



NEWSLETTER

Number Two

Fall 1997

DEAR READERS

The last hearty tomatoes cling to the vines, the pumpkins are changing from green to brilliant orange. Another fall approaches. Another turn of the wheel. A good time to reflect on transitions, transformations and innovation.

- Laurie Tema-Lyn

MUSINGS ON TRANSITIONS , TRANSFORMATIONS AND INNOVATION

As I write this newsletter, I take a noon-time break for a walk. It's a surprisingly warm fall afternoon. A passer-by comments: "good day for a walk—better take advantage of the fine weather while it lasts." That gets me thinking: the climate has also been pretty good for business these days. Inflation is low, profits are up, unemployment is down, the stock market is flying, headlines are filled with news about emerging industries and new strategic partnerships. Are we taking advantage of these good times while they last? Are corporate leaders investing in their people and processes to ensure a successful future, or to prepare them for the inevitable down-cycles to come?

The answer is mixed. Some organizations take advantage of good times to explore ways to grow business—to deliver better products and services that anticipate consumer needs, and at the same time they also actively seek out ways to foster happier

employees. Companies such as Southwest Airlines (the only airline to turn a profit every year since 1973 and has never had a layoff) deeply recognize that corporations are made of human beings and enduring business is about relationships. Motivated, involved, enthusiastic people can overcome tremendous obstacles, and can create great and useful things together. Their passion can be infectious—and can spread throughout an organization, touching the customer in a way that ensures support, loyalty and sales.

There's the other side to corporate life, captured in the daily doings of Dilbert. He brings to light fad-of-the-month management practices. Focused entirely on the bottom line, they de-humanize work and ultimately sabotage outcomes. Dilbert also shows us ways in which corporate decision-makers can be insulated from feedback and only pay lip-service to change.

This brings me to creativity and innovation. It's been part of human experience and enterprise forever, and as a manage-

(Continued on next page)

Practical Imagination Enterprises is located at 43 Bedford Road, Post Office Box 693 in Carlisle, Massachusetts 01741-0693. Please call us at (978) 369-1544 or send us a fax at (978) 369-1812.

Interesting Reads

The Art and Science of Business Creativity

by John Kao,
HarperBusiness 1996

John Kao brilliantly uses the metaphor of the jazz jam session to talk about ways that managers can develop teams to work creatively together. A lively read, filled with keen observations, insights and practical tools.

Seeing Differently: Insights on Innovation

Edited with an introduction by John Seely Brown, *A Harvard Business Review Book*

This is an outstanding collection of previously published articles from the Harvard Business Review. The case is made that the revolution in information and communications technologies necessitates a fundamental re-thinking of how we do business. Creating strategies, marketing, developing new products, doing research all require a competency in innovation in order to stay ahead of the game.

The Corporate Mystic: A Guidebook for Visionaries with their Feet on the Ground

Gay Hendricks and Kate Ludeman, *Bantam Books*

What are the qualities that set visionary leaders apart? Hendricks and Ludeman have crafted an inspiring book filled with wisdom and practical tools to deal with everyday business problems. The twelve characteristics of twenty-first century leaders: absolute honesty, fairness, self-knowledge, focus on contribution, non-dogmatic spirituality, getting more done doing less, calling forth the best from themselves and others, openness to change, special sense of humor, distant vision and close-up focus, self-discipline and balance.

The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Creativity

by Julia Cameron with Mark Bryan, *G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1992*

Written by a Hollywood writer-director, the Artist's Way is a treasure-chest of exercises, meditations and creative affirmations to help an individual discover and recover her creative self.

ment art and science it's been around some 50 years—since the days when Alex Osborne first coined the term *brainstorming*. While it's true that creativity and innovation can be used as one of those fad management practices, it also has proven itself to be a sustaining management philosophy and practice in many of the most successful and profitable corporations.



FROM POTATOES TO VICHYSOISE

Working with a team of esteemed chemists and market development

managers recently, I was asked what special talent I had that justified me helping them wrestle with a tough challenge. Jokingly I responded, "I make a really great pot of soup." Seriously—soup-making is an excellent metaphor for innovation. The cook gathers raw materials—(ingredients, expertise, information and ideas) and brings them together in such a way as to produce something with a different form, with different qualities from what she started with.

The process itself reflects a transformation both in the end results and in the creators themselves. The cook for example doesn't put together ingredients purely to provide the body with nourishment, but to produce other experiences. Eating food together is a relating event. This was dramatically brought to light in a series of focus groups we conducted to create positioning for a line of sauces. When I asked participants to describe a recent memorable meal, they described the foods, flavors, textures and tastes as a backdrop and catalyst to their connection-making with friends and family. In similar fashion, the very act of bringing people together for the stated purpose of idea creation and development produces qualitative changes within the individual participants.

A NEW CULTURE

In our ideation sessions we set up a dedicated space in which each person's contributions are not merely tolerated but solicited and valued. We develop a group culture where participants are focused on finding the usefulness in each other's ideas and deliberately emphasize working to enrich those ideas. We create a safe place to play with our images and connections and we use toys and materials to help support that playful expression. Team members who may live by day in an analytical world of ingredient formulas or business strategies become facile at making metaphors. They role play customers in action and vision future markets or product applications. The freedom, risk-taking, collaboration and delight they experience changes the nature of how they think, work, and relate. I observe the change—sometimes for just a brief time—while we work together, and then they succumb to the pressures of business-as-usual. But I have also witnessed business colleagues who have developed passionate and profitable behaviors that carry-through over the long haul to a new way of being their companies.

