

Innovative Approaches to
Outstanding Performance

The Practical Innovator

For clients, colleagues and friends of Lynne C. Levesque Volume II, Issue 1.

From the Editor

We're back...

Did you wonder what happened to the second issue of **The Practical Innovator**? Right after the first issue was published, I signed a book contract. I have spent most of the past year immersed in writing a book designed to help individuals and teams be more productive and competitive by tapping the creative power of personality.

That incredible experience taught me an important lesson. It is one thing to research, study and teach creativity. It's another to be creative. In addition to gathering lots of important information, I have certainly gained a new appreciation for the creative process.

I hope you will enjoy this tardy second issue and that it will give you a quick reference to ideas for solving problems, being more competitive, and keeping good employees.

I look forward to your comments!

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Creativity Messages from Down Under

Australia has many amazing animals with fascinating stories about surviving in changing environments. One bird that particularly intrigues me is the Malleefowl.

The Malleefowl, which looks like a large pheasant, does things very differently. Known as the bird with the built-in thermometer, it can serve as a metaphor for a creative leader. In the autumn, the male digs a deep hole. He and his mate fill it with leaf litter and then use soil to build a large mound up to 22 meters in circumference. While the female is occupied with laying eggs in the mound, the male is busy maintaining the mound's temperature at roughly 33° so that the eggs can incubate and hatch. He uses his beak to monitor the temperature in the mound. He adds or subtracts soil from the mound in order to maintain the right temperature.

When the egg hatches, the chick has to fight its way to the top of the mound. After reaching the top, it is able to run within two hours and fly within 24 hours. The chick is on its own, since the adult birds provide no parental care to their offspring. Many don't make it, because of animal predators and the clearing, grazing, and frequent burning of their habitats by humans. In fact, the Malleefowl is now classified as "rare or likely to become extinct."

As a metaphor for the creative leader, the Malleefowl offers interesting comparisons. Working persistently to build the right culture and then keeping the right "temperature" for teams and individuals to flourish are key roles of a team leader (see inside stories). Letting creative ideas hatch on their own and recognizing that not all will survive are part of the creative process.

Metaphors are helpful in contrasts that don't work as well. The life of the Malleefowl is a lonely one, in addition to a hard one. They take little nourishment and they are threatened with extinction. Hopefully that's not your story as a creative team leader?

I plan to contribute no less than 1% of the net profits from my consulting practice to preserve this amazing animal and its habitat. According to Susanne Dennings, Coordinator of the Malleefowl Preservation Group in Ongerup, Western Australia, "we are a small band of wheat and sheep farmers who are concerned about not just the Malleefowl but our own long term planning for more than just tomorrow!!"



True Stories

While most of the last year has been spent on writing my book, I did have some stimulating work projects. One of the most exciting assignments was working with Ideascop Associates, Inc. on a visioning project for one of their clients.

It was exciting on two counts. Ideascop is a recognized leader in the field of strategic innovation. The firm has helped major corporations, such as Agilent Technologies, Barclays, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Intel, Motorola, Procter & Gamble, and US West, develop break-through growth

"Vision, strategy and objectives are the bedrock for managing innovation and change."

-- M. Tushman and C. O'Reilly

strategies. So working with them was great experience. But the project itself intrigued me since having a shared vision and audacious goals are major success factors for organizations that want to build and sustain an innovative, competitive edge.

The client's challenge

The challenge for the client, a long-established international specialty materials company, was

to develop a new vision for the next ten years. Their current vision, developed over a period of two years back in the early 1990's, was set to expire in 2002. By now was more of an operating plan than an inspiration toward the future.

The chairman of the Board and his operating group wanted an update to the vision. They also wanted a vision that was inclusive of the company's 18,000 employees spread around the globe and one that was truly farsighted.

True stories continued on pg. 3

Managing for More Creative

Results (adapted from the upcoming book, tentatively titled *INCREDIBLE TALENTS*, by Lynne Levesque)

Question: Is it really true that everyone is creative? That's hard to believe when I hear team members constantly say things like "we tried that and it didn't work" or "that won't work around here."

Answer: While everyone has the potential for being creative, or consistently producing different and valuable results, not everyone knows how to be his or her creative best.

Certain individuals may need more support than others to see the positive side of change and creative initiatives. They may value the status quo and not understand the reasons for change.

