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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

December is a month when we can all be imaginative no matter how creative we think we are. Read this month's newsletter to find out how to use imagination in your life.

'Tis the Season to be...Imaginative

*"The world of reality has its limits: the world of imagination is boundless."
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Philosopher and composer of enlightenment*

Are you a "baa humbug" or "Joy to the World" type of person at this time of year? Are you stuck in the same old same old patterns of last year or does this describe you right now:

- You have just bought that unique gift for that special (or not so special) person.
- Better yet, this year you have found a strategic spot for the gifts where you are sure the kids won't find them.
- You have discovered a way to get all our work done so that we can start our holidays early. Either that or you have shoved it in your drawer to tackle creatively when you get back.
- You finally figure out how to beat the holiday crowds.

If this does describe you then you have been tapping into your imagination. If not, no need to panic, any ability or talent can be developed by training. You can improve your imagination by exercising it.

Imagination is the act or power of forming a mental image of something not present to the senses or never before wholly perceived in reality. It is a creative ability that we all had (and hopefully still have) as a child. The ability to imagine is universal. The power to imagine is not limited by gender, culture, education or intelligence. The fact is if more of us understood the power of imagination we could transform our life accordingly. Here are some techniques to help you develop your imagination.

Techniques to Develop Your Imagination

- ✦ **Reading.** Alex Osborn, author of "Applied Imagination" wrote: "Reading supplies bread for imagination to feed on, and bones for it to chew on." Read anything that will stimulate your thinking, challenge your personal belief system and inspire you to take action; the more diversity in your

reading the better. The key however is to use reading as a creative exercise to read **selectively** and **actively**, i.e. take a topic of interest and read several viewpoints.

- ✦ **Write it down.** The act of writing forces you to utilize all phases of the creative process and come up with a tangible product. Use your wireless communication device or keep a journal nearby to capture your thinking. The key is to allow time to incubate on ideas to allow them to illuminate.
- ✦ **Personal contacts.** Associate yourself with creative people. Look for people who are fun to talk to and have a keen interest in life; someone who can stimulate your thought process is what you're looking for. For example, last week I went to a Christmas craft fair with one of my creative friends. I was looking for ideas for my children, specifically an imaginative solution for their newly painted bathroom. As we stood in front of this booth of ceramic fish we together came up with a unique wall display of marine life. She helped fuel my imagination.
- ✦ **Hang out with children.** A child's world is filled with fantasy, and yours can be too, if you make an effort to hang out with them. Try an association game with a child where you both look at something together and ask the child, "What does that look like to you?" or "What does that make you think of?" Playing imagination games with children and creatively interacting with them is a great way to get back in touch with your imagination.
- ✦ **Practice your imagination skills.** Using techniques of relaxation and meditation on a daily basis will help you develop your imagination skills. Put yourself in a rest (alpha) state - find a place to sit quietly, close your eyes, focus on your breathing and relax. Visualize familiar objects first. Progress to seeing your goals, thoughts, and ideas as visual images in your mind.
- ✦ **Travel.** What a better way to get you out of a "lack of imagination" rut but to travel. Traveling can expose you to new people, customs, ideas and way of living; it allows you to view life from a fresh perspective and give yourself a new outlook, if you allow it. If you can't physically get away try arm-chair travelling by watching travel shows, reading travelling books or visiting websites such as the Lonely Planet website (<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/>).
- ✦ **Trust yourself.** The more that you trust your own ability to think, the more proficient you will become at thinking imaginatively. If you rely on others to solve your problems and come up with ideas, your ability to think imaginatively will shrivel up rather than flourish. If you are having trouble with this one, try remembering when you were two years old and the magnificent imagination you had then. You are that same kid, just a little bit older - its time to reclaim your imagination back.

What's the Bottom line

Who can say it better than Albert Einstein, "Imagination is more than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination circles the world."



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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