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Focus on Innovation

Focus on Innovation is a monthly electronic newsletter designed to provoke thoughts and ideas on how to bring innovation to life within the organizations in which we work.

For Those on the Run

The end-of-year holidays are still the biggest season - and reason - for gift giving. No matter if we are at the last minute or started early, we endeavour in trying to find that unique gift for the special people in our life. This month's newsletter explores ideas as gifts - they are unique and there is a way to give and receive them.

Ideas as Gifts

Ideas are gifts and if you are listening and in a state of awareness you shall find a universe of ideas.

Kathleen Arnason, Author

Everything you see around you began as an idea - the computer, the stapler, the paperclip, the microchip, the chocolate chip. All of them began as an idea within someone's fevered imagination. Some might say the originators of these ideas saw them as gifts that they were open to receive and gladly passed on to others.

Ideas are gifts. Some wake us at night. Many come from seeing slantwise something we thought we knew. Others come when we tire of doing something over and over that does not work. Like any gift we need to be open to receiving them. Here are some ways to do this:

- **Make our mind receptive to different ideas, facts, or perspectives.** To do this we need the mental equivalent of a blank piece of paper - go to a quiet room, take a walk, listen to quiet music - to empty your mind.
- **Allow time for incubation** - pose your problem in your mind and then let it go. Then listen to the solutions that come to you - in the shower, taking a walk, while driving your car, etc.
- **Keep an idea log** - a complete graphic record of all your thinking on a project; a place to store your ideas as you have them and for making ideas happen.
- **Shush the inner critic** - that little voice that undermines your creativity. Replace weed thoughts with seed thoughts.

Sometimes we are so wrapped up in ourselves that we rarely take the time to listen to the ideas of others. Our colleagues know this and, consequently, rarely share their ideas with us. The time it takes you to listen to the ideas of others is not only worth it - the success of your organization depends on it. The next time someone comes to you with an idea the first thing you need to do is realize the opportunity you have. An idea is about to be shared, one that may herald a breakthrough or, at the very least, solve a problem, capitalize on an opportunity, or make your life easier. If possible, drop what you're doing, focus all of your attention on the idea generator, take a deep breath, and begin a series of questions that demonstrate your interest. If you cannot drop what you're doing, schedule some time - as soon as possible - for the idea originator to share it with you.

When working in teams remember that your ideas are gifts to the group; offer them and let the group address, challenge, and improve them. Ideas are a product of human interchange and rightfully belong to the whole collaborative team. Each person's ideas are gifts from and to the team. When colleagues offer ideas it is the message that counts - our response can either hinder or support the idea. Your response - in the form of exploratory questions - needs to be as genuine as possible.

Consider some of the following openers:

- "That's a wonderful idea. Go with it!"
- "That sounds interesting. Tell me more."
- "What excites you the most about this idea?"
- "What is the essence of your idea - the core principle?"
- "What's your next step?"
- "Have you thought about how you'll handle ____?"
- "You might get some good ideas on that from ____."
- "I'd like to know more about ____?"
- "What do *you* like best about it?"
- "What make it interesting?"
- "If you only had 30 days to manifest your idea, what would you do?"
- "What information do you still need?"
- "Who are your likely collaborators?"

In the year ahead, seek to cultivate an attitude of openness to ideas, no matter what their source. Treat ideas as a gift to be given and received with respect and enthusiasm. You and your organization will benefit greatly.

What's the Bottom line

We at Foursight wish you a peaceful holiday and prosperous New Year. In the spirit of ideas as gifts, we would like to offer you a one hour free consultation or workshop on how to boost innovative thinking. Contact us by January 7, 2007 for this free gift.



Please feel free to pass this newsletter on to others.

If you would like more information about the ideas and topics listed in this issue, contact Judy Laws, Ph.D. at jlaws@foursightconsulting.com.

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