They may need help believing that they are creative and capable of prospering with new jobs or assignments. Their persistence, ability to deal with details, understanding of resistance, and willingness to build on the work of others make them valuable contributors to creative efforts, just like Thomas Edison! To help such individuals be more creative, you can:

- ▲ Give them time to digest and test out information, voice their concerns, and develop plans for coping
- ▲ Explain the reasons for changes
- ▲ Recognize their contributions
- ▲ Value the past as an important part of the future
- ▲ Include them as much as possible in decision making and planning
- ▲ Be sure expectations about roles are clear and explicit
- ▲ Encourage and support their exploration of new ideas and possibilities through small steps
- ▲ Explore different creativity techniques, such as more structured tools that may work better for these individuals than blue-sky techniques.

Remember one size does not fit all when it comes to being creative! 

Next issue: Managing the "big idea" person for more creative results.

Creativity Tips

No matter where you are in an organization, you can build a team environment that encourages change and innovation if you:

1. Treat every member of the group as an individual. Help members identify, develop and treasure their creative strengths. Be sure everyone is really listening to different perspectives. Build trust and mutual respect and the ability to constructively challenge each other's ideas.
2. Do whatever you can to give team members the freedom to decide what work to do or how to do it. Within the goals and objectives for the team, give team members a sense of control over their work. Help them understand the importance and urgency of the project.
3. Make sure you are serving as a good role model. You should be constantly communicating, being creative yourself, and showing confidence in your team's abilities to be creative. 

More ideas in the next issue of *The Practical Innovator*

... "Help team members identify, develop and treasure their creative strengths." ...



Lessons from Research.

One way to measure how well your organization supports creativity and innovation is to use KEYS, The Innovation Assessment Process.

A study by KEYS co-developer Teresa Amabile, now at Harvard Business School, used KEYS to define the impact of a downsizing initiative on creativity. The study analyzed KEYS measurements taken during the downsizing at a large international electronics manufacturing company. The study collected additional data on risk-taking behavior, job satisfaction, likelihood of voluntary exit, and the number of invention disclosures and patent applications.

As the downsizing progressed, the study found that employees were adapting to the changes. However, "the creativity of individuals and teams continued to be depressed well beyond the end of the downsizing." One key factor appeared to be the work group environment.

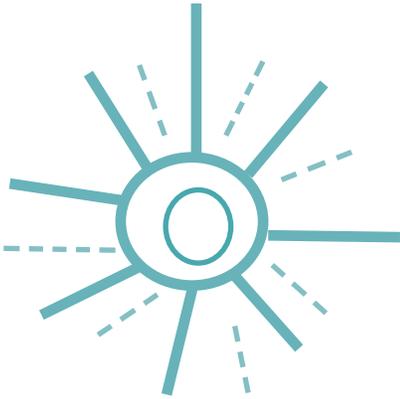
Even though the overall organizational environment improved, lack of work group stability, mutual trust, respect and support correlated with higher levels of depression, greater likelihood of leaving the company voluntarily, and lower levels of entrepreneurial behavior and job satisfaction.

According to the study, leaders need to:

- ▲ Be sure downsizing is truly the smartest course and if so, conduct it in a timely fashion; and
- ▲ Provide as much stability as possible in work groups and undertake team building efforts as soon as new groups are formed.

Without these precautions, "the long-term negative effects of [downsizing] on creativity and innovation may only retrigger the corporate woes that started the cycle in the first place." 

(From the *Academy of Management Journal*, 1999, 42 (6), pp. 630-640.)



True stories continued from pg. 1

The project

The company chose Ideascopes in May 1999 to help them define what they came to call Vision 2010. Working with Ideascopes, the company defined just what Vision 2010 meant and how they would go about developing it. Vision 2010 ended up consisting of:

- ▲ a statement of core values and core purpose, to express the timeless guiding principles of the organization and its fundamental reason for being,
- ▲ a vivid description, or mission statement, which defined the company's desired position in the future, and
- ▲ a set of audacious, bold goals that would enable the company to achieve its mission.

To ensure that Vision 2010 would be inclusive, a structure for the process was laid out. The Chairman of the organization and his operating group would set the overall direction and support the effort throughout the company. (Their strong commitment turned out to be a critical factor in the success of the effort.) A Core Team, made up of four senior executives and the Ideascopes consultants, was assigned the responsibility of managing the process.

Ten other teams were formed throughout the company, representing a cross section of geographical, functional, and special interest groups in the organization. In all, over 150 employees, from junior to senior levels, participated in the process. Finally a Visioning Team was built out of the Core Team members and the captains of the 10 teams to make sure their team's interests were represented throughout the completion of the project.