It's no accident that Dilbert strikes such a resounding chord with the experience of many people. Of course corporate leaders are driven to increase the bottom line and return to shareholders, but it's also clear that productive human beings need to interact with each other in ways that are very human. An astute observer of corporate culture once told me that the corporate water cooler was the action place for ideas. The watering hole literally brings people together from different parts of the corporation to connect with each other—dispensing information, thoughts, ideas (and gripes) momentarily experiencing a shared perspective.

WHAT ARE THE LESSONS FROM DA VINCI?

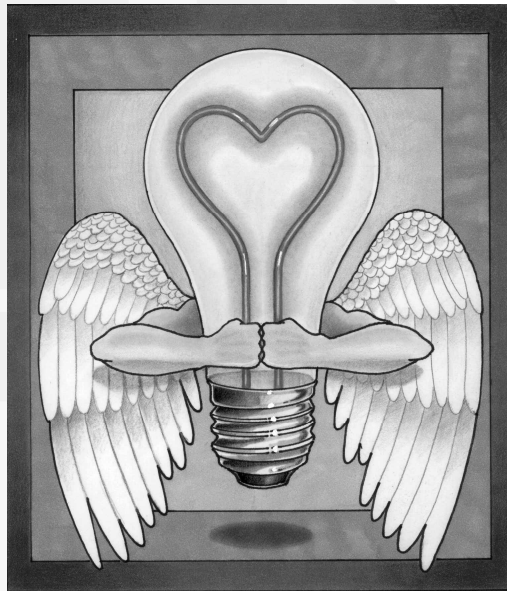
An inspiring exhibit on the remarkable life of Leonardo da Vinci—scientist, inventor and artist recently left the Boston Museum of Science. There was much to learn from his life about the nature of creativity and innovation.

Passionately curious, da Vinci observed and understood the structure of working things—whether the anatomy of the human body, or the strength of a bridge. And he used that knowledge of structure as a springboard from which to vision and dream of possibilities. A solitary Renaissance man, he was generations ahead of his peers. But while da Vinci made copious notes of his observations, ideas and inventions, his notes were not disseminated during his life. For the most part, his ideas didn't enter the group practice of the day for others to reflect upon, build upon or refute.

As we can now learn through his notebooks, da Vinci's mind was like a pinball machine, constantly bouncing from one thing to another, connecting things seemingly unrelated, finding the universal in the particular. For example, he studied the human body as an engineer studies a machine; saw the parallels between the earth's body and the human; observed the flight of birds to create his prototypes of flying. Da Vinci was a prolific creative genius but, Mona Lisa aside, he didn't follow through on the majority of his ideas. He was a creator—but not an innovator.

CREATING IDEAS WITH MUSCLE, WING AND HEART

We often frame the focus of our consulting as helping teams to “create ideas with muscle, wing and heart.” Some people have questioned what's behind that phrase. So permit a poetic explanation...



Wing

We think of wing as providing structure; you have to pay attention to what is useful. As da Vinci discovered, you can build wings that flap but they won't fly unless you really understand the dynamics of how they work. When we create and develop ideas together we have to understand how they can sail through an internal organization as well as the external marketplace. *Wing* also has another crucial meaning. We help our team members stretch beyond their comfort zones to create ideas that are lofty, and that have forward momentum.

(Continued on next page)

Thank You!

PIE celebrated its second anniversary this summer. We thank our clients and colleagues—many of whom we've worked with over the course of 5... 10... even 15 years in various business incarnations. And it's been a pleasure to work with several new clients in diverse industries.

New Directions

In addition to our consulting practice, I've continued the exploration of creativity in the playground of the kitchen. The first public workshop of *Creating the Creative Cook* will be held at the Interface Center for holistic education on November 22, 1997. You can register for that program by calling Interface at (617)964-9360.

We appreciate your comments to this newsletter and contributions to our future publications.

(Continued from Page 3)

Muscle

Muscle is what moves things through applied effort. Generating and developing good new ideas and strategies needs strength. That strength comes in the form of the brain-power assembled to work on the task, and it also reflects the muscle-power necessary to support and champion results. *Muscle* moves ideas into products and services that are successful in the marketplace.

Heart

Heart has to do with will, and commitment to purpose. In a business setting creativity for the sake of creativity doesn't go anywhere. The process has to be purpose-driven. But *heart* also reminds us that ideas

have to connect with human beings. Even products in industries that play very far upstream (e.g. in the business of creating pharmaceuticals, or ingredients or molecules which go into materials which ultimately go into products) we have to be conscious that there is always a customer, a consumer somewhere—within the organizations in which we operate and within the marketplace.

Practical Imagination Enterprises specializes in helping clients develop distinctive new ideas and innovative practices that are grounded in the reality of the marketplace. We take a strategic approach to developing new products/services and line extensions, design and conduct qualitative market research, and offer advanced creativity and innovation skill development programs.

Copyright 1997, Practical Imagination Enterprises®

Practical Imagination Enterprises®

43 Bedford Road

P.O. Box 693

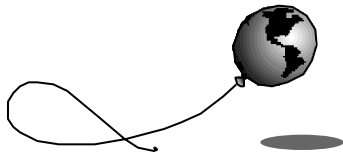
Carlisle, MA 01741-0693

Phone: *(978) 369-1544

Fax: *(978) 369-1812

E-Mail: LTL325@aol.com

(*Note the new area code!)



43 Bedford Road • P.O. Box 693
Carlisle, MA 01741-0693
Phone: (978) 369-1544 • Fax: (978)
369-1812

