

# Creativity at work

## An action research project

### Summary

Creativity is no longer a 'nice to have' quality within a few 'cranky' individuals - it is mentioned in the contexts of business survival and the need to stay ahead of the game within leading organisations. It is particularly mentioned as a source of competitive strength within organisations who face discontinuous or chaotic environments or where there is little or nothing to differentiate the product or service from competitors:

This report focuses on a number of organisations who encourage creativity at work and identifies best practices in terms of policies, strategies and their practical implementation. It also condenses seminal thinking on the subject, both theory and practice. The key findings from the study are that:

#### 1. *There are no magic formulae for creativity, just paradoxes*

There are no universal prescriptions that will enhance creativity within organisations. It is only possible to identify factors that make creative behaviour in organisations **more probable**. These factors were not consistent across the organisations studied. Furthermore, some of the practices mentioned are contrary to conventional wisdom on what encourages creativity.

#### 2. *Factors that make organisational creativity more probable*

A number of factors were identified that make creativity more **probable**. Broadly speaking these subdivide into the following areas:

- ☉ **Setting an appropriate culture, leadership style and living values that encourage people to think and act beyond current wisdom.**
- ☉ **Focusing more on informal structures and communications than trying to formalise these features. Ensuring that the built environment is stimulating.**
- ☉ **Devising systems of reward and personal growth that fit with the strategy and minimising the use of systems for their own sake.**
- ☉ **Encouraging diversity of people and tolerating the conflict that may result, providing that this is over ideas rather than of a corrosive nature.**

It is vital to take into account the culture, leadership style, values, structure, systems, resources and skill base of an organisation when attempting to devise approaches that will increase the potential for creativity to emerge.

### ***3. Creative leaders do it differently***

Amongst the attributes required for creative leadership a number of themes emerged from the research:

- ☉ Encouraging risk taking
- ☉ A key role of leadership as idea advocates
- ☉ Giving a tangible example to the concept that failure is a learning opportunity
- ☉ Building teams that have high levels of trust
- ☉ Giving freedom to 'bootleg'
- ☉ Leadership style more akin to a 'coach' or 'counsellor'
- ☉ The leader as a resource and enabler - The 'upturned pyramid'
- ☉ The ability to set a direction that excites others

### ***4. Not only but also....***

A shift in thinking is required to generate a more creative climate in organisations.

**From** 'either/or' thinking      **To** 'and/also' thinking

### ***5. Creativity 'toolkits' are insufficient***

Whilst some organisations made use of proprietary creativity 'toolkits', these were insufficient to generate a creative culture. The balance of focus needs to shift towards the creation of environments where people's innate creativity can emerge. Techniques have their place when an appropriate culture has been created, but these cannot be used to 'force' creativity out of people. A wide menu of tools is recommended, so that people may fit the tool to the organisational issue or design their own ones that fit the culture, rather than having to force fit issues to tools.

101 ideas for developing a more creative organisation are given within the report for adaptation to particular contexts.

The benefits of encouraging creativity within organisations are mostly intangible in the short term, yet a number of major organisations are striving to arrange themselves such that creativity is a more common feature. These are mostly connected with the need to become more responsive to customer needs and to recover from organisational change more rapidly. A number of examples of where creativity has been a vital ingredient in achieving success are given within the report.

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## 1.0 Introduction and aims

### 1.1 Why does creativity matter to organisations?

Creativity is no longer a 'nice to have' quality within a few 'cranky' individuals - it is mentioned in the contexts of business survival and the need to stay ahead of the game within leading organisations. It is particularly mentioned within organisations who face discontinuous or chaotic environments as a means of remaining flexible or where there is little or nothing to differentiate the product or service from competitors by adding low cost/high value enhancements.

*'To help us on our way, we should look for every opportunity to benefit from each other's experience in an environment where the individual can be creative and innovative - to the ultimate benefit of our customers'*

Sir Richard Sykes, Chief Executive GlaxoWellcome 1996 Staff Report

*'With creativity and daring Matsushita will continue to fulfil its responsibilities as a corporation and citizen of the world'*

Yoichi Morishita, President Matsushita Electric - Company overview

*'Economic success depends more than ever on the brain power and creativity of the workforce'*

Dominic Cadbury, Chairman of Cadbury Schweppes

This report is focused on the generation of a number of examples of creativity in action within organisations to enhance understanding of the topic.

