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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 value of getting things into some sort of visual, graphic format is a key component to successful innovation in any domain. Read this month's newsletter to learn about a technique called *Strategic Graffiti* that you can use with your team to help them "think in pictures" to solve a problem or identify future state.

Creativity Technique: Strategic Graffiti

*"A picture is worth a thousand words."
- Napoleon*

The value of mental imagery and visualization in driving performance and innovation is undisputed. Pictures and images can connect people to the intention in a very forceful way, toughing their hearts and minds. They connect the right brain with the left and help us see the path more clearly.

The practical use of pictures in solving problems or identifying future state include: pictures and images connect people to thoughts and goals and help turn valuable ideas into action and; there is no step-by-step process or one best way for thinking in pictures.

Strategic graffiti is one activity to help a group think in pictures. This activity can be used to either have a group identify their future state and help identify the strategic direction they should take. It can also be used to help a group solve a problem.

Strategic Graffiti Technique

Materials Needed:

- Flipchart paper or roll of artist paper cut to create a five-panel mural on the wall
- Lots of different colour pens/crayons
- Lots of magazines on different topics
- Enough glue sticks for each table group

- Enough pairs of scissors for each table group

Timing:

- 45 - 60 minutes

Group Size:

- 5 - 50 people

Instructions:

1. Depending on the size of your group, either keep them together or break them up into 2 - 3 groups.
2. Using big paper put up a five-panel mural on the wall.
3. Instruct participants to use the five-panel mural, on the wall, as their canvas. Tell them to sketch/draw (with lots of different colour pens/crayons) and/or use magazine clippings to create a picture of the future state you are trying to create or problem you are trying to solve. They can use stick figures, draw anything they like using minimal words. The only rules are:
 - No process maps, fishbone diagrams, long sentences, i.e. minimal words.
 - Make it vibrant, colourful
 - Don't need to be an artist - no one judging your creativity here

If you are focusing on identifying future state, post the following on a flipchart:

It is now 2010/2012 - create a picture (no words) of your organization:

- What does perfection look like?
- What's going on?
- Who's in the picture?
- What are people doing, etc?

Make the picture vibrant, colorful; it is okay to be raggedy.

If you are focusing on trying to solve a problem, post the following on a flipchart. Note: before doing this, articulate the problem to be solve:

- Draw me a picture of the problem as it stands today :
- Who is involved? How do they feel?
- What works, what doesn't?
- What's a day in the life look like?

Make the picture vibrant, colorful; it is okay to be raggedy.

4. Ask participants to respond to the questions you have on the flipchart while creating the picture using the material provided.
5. Once the picture is completed, facilitate a discussion asking the group what the picture is telling them about the future state of their organization or the problem you are trying to solve. Capture on a flipchart what the group tells you. Use this information to help articulate the desired future state or solution to the problem.

What's the Bottom line

Whenever you can, wherever you can, start by building a visual element into your or your team's thinking.

This newsletter was adapted from Matthew May's book, *The Elegant Solution: Toyota's Formula for Mastering Innovation*, New York: Free Press, 2007.



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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