination he was willing to invest to make it work.

The fact is that most good ideas start out a half-baked schemes. Even their inventors know they are half-baked. Creative people understand that they must refine, improve and enhance their ideas on a continuous basis. Noncreative people see the "failure" of an idea as a reason to quit. Creative thinkers see it as a reason to change tracks and refine the idea into a new and more recognisable form.

5. Selling - Getting Somebody Else to Go for the Finished Product. Marketing consultant Morris Pickus claimed, "Nothing happens in the business world until somebody sells somebody something." The Selling stage takes the idea out of the cold hard world and explains it to the average, convergent, inflexible thinking person. The question you should ask yourself about your idea is, "Can the average person on the street see the benefits?" If the answer is yes, then you have a salable idea. If that average person forks over the money to buy it, you have done a good job of selling it.

Putting It All Together

Many creative people don't have the ability, energy, temperament, or resources to go through all five phases of the process described above. The creative person who can pass through all five steps successfully is rare indeed. Some people can create but not sell, and others can sell but not create.

Many inventors and technical people fall into the first category. Computer experts and rocket scientists can create hundreds of worthwhile products and ideas, but they often have difficulty explaining the feasibility and value of these ideas to other people who may not be knowledgeable in their field. Read through a typical computer software manual as a case in point.

Conversely, many excellent sales and marketing people know little of the technical side of their products but can sell them enthusiastically anyway. The trick to success as an innovator is either to learn to function in all five phases of the creative process or to ally yourself with other people who can handle the phases you don't like.

How The Corporate "Mind" Creates

To better understand the five stages in terms of the roles played by the various influential people, I've given them titles that correspond to the respective roles they play. They are: 1. The Spotter. 2. The Inventor. 3. The Philosopher. 4. The Champion. 5. The Seller.

Let's look at each role individually, and see how it fits into the innovative process in the organisation.

The Spotter. This person is the eyes and ears of the culture. The Spotter's role in the organisational process of innovation is analogous to the Absorption phase of the individual innovative process. The Spotter is the person who recognises the need for new responses to the environment, new methods, new products, or new ways of accomplishing things. This person can grasp the global logic of the organisation's environment and interpret what is happening in terms of what the organisation needs to do, stop doing, or do better.

The Spotter need not be a person formally "appointed" to think in strategic terms. It need not be someone in a marketing or planning department. Anyone with the knowledge and inclination can contribute to this role. A very experienced employee, for example, or one with special expertise or background, can contribute a valuable perspective under the right circumstances.

The Inventor. This person comes up with many of the creative ideas, options, and solutions for the organisation. The Inventor can be one person, a group of people, or an entire department, like the research and development arm of a company.

The Inventor is always looking for new ideas, technologies, products, concepts, ways of designing something, and new ways to do the simplest task. Often the Inventor develops or creates a new idea or method of doing something and presents the idea to others for review. The role of the Inventor corresponds to the Inspiration stage on the part of the individual.

The Philosopher. He or she provides the intellectual leadership needed to get the right person to sit up and take notice of the idea. This person is the conceptual, contemporary thinker who can see the relevance of the idea to the needs of the organisation. Furthermore, they have some degree of influence on the ideas of those in positions of authority. Others will listen to the Philosopher and have confidence in his or her views.

The role of Philosopher is analogous to the stage of Testing in the individual innovation process. The Philosopher tests the idea intellectually first, and then practically if necessary. He subjects it to an appraisal or workability, tries to add value to it, and tries to find ways to fit it into the culture.

The Champion. The champion advocates the idea by carrying it into action. This person "champions" or fights for the idea by positioning it as a useful one. The Champion becomes more or less obsessed with the success of the idea and is willing to take personal and career risks by putting his name behind it. This person may have access to top management that the Spotter and the Inventor don't have. The Champion may be able to present the benefits of the idea or the concept of a product better than any of the previous participants.

The role of the Champion is analogous to the stage of Refinement. The Champion's role is to make the idea work in the practical realm, and to make the skillful compromises necessary to get it accepted.

The Seller. This person lobbies for the idea with the people who constitute the operational infrastructure of the organisation. Even though the Philosopher has helped to sell the idea to the top leadership of the company, and the Champion has carried it through to a successful implementation, many other people in the organisation must embrace it and endorse it for it to be fully accepted.

Somebody has to sell the "ant army." These are the administrative people, middle managers, supervisors, coordinators, and all those in similar roles who have lived without the idea so far. It is the role of the Seller to help them buy into it.

How it Really Happens

If you have worked in organisations you will probably agree that the innovative process is not so clean and simple as the picture just presented. The foregoing discussion gives a sense of clarity to what's going on, but you won't always be able to see the individual phases and processes distinctly.

Innovation is a very messy process. It is fundamentally a human activity-often a cerebral one-that involves the personalities, emotions and quirks of many creative people. It does not always work cleanly and efficiently.