### 1.2 Research project aims

The aim of the research project was as follows:

To identify best practices within a number of organisations that encourage creativity, in terms of policies, strategies and their practical implementation, in order to deliver the following outcomes:

- ☉ A wider view of the state of the art in this field.
- ☉ A collective list of best practices that may be **adapted** into other environments.

### 1.3 Project overview

The project encompasses a pragmatic overview of theories and practice on creativity at a personal and organisational level, a strategic review of the project findings and interview transcripts with key people in the organisations studied.

## 2.0 Background - Creativity at work

### 2.1 What is personal creativity?

Many definitions of creativity are available, which tend to illustrate both positive and negative associations to the notion of creativity:

*'The thinking of novel and appropriate ideas'*

Dr William E Coyne, Senior Vice president, Research and Development, 3M

This definition illustrates the need for creative people to offer ideas which are both **different** and **apt**. Thus, ideas (creativity) must be capable of transformed into action (innovation). In practice, it may take a variety of individuals to bring these relevant qualities to the organisation. 3M are unusual in so far as they see a strategic role for creativity in designing products that 'change the basis of competition', i.e. products that redefine what is expected by the customer and that leapfrog the competition.

*'I'm looking for people who won't fit the system'*

Dr Gareth Jones, Senior Vice President Human Resources Polygram International

Dr Jones refers to the fact that some creative groups operate under conditions of conflict of ideas, which can appear unproductive to outside observers. The winning move is to separate functional conflict from the kind of conflict that cripples an organisation.

Studies of literature on personal creativity in organisations add further dimensions to the above definitions:

- ☉ Creative individuals possess a number of basic qualities, such as Positivity, Playfulness, Passion and Persistence
- ☉ Creativity requires hard work as well as inspiration - it is not the sole domain of the 'mad scientist in the attic'. The story of Thomas Edison gives example to this. Apparently, Edison, having failed for the 1000th time to invent a light bulb, was reported to comment that he had just discovered yet another way **NOT** to invent a light bulb.
- ☉ Creativity is assisted by intelligence **across** a number of fields of expertise and non-expertise can be of value. It is believed that Alexander Graham Bell would not have attempted to invent the telephone if he had been an electronics expert.
- ☉ Creativity rests on the generation of a large number of choices. Instant judgements are likely to prevent opportunities for inventive search. This has important consequences for management of creative individuals, since a good deal of management is concerned with decision making and judgement.

Some of the barriers to personal creativity include:

- ☉ A fear of failure (or success)
- ☉ A dislike of chaos and uncertainty
- ☉ Overly judgmental behaviour
- ☉ Limiting mindsets - not being able to perceive possibilities
- ☉ An unwillingness to use one's imagination

## 2.2 What is organisational creativity?

A number of leading writers describe some of the essential features of creative organisations:

Charles Handy mentions the 'triple I corporation' as being the organisation of the future, where

$$I^3 = AV$$

I = Intelligence, Information and Ideas and AV = added value.

Twiss suggests that the possibilities open to organisations who want to develop conditions that encourage creativity include:

- ☉ The recruitment and retention of creative people
- ☉ The creation of a working environment that encourages creativity
- ☉ The use of any techniques which can be shown to be useful in developing creative problem solving capacity.

Ekvall stresses the importance of organisation climate which is assessed by the following factors:

- |                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| ☉ Challenge    | ☉ Playfulness |
| ☉ Freedom      | ☉ Debates     |
| ☉ Idea support | ☉ Conflicts   |
| ☉ Trust        | ☉ Risk taking |
| ☉ Dynamism     | ☉ Idea-time   |

Many so-called 'Learning Organisations' encourage creativity. There are many definitions of a learning organisation and this topic is explored in greater detail in a previous research report on the subject. A range of illustrative definitions is shown below:

*'Learning organisations are organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspirations are set free and where people are continually learning how to learn together.'*  
(Senge)

*'Organisation learning is a process in which members of an organisation detect errors or anomalies and correct it by restructuring organisational theory of action, embedding the results of their inquiry in organisational maps and images.'* (Argyris)

*'Learning organisations experiment more, encourage more tries, permit small failures, encourage internal competition, maintain a rich formal environment, heavily laden with information which spurs diffusion of ideas that work.'* (Peters)

At the present time, there is a focus on the need for radical change in organisations. Much organisational creativity is the result of incremental shifts in thinking and relatively few 'big breakthroughs' occur. creative ideas. Organisational creativity is mostly **adaptive** rather than **radical**.