The process

Over the course of the next four months, meetings were held around the globe. To ensure that Vision 2010 was far-reaching, Ideascopes used several proprietary exercises to stretch the thinking of the team members about the future. In addition, before meeting, team members were asked to research market and global trends for the next ten years.

Over 2 and 1/2 days, team members first individually defined their personal values. They then worked in small groups to find common themes. Using company stories, the groups also defined the organization's **core values**. The next step was for each group to articulate what it believed was the organization's **core purpose**: why it was founded and why it continued to exist.

Next, team members shared the research that they had completed prior to the meeting. Based on this information, they identified key descriptors of the world in the year 2010. Using the company's core purpose and values, they selected the key descriptors that would be most meaningful for the company. They explored these descriptors in more detail to define their view of the world in 2010 and the position they felt the company should hold in that world.

That position became their draft of a **mission statement** for the company. Finally, the team determined what goals they needed to set to achieve that mission. The **goals** addressed areas such as globalization, profitability, market share, and innovation.

These ten meetings around the world, according to Mark Kennedy from Ideascopes, "were a major undertaking, but they made sure employees played a key role in creating Vision 2010."

Results

In October the Visioning Team met for three days in the company's headquarters to consolidate the work of the 10 teams and to define an integrated Vision 2010. Two days later, the Core Team met with the operating group for a day. Although there were slight modifications for clarity, the work of the Visioning Team was essentially approved.



The next step was to finalize the Vision by obtaining internal and external feedback prior to rollout and implementation. To provide external expertise and advice, Ideascopes arranged for a roundtable discussion with executives from other organizations who had gone through similar visioning processes.

The final product was presented at the organization's two-day worldwide conference in early December. The 200 most senior managers in the organization listened to the chairman describe Vision 2010. They then broke up into groups, each of which was asked to explore one of the core values and goals in detail. The participants presented their findings and questions the next day. After having their issues and questions addressed, they received communications packages to support the rollout of Vision 2010 in their business units.

Simultaneous with the rollout, the operating group has begun to review current product lines to see how they fit with Vision 2010. This effort will identify current capabilities and gaps that need to be addressed. Specific plans to address the gaps will be defined by July, 2000.

Summary

Alignment with an organizational vision and individual commitment to bold, challenging goals are hallmarks of innovative companies. By spending the time, energy and resources to build an inclusive, far-reaching vision, the company is well on its way toward creating a future where it will be a major global player in its markets.



The Practical Innovator

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*"Everyone has the potential to be creative....
But not everyone knows how to be his or her
creative best."*

Products and Services

Lynne C. Levesque, editor of The Practical Innovator, earned a doctorate for her work on creativity in top executives after spending 17 years in industry and management. Four years ago she started her consulting and facilitation practice, located in Charlestown, MA. She now offers innovative tools, techniques, and approaches to help leaders solve problems, build more competitive organizations, and keep good employees.

Consulting Services

Consulting and facilitation services support organizations in teambuilding, change and project management, and organizational creativity and innovation. Services include organizational assessments, individual and team diagnostics, and ongoing support for leaders and teams.

Workshops

Workshops provide substantive material in an interactive environment, focused on practical application. Because of their modular design, they can be easily customized to meet each group's particular needs.

We welcome your questions, success stories, and suggestions for future issues!
Call 617-242-7801 or e-mail them to llevesque@compuserve.com.

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The Innovative Environment

- ▲ *Building a Resilient and Innovative Organization (two days)*
- ▲ *Using KEYS: The Innovation Assessment Process to manage for innovation and change (one to two days)*

Creative Processes and Tools

- ▲ *Creative Problem Solving (one day)*
- ▲ *Building Exceptional Teams (one - three days)*
- ▲ *Teampayer Styles (one day)*
- ▲ *Thinking for the Future (half day)*
- ▲ *Successful Decision-Making (half day)*
- ▲ *Achieving Innovative Results through Effective Project Management (one - two days)*
- ▲ *Doing More with Less (one day)*

The Creative Individual

- ▲ *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® programs*
- ▲ *Developing Team Talents (one day)*
- ▲ *The Leader as Creative Change Agent (one to two days)*

Curious about the designs in this newsletter? They are based on Australian aboriginal symbols, describing travel and change. The logo depicts the new perspectives a traveller brings to the problems of others.