ACTIVE IMAGINATION:

Creativity is a capacity in all of us that needs to be stimulated to be effective. Tapping the "inner self" seems to be key to releasing creativity, yet many are unable to do it . Active Imagination is one method that can be done alone or with a group. It is taken from a book by Robert A. Johnson, called Inner Work. Also included is a second process taken from Dr. Jean Houston's book The Possible Human in which you talk to your inner guide or "Wise One".

Active Imagination is a special use of the power of imagination that Carl Jung developed early in this century. Although its tremendous value is well proven, it is not widely know outside Jungian circles. Of those who have heard of it, many feel they do not understand it well enough to put it into practice.

Essentially, Active Imagination is a dialogue that you enter into with the different parts of yourself that live in the unconscious. In some ways it is similar to dreaming, except that you are fully awake and conscious during the experience. This, in fact, is what gives the technique its distinctive quality. Instead of going into a dream, you go into your imagination while you are awake. You allow the images to rise up out of the unconscious, and they come to you on the level of imagination just as they would come to you in dream if you were asleep.

In your imagination you begin to talk to your images and interact with them. They answer back. You are startled to find out that they express radically different viewpoints from those of your conscious mind. They tell you things you never consciously knew and express thoughts you never consciously thought.

Most people do a fair amount of talking in their Active Imagination, exchanging points of view with the inner figures, trying to work out a middle ground between opposing views, even asking for advice from some very wise ones who live in the unconscious. But not all dialogue is verbal or spoken.

An Approach To Active Imagination

There is a four-step approach to Active Imagination, to get you past the obstacles, confusions and indecision that sometimes prevent us from getting started or following through. It is strongly recommended that your inner dialogues be recorded, preferably by writing or typing, or other modes such as playing music, drawing, painting, etc. The four steps are:

1. Invite the unconscious. In step one the creatures of our unconscious are invited to come up to the surface and make contact with us. We invite the inner persons to start the dialogue. Perhaps the purest form is to simply clear your mind, go to your imagination, and wait to see who will appear. Sometimes, however, you have to "prime the pump" by:

a. Use your fantasies. Look at the fantasies that have been going through your mind during the day and choose an image, an inner person or a situation. Participate in the fantasy, enter into dialogue with the characters, record what is done and said, and thereby convert this passive fantasy into genuine Active Imagination.

b. Visit symbolic places. Go to a place in your imagination and start exploring to see whom you meet there. Usually your imagination will take you to the inner place where you need to go and connect you to the inner persons that you need to meet.

c. Use personifications. You can personify feelings, moods, etc. by calling them forth as figures. For example, you can go to your imagination and say: "Who is the one inside me who is depressed today? Where are you? What do you look like? Please take some form I can see and come up and talk with me. I want to know who you are and what you want."

d. Dialogue with dream figures. You can extend your dreams. For example, if a dream is not resolved, or you keep getting the same dream over and over, you can extend the dream out through imagination and bring it to a resolution. In other words you can effectively continue the dream and interact with it by extending it out into your Active Imagination.

2. Dialogue with experience. Making dialogue is mostly a matter of giving yourself over to the imagination and letting it flow. Moving the experience ahead consists, more than anything else, of letting the inner figures have a life of their own. A few suggestions are:

First, it is necessary to stick with the image that you start with, and stay with the situation until there is some kind of resolution. Active Imagination is a complete experience, one that has a beginning, middle and end. I usually produce a statement of a problem, a period of interaction with the problem and the different viewpoints on the subject, and finally a resolution of the conflict or the issue.

Second, one must be present in their feelings and participate with their feelings. When you let your feelings out and invite your inner person to do the same, it usually constellates the exchange very directly.

Third, one needs to learn to listen and learn to reply, both without manipulating. We learn to honor those whom we have dishonored, yet also learn to reply — to contribute our own information, viewpoint and values. In such a dialogue you never work with a prepared script. You can't know what is going to happen until it happens.

3. Add the ethical element of values. Once the imaginative process is launched, once the primordial instinctual forces are invited to come up to the surface and be heard, some limits have to be set in order to protect the imaginative process from becoming inhuman or destructive or going off into extremes.

There are three specific elements involved in preserving the ethical aspect of Active Imagination: First, you add the ethical element by holding out for the attitudes and conduct that are consistent with your character and your deepest values. Second, ethical balance requires that we do not let one archetype or one part of ourselves take over at the expense of others. We can't sacrifice essential values in order to pursue one narrow urge or goal. Third, we must nurture and preserve the specifically human values that serve human life, that keep practical daily life going, and that keep human relationships alive.

4. Make it concrete with physical ritual. Whenever you do any form of inner work and bring it to an insight or resolution, you should do something to make it concrete. Either do a physical ritual, or if appropriate, do something that will integrate it into the fabric of your practical daily life. However, refrain from "acting out," i.e. taking your inner, subjective conflicts and urges and trying to live them out externally and physically. In addition, we should never use the images of external, physical people in Active Imagination.