A range of approaches used by a number of archetypal creative organisations give a perspective on the issues involved:

### 3M

- **Small is beautiful** - when a division gets too large, it is split up.
- **Accept failure** - Divisions must derive 30% of sales from products introduced in the last four years and 10% from products that are less than one year old.
- **Encourage champions** - When a 3M employee comes up with a product idea, s/he recruits a team to develop it. Salaries and promotions are tied to product progress.
- **Involve the customer in design** - Customers routinely help to brainstorm product ideas.
- **Share ideas** - Technology belongs to everyone, wherever it originates.
- **Don't kill a project** - If an idea does not 'fit' in one of 3M's divisions, an employee can devote 15% of his/her time to prove it is workable. Grants are awarded each year to encourage this.

In practice, it is said that some 3M employees use much more than 15% bootlegging time and others use none at all. What matters is the fact that the 15% rule exists as a visible permission/encouragement.

### Hewlett Packard

- **Bootlegging is OK** - Researchers are urged to spend 10% of their time on own pet projects.
- **Open all hours** - Facilities are open 24 hours a day.
- **Small is beautiful** - Keeps divisions small to maximise collaboration.

### Johnson and Johnson

- **Failure is OK** - The freedom to fail is a built-in cultural prerogative.
- **Autonomy is beautiful** - Uses many autonomous operating units to spur innovations.

Adapted and updated from Managing Innovation - Edited by Jane Henry and David Walker (Sage)

## 3.0 Organisations studied

### GlaxoWellcome Research and Development

GlaxoWellcome is the world's largest pharmaceutical company, with a strong commitment to innovative drug discovery.

### Merck Sharp and Dohme

Merck Sharp and Dohme (MSD) is a major international pharmaceutical company with a 100 year history and a strong commitment to innovative drug discovery.

### Drusillas Zoo Park - Alfriston, East Sussex

Drusillas is a small Zoo that focuses on education and environmental issues.

### The College of Guidance Studies

The College of Guidance Studies is a specialist University Sector College that focuses on the education and development needs of the guidance community.

### Kent County Council

A large county council recognised as being very pro-active. As such the organisation has a number of different approaches to creativity.

### Tibbett and Britten Consumer Group - Distribution Centre - Bristol

Tibbett and Britten (Bristol) provides high quality distribution of food for Asda in South Wales, South and South West England.

## 4.0 Research methodology

An action learning approach to the research was used, having a dual objective of producing research output whilst also being of practical value to those involved. Thus the research was itself a learning process for participants and their organisations. The methods used to gather information were as follows:

1. Qualitative research through short semi-structured interviews and focus groups.
2. Semi-quantitative research through completion of a structured questionnaire.

The following topic areas were examined

1. The role of leadership and culture in generating more creative behaviours.
2. Policies and strategies that specifically encourage creativity.

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3. Practices that make a difference at individual, team and organisational levels.
4. The outcomes - what specific results can be wholly or partly attributed to particular practices?

## 5.0 Strategic review of findings

### 5.1 Defining creativity at work

#### *Confusion over definitions*

A number of viewpoints of creativity existed within the organisations studied. This included '*infection theory*':

*'Creative people stimulate creativity in naturally uncreative people'*

This relates to the psychological concept of cognitive dissonance, i.e. The creative person stretches someone's thinking like an elastic band and the other person has to adjust their thinking in order to reduce this stretching. If they overstretch the other person's capacity to adjust, the idea is ditched (and the person who formulated the idea may also be regarded as foolish or dangerous). To do this a number of contributors mentioned the fact that they believed this required a good deal of courage and assertiveness on the part of individuals. Sometimes this was made easier when external agents were used to catalyse new ideas within the organisation as mentioned within Kent County Council's Environmental Management Unit.

Others focused on creativity as '*outputs*' i.e. innovation and competitiveness, e.g.:

*'Creativity is the ability to identify some technology that will give us a leading edge over our competitors'*

This is akin the approach adopted by leading edge companies such as 3M, who seek to produce products and services that change the basis of competition.

Another perspective was that creativity is about the '*climate*' of the organisation:

*'Drusillas define creativity as the freedom, encouragement and involvement to feel part of something that the public want'*

*'More often the ideas pop into your head or can arise from unrelated conversations'*

Climate includes the culture and the environment, which are mentioned further in sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3.

#### *No magic formulae for creativity, just paradoxes*

There was no strong evidence to suggest that it is possible to have a deliberate strategy to produce creativity. Furthermore, some of the practices mentioned are contrary to conventional wisdom on what encourages creativity. For example:

*‘Stage managed’ creativity does not work - if you gave the people half an afternoon to be creative, they might just use the time to doss’.*

*‘If someone comes up with a crap idea, we tell them so’.*

Thus ‘enforced daydreaming’ may not work and negative feedback may not hinder the creative person. This reinforces the notion that creativity can emerge where there is a suitable psychological contract in spite of what some theorists would argue are unsupportive practices.

*‘Creativity exists where chaos and structure meet within the organisation’*

*‘In terms of creative change management, we should learn to create ‘stability zones’ within organisations’*

These comments suggest that it can be counter-productive to sanitise organisations such that they might be more creative.

### ***Qualities that make personal creativity more probable***

In the absence of a ‘magic formula’ to produce creativity, a viable and more realistic alternative is to arrange things such that creativity is **more likely** to emerge and to remove ‘blockages’ to creativity so that seeds may germinate.

Amongst those qualities that were mentioned as being important were:

#### ☉ Mental mobility

*‘At the age of three I wanted to be a cook. At the age of six I wanted to be Napoleon. Since then my ambition has increased all the time’*

Salvador Dali

Some support is given in the research to the notion that creative individuals possess mental mobility as an essential personal quality. Examples cited include;

- ***Unrelated stimuli*** - An interest in motorbikes was helpful in the approach to designing an innovative drug delivery system.
- ***Putting things to other uses*** - Using ‘washing up liquid’ as a lubricant.

#### ☉ Doggedness/persistence

Drusillas mentioned that ideas may take years to come to fruition, requiring the use of continuous gentle persuasion. Other commentators mentioned the need for assertiveness and confidence to push ideas forward, sometimes against the grain of what the organisation was currently interested in.

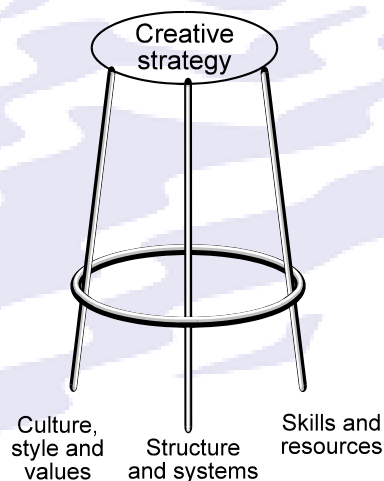
## ☺ Humour

Tibbett and Britten commented on the powerful therapeutic effect of humour on the resolution of tough problems and breaking down real or imagined hierarchical barriers. Some proprietary processes exist that capitalise on this aspect of creativity e.g. Corporate Jest<sup>®</sup> and De-Bono's six thinking hats.

The College of Guidance Studies also mention the use of fun as a process to deliver new insights. There are many barriers to the introduction of fun into organisations and this may partly explain why creativity is resisted by 'highly rational' organisations.

## 5.2 Organisational creativity

In designing creativity into an organisation, it is important to take a strategic view. A systems view of strategy requires that the culture, style and values, structure and systems, and skills and resources of the organisation be aligned to provide the necessary synergy. A metaphor for this is that of a three legged stool, where all three 'legs' need to remain in balance to achieve the strategy:



Clearly, some of these elements will be more important for creativity in different types and sizes of organisation. The research confirms that different organisations pay more attention to some elements. What is particularly important is that the chosen strategies are ones that *fit* the particular organisation.

Taking each of these components in turn:

### 5.2.1 Creativity and strategy

Strategic planning has been traditionally thought of as a linear process, and yet it is widely acknowledged that many strategies do not get implemented, suggesting that plans are frequently adapted in reality or circumstances changed to prevent implementation.

The more recent approaches to strategic thinking acknowledge this uncertainty and apparent inability to control the environment even in large organisations. Processes such as scenario planning, projective techniques and creative visualisation offer an agenda for creating potent

and desirable futures that are more likely to drive action. The example given by the College of Guidance Studies used such processes and is indicative of a more creative and robust way to organise strategic thinking in a chaotic world

GlaxoWellcome believe that it is important to use a more participative approach to strategic planning in their Inhaled Products Division, where a great deal of work was done to gain a fully shared understanding of the group's purpose, operating principles and five and ten year vision.



# HUMAN DYNAMICS

## 5.2.2 Creativity and culture, leadership style and values

*'Creativity should itself become an organisational value'*

Dr Gareth Jones, Senior Vice President Human Resources Polygram International

### *Myth management matters*

Culture is one means of making the organisations strategy visible and reinforcing the norms and expectations of the organisation. This is often done by the management of meaning through identity level symbols, communications strategies and 'myths'. A classic example of this would be the Wellcome Foundation's Unicorn logo, which symbolised uniqueness. More modern examples are the 'imagineering' concept of the Disney Corporation and the use of high profile communications vehicles to reinforce creativity within the MSD and GlaxoWellcome organisations.

In particular the GlaxoWellcome culture is visible in many of the 'high profile symbols' such as 'The power of one' 1996 staff report which focuses attention on personal responsibility and initiative. The culture is modelled down to the last detail wherever possible, for example:

- ☉ Using open plan environments to assist in the cross fertilisation of ideas
- ☉ Premises open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to enable people to work when they are most energised to be creative.
- ☉ Use of 'unrelated stimuli', e.g. the specially commissioned artworks at the Stevenage research facility.

This deliberate attempt to design informality into the built environment is intended to increase the number of occasions where serendipitous conversations can take place.

At MSD, the local structure keeps all the relevant disciplines under one roof. It is still necessary to supplement this formal structuring with local knowledge of 'who knows what'.

The role that the built environment plays in stimulating creativity was also mentioned by Drusillas and Kent County Council.

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## *No single preferred creative culture*

To gain an assessment of whether a particular cultural type was favourable for creativity, each organisation in the study was asked to position itself on a culture 'grid', according to the degree of risk present within the organisation and the speed of feedback. The four cultures are described as follows:

### **1. Tough guy/girl, macho culture**

A world of individualists who regularly take high risks and get rapid feedback on whether their actions were right or wrong.

### **2. Work hard/play hard culture**

Fun and action are the rule here, and employees take few risks, all with quick feedback; to succeed, the culture encourages them to maintain a high level of relatively low-risk activity.

### **3. Bet your company culture**

Cultures with big stakes decisions, where years pass before employees know whether decisions have paid off. A high risk, slow feedback environment.

### **4. The process culture**

A world of little or no feedback where employees find it hard to measure what they do: instead they concentrate on how it's done. When this culture gets out of control, it becomes a bureaucracy.

There was no particular trend from the organisations studied as to the types of culture that allowed creativity to flourish, although this aspect would warrant more extensive investigation.

## *Informal communications preferred*

In terms of communications, there was an overall preference for use of informal conversations as the main arena where creativity was released. One or two organisations were using electronic conferencing to bounce ideas around on a nominal basis. There was some suggestion that the level of anonymity and 'distance' afforded by electronic communications was helpful in gaining contributions from quieter staff, although it is also likely that it would be less preferred by extroverts who may wish others to hear their ideas in a public forum.

Deal and Kennedy's model of organisational culture

Risk	High	Tough guy/girl, macho culture	Bet your company culture
	Low	Work hard/play hard culture	Process culture
		Quick	Slow
		Feedback	

## *Creative leaders do it differently*

Amongst the attributes required for creative leadership a number of themes emerged from the research:

- ☉ Encouraging risk taking
- ☉ A key role of leadership as idea advocates
- ☉ Giving a tangible example to the concept that failure is a learning opportunity
- ☉ Building teams that have high levels of trust
- ☉ Giving freedom to 'bootleg'
- ☉ Leadership style more akin to a 'coach' or 'counsellor'
- ☉ The leader as a resource and enabler - The 'upturned pyramid'
- ☉ The ability to set a direction that excites others

When these aspects are disrupted, creativity can suffer:

*'Major upheaval stifles creativity in the short term - there is a loss of trust and networks and few examples of people in the new organisation who have survived 'failure'. As a result, there is a reluctance to take risks.'*

In Transactional Analysis (TA) terms, creative leadership equates to a predominant use of the 'nurturing parent' 'free child' and 'adult' states. These are characterised as follows:

Nurturing parent	- encourages, protects
Free child	- is spontaneous, fun-loving, uninhibited
Adult	- is rational, objective and focuses on clarity

This would contrast with a more traditional form of leadership associated with that of 'controlling parent' as the predominant state. This state is characterised by telling, giving instructions, finger wagging, frowning etc. One major Agrochemicals company has used an extensive programme called 'from command to creativity' in order to raise awareness to the issue and change attitudes on the subject.

Flexibility in the leadership role is essential. One useful summary of the range of required leadership strategies for handling resistance to creativity was given by Kent County Council's Environmental Management Unit.

Reaction to creativity	Strategy which addresses individual reactions to creativity
Cynical	Finding ways to break down barriers
Pragmatic	Giving people practical things (on a plate) that they can do which fit in with particular constraints e.g. time, resource, work priorities
Idealistic	Enabling people to translate ideas into action by finding levers, catalysts and incentives

### *Possibility thinking rules!*

In terms of values, many of the organisations studied espoused and lived a very positive set of values that may seem evangelical dissonant with traditional organisation values. These were typically ones that were in the realms of 'possibility thinking':

- 'Our ambitions know no boundaries'* (Tibbett and Britten)
- 'Do good science and the drugs will follow'* (MSD)
- 'Whatever it takes'* (Digital Corporation)
- 'We will encourage each other to question, create and innovate'* (GlaxoWellcome)

In such organisations, excitement is a permissible behaviour.

## 5.2.3 Creativity and structure and systems

### *Informal structures are vital to creativity*

More mention was made of informal structures. In particular, Kent County Council emphasised the informal (shadow) side of the organisation as being an important area where seeds of creativity germinate. If this is controlled formally, it may lose its effectiveness. In an age where many organisations are becoming more rational systems due to re-engineering and other processes it would appear that creativity could suffer due to the removal of apparently low value-adding activities.

To facilitate informality, it is likely that some of the following formal structural elements are likely in a creative organisation:

- ☉ Minimum hierarchy
- ☉ Organisation based on networks

- ☉ Careers based on life stage/goals
- ☉ Rotate staff out of professional role
- ☉ Using venture groups

Amongst the formal systems that were mentioned in the research as being helpful in maintaining creativity were: individualising role specifications, simplified grading structures, performance related pay based on individual and team contribution and international reward structures.

*Systems must either support creativity or not get in the way of it as a minimum requirement*

The research indicated that organisational systems could potentially hinder creativity, especially if they are unsympathetic to the expected behaviours. For example, in GlaxoWellcome people are mostly rewarded for initiating projects and this could be usefully balanced by being rewarded for exercising sound judgement to terminate projects.

Some organisations have experimented with 'dual ladder' reward system to recognise different career paths as specialists and managers. Such systems have to be operated very effectively if they the dual ladders are perceived to be of equal value.

There were differences in opinion as to whether effort was as valuable as results in terms of reward. MSD rewards results (**ends**), i.e. drugs on the market rather than the process (**means**) of getting there. The advantage to them is that there is considerable latitude of approach (how-to). It also assists in dropping research projects that are not delivering real benefits, since people want to be associated with winning projects.

*Unconventional rewards may work better (and cost less)*

Tibbett and Britten have a 'Big breakfast' ritual where the company gives its employees breakfast as a reward for special achievements. These types of rituals are changed regularly so that they do not become stale.

Other systems seek to reinforce the culture, e.g. the use of 'trust time' to model personal responsibility at work.

The 'quality day' - this is a reward for something outstanding.