Exercise: Contacting Your Body Wisdom

Sitting comfortably or lying down, relax your body a bit at a time, starting with your toes and working up to the top of your head. Then do it again and discover that you can relax still more.

Next, imagine and experience as vividly as you can that you are on a mountaintop looking for a way down. You see a rocky stairwell winding down and around the mountain and you begin to descend it. Sometimes the terrain is rough, with boulders in the path. Still, you keep on moving down and around, careful of the rocks, careful not to slip. Go slowly; don't hurry.

When at last you reach the bottom, you discover a door leading inside the mountain. You open that door, enter, and find yourself in a long and pleasant corridor. You are aware that you are walking deeper into the mountain now, but you can trust your own progress. You feel instinctively that this is a place of renewal and learning about the restorative powers of your body.

Allow yourself to look around at the surroundings; you may be surprised to find pictures on the walls portraying beautiful nature scenes as well as fantastic portraits of cellular structure. Continue your walk down the corridor, moving more deeply into the heart of the mountain.

At the end of the corridor is a door. It bears a sign: The One Who Knows Health. Open the door and walk into a most interesting room to meet this being.

This is someone who understands all about you - the one who is the representative of your own body wisdom and has access to billions of bits of information concerning your state of health and what is necessary for its improvement.

Sit down in the chair across from this being and ask both general and specific questions about yourself. Don't demand answers. Allow yourself to be passively receptive to what comes through. The One Who Knows Health may communicate in words or images or even through muscular sensations or feeling states.

Just allow yourself to be relaxed, receptive, and attentive to the messages that you are receiving.

And when you know that these messages have finished, and not before, ask the wise one before you: "What can I do for you?"

Having received this message, sit in silence with this wise being for a few minutes in deep communion, in deep recognition.

And when you are ready to leave, thank this being for the wisdom offered and the understanding received.

Leaving now and carefully closing the door behind you, retrace your steps up the mountain, feeling your body integrating this new knowledge with each step you take until you reach the top. And when you get to the top, open your eyes.

Sense your body now in this familiar place. Get up and walk about. And dance the discoveries you have made.

"SIX HATS" DISCUSSION

This exercise is one of the tools of creative thinking developed by Edward de Bono and explained in detail in his book, Six Hats. It is an excellent way to test an idea from a variety of perspectives without it degenerating into one person pushing an idea and others trying to "shoot it down". However, it is important to realise that it does take both a sense of discipline, that is, sticking with the point of view assigned to you by your "Hat", and a willingness to play a role . Many people are uncomfortable with role playing and may not add much to the discussion. A sensitive leader will ask questions of that person that can draw out a response from their assigned perspective.

It is necessary to understand that you are assuming a point of view and must try to see the question under discussion from that light. Often you may not agree personally with the way you are assigned talk about it, but by thinking of how someone who does feel that way would respond will help get out a broader perspective.

It is important to have someone writing notes for post analysis discussion. Even better is to have someone take notes on key points, write them on individual cards, and tape them to a wall surrounding the subject under discussion on a large card or in the centre of a circle. In this way people can see the key points and will not have to rely totally on their memory alone.

The Six Hats

Blue: The blue hat is the moderator and facilitator. He does not offer his own opinions but can ask questions to get further data and input. He must keep the process moving. It is helpful if he repeats in his own words what others are saying to make sure the insights are understood.

White: The objective one. "Only the facts please!" His responsibility is to get out all the basic information needed for discussion.

Red: States the "gut feel" or emotional response, e.g. "I like it." "It makes me nervous." "I feel it is a big risk for us." "I feel a lot of people will be surprised by this." These statements are not to be rationalised, defended or justified.

Yellow: This expresses the positive aspects of the proposal, giving reasons where appropriate, and may be described as the "best case" scenario.

Black: This is the negative side, pointing out the dangers and the facts that would deter one from proceeding, the "worst case" scenario.

Green: Wearing this hat the group employs what de Bono calls "lateral thinking". New ideas, sometimes outrageous, are encouraged. It requires breaking loose from the normal, linear thinking. The question asked is "What if....." It is this person's responsibility to make connections to things that might not be obvious to others.

Procedure

Have the group sit in a circle or around a table. Lay out the focus topic or proposal and assign each person a hat, explaining their role and responsibility. It is helpful for role playing if you actually have colored hats people can put on. Give each person a chance to do some individual thinking. Then go around to each "hat" giving each of them not more than five minutes to make their points. Others may ask this person questions, but keep them to a minimum, as it is difficult to keep the perspective objective if there is excessive discussion.

After all have spoken take off the "hats" and open up the conversation for more discussion. Start with objective data, "what did you remember people saying?" Then ask, "where did you find yourself agreeing? ....or questioning? ... or excited?" No prolonged discussion here, just "reactions". Then ask for more interpretation and depth discussion. This will be a longer time of discussion, but try getting people to state their "insights". Finally, move the discussion towards the implications and decisions. Make sure all the responses are recorded with a copy of all the data to each participant.

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