What others do

Other systems may be of value in supporting creative behaviours:

- ☉ Customer involvement in new product/service design
- ☉ Well-designed appraisal systems

- ☉ Self-set goals and pay
- ☉ Continuous learning policy
- ☉ Job rotation based on individual desire/potential
- ☉ Loose job descriptions
- ☉ Personal Development Plans
- ☉ Project grant schemes
- ☉ Worker directors and children on the board

## 5.2.4 Creativity and skills and resources

### *Diversity is the key - 'too many chiefs and not enough idiots'*

There was a good deal of agreement about the need to select people who brought difference to the party. This would include naive contributors who would offer new perspectives on an issue. The classic example is that of Drusillas who have a junior board comprised of children who advise on a range of matters related to business development. A related example is the use of worker directors which has been very popular in certain European countries for a number of years.

Other ways of achieving this included the Kent County Council example of using outside consultants to import difference to the organisation and gaining a high natural turnover of talent through deliberately employing a number of students every year at Drusillas for seasonal work.

Some of the organisations made a distinction between the types of individual needed to produce the 'right mixture' for creativity:

*'The organisation is divided between people who always go to lunch with the same people and people who 'flit around a bit' - the second group are often ideas people or idea sensors/advocates.'*  
(Both types are required - author's comment)

*'There needs to be a balance between creative people and people who can put ideas into action. On occasion, these talents reside within the same person, but more often they are present in different people'*

### *Creativity 'implants' not easy*

On balance, it was felt that it was more important to select people who would bring creativity to the organisations than trying to 'implant' creativity into them whilst they were there.

Drusillas attempt to identify this potential at the interview stage by including non-conventional exercises such as drawing.

Having said this, there was support for using some developmental approaches such as cross functional moves, learning outside professional role, coaching and mentoring.



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## 5.3 Creativity and change

### *Unlearning is more important than learning*

The nature of change in organisations requires people to adopt new beliefs and give new performances. Change is essentially a creative act.

For sustainable growth, organisations and the individuals within them must learn at a rate that is faster than the pace of change. In short:

$$L > C$$

L = the rate of learning  
C = the rate of change

The challenge for successful change management has more to do with **unlearning**, i.e. the ability to forget, rather than learning. The strategic planning work at the College of Guidance Studies uses creative processes to question assumptions about the past (and the future). In doing so it creates the possibility of unlearning and focusing on future goals.

Kent County Council mentioned the need for unlearning through the challenging and breaking down of identity based beliefs. Examples of how these often emerge in conversation include phrases such as:

*'We have never done it before'*  
*'We have never known anyone else that has done it before'*  
*'Everyone else who has tried this has failed'*  
*'We wouldn't know how to begin'*

A number of processes can be used to assist with such issues, such as assumption surfacing, reframing, beliefs change and scenario planning.

## 5.4 Creativity and chaos

*'Innovation at 3M is anything but orderly'*

A number of the organisations studied were considering the value of chaos management theory and practice as a more useful way of allowing ideas to ferment. Rather than having a deliberate strategy for managing creativity, they allowed creativity to 'emerge'. This was possible in larger organisations where there was an absence of a strong ethos of corporate standardisation - akin to making the organisation into a number of small autonomous units. The principle behind this is the observation that order can emerge from chaos.

### *Not only but also....*

Whilst chaos theory has attractions for complex organisations, it requires a high tolerance of ambiguity on the part of individuals. This was articulated by Kent County Council as a shift:

**From** 'either/or' thinking      **To** 'and/also' thinking

Ambiguity presents an important agenda for people in organisations in the current climate of downsizing and job mobility.

One response to complexity and ambiguity is simplification. Other (more useful) alternatives) include:

- ☉ Learning to be curious and tolerate (or even enjoy) uncertainty. This is perhaps the most robust personal strategy for addressing complexity.
- ☉ Use of information processing mechanisms that preserve the richness of the complexity whilst providing overview and insight. This is the domain of effective information management. Techniques such as mind mapping, outliners, systems mapping, rich picturing are of assistance in addressing complexity.

## **5.5 Creativity and information management**

### *Information explosion may hinder serendipitous creativity*

Many leading management thinkers believe that we are entering the information revolution - 80% of all currently available information has only been in existence since 1964. Faced with this huge expansion in the volume of information, the possibility for serendipity in putting pieces of diverse information together will be reduced using existing technologies. Therefore it is increasingly true to say that we need to manage information effectively.

Since there is more information than most people can reasonably use, a key role of managing information is the selection of key information that will guide and inform decision making. This is the concept of 'bounded rationality', where people limit their search for information to make decisions based on what can be reasonably absorbed at the time. If this search concentrates in the 'expected' places where 'answers' are to be found, it is likely that 'unremarkable' decisions will be produced, yet it is clearly not (yet) possible to synthesise information from all sources. In short:

*One definition of insanity is doing the same things and expecting a different result*

A number of the organisations studied were using technology to scan and order the vast amount of information resources available on the internet and the intranet. For example:

- ☉ The use of unmoderated internal sites where people can drop in ideas - this amounts to the use of 'electronic serendipity'. Although theorists would argue that criticism stifles

creativity, the psychological distance available through electronic communications makes it more possible to have 'robust' conversations and 'recover' from them.

*'We have developed the understanding that you expect your own ideas to be challenged'*

- ☉ To deal with the problem of information overload, one organisation in the study was experimenting with news groups as a means of recording learning for idea transfer and adaptation.

### *Creativity will suffer if Information = Power*

One challenge in managing information and ideas is the reality that information is power in many organisations. Many individuals in organisations choose to keep it to themselves (Analogy - information stored in a 'battery') Other organisations choose to distribute it through a network (Analogy - information distributed through a 'National Grid'). Rover Cars operate an ideas transfer network that works on the 'National Grid' model, from which people are to 'swipe' ideas so that they can be successfully transferred from location to location.

In the battery analogy, it is important to note that batteries lose their power if they are not used. Out of date information depreciates more rapidly than a battery, since it often has zero value if it is not timely. Another challenge for the future is that of creating environments where information and ideas will flow more freely.

The Financial Times 'Mastering Management' series identifies four types of information culture:

**Functional Culture** - Managers see information as a means of exercising influence or power over others

**Sharing Culture** - Managers and employees trust each other to use information (especially about problems and failures) to improve their performance

**Inquiring Culture** - Managers and employees search for information better to understand the future and ways of changing what they do to align themselves with future trends/directions

**Discovery Culture** - Managers and employees are open to new insights about crisis and radical changes and seek ways to create competitive discontinuities.

It would appear that a creative organisation would need to be operating at level two as a bare minimum and more likely at level four and beyond. A range of options for improving learning across organisations is presented overleaf.

## 5.6 Creativity and techniques

### *Toolkits have a role but are insufficient on their own*

There were differences in opinion regarding the value of developing the creative thinking capacity of individuals and organisations via the use of creative thinking techniques. These differences were present both between and within organisations.

A limited number of techniques were generally in use and this would tend to require individuals and groups to force-fit the available techniques to the problems under consideration. If there is to be a role for technique, it is vital to have a wider menu of techniques from which to draw on and an understanding of what types of technique are most appropriate for particular types of problem:

*‘The group needs a wider portfolio of creative thinking tools in order to provide a wider choice.’*

*‘To use tools like Kepner Tregoe, ‘you must be in the mood’ - tools are less important than the way in which they are used (environment, culture).’*

*‘Training courses have some value but creativity is released over a longer timescale, via a stimulating environment, opportunity, contributions being recognised, people feeling valued and adequate rewards.’*

Most creativity techniques work on a number of principles, such as:

- ☉ Detachment from the problem - acting as a distant analyst
- ☉ Viewing the problem from a different angles
- ☉ Separation of the states of divergent and convergent thinking
- ☉ Allowing space for focused thinking
- ☉ Involving non-experts (or novices) in the process
- ☉ Connecting ideas and listening intently to meanings
- ☉ Developing a climate where ‘playful’ thinking is allowed
- ☉ Stretching the boundaries of current thinking
- ☉ Assuming that everyone has something to contribute
- ☉ Use all thinking styles - e.g. logic **and** intuition

An improvement to the slavish use of a limited range of techniques is to devise ones based on these principles that fit the desired culture of the organisation. Techniques devised in this

way become 'new thinking rituals' rather than 'creative thinking tools'. This can often be achieved by exposing organisations to a wider menu of techniques from which the design principles may be extracted and put to use.



# HUMAN DYNAMICS

## 101 ideas for developing a creative organisation

*The ideas that follow are a broad (but not bland) list of statements, intended to act as provocations to determine what might work in a particular organisation. Some of them would be inappropriate or even counter-productive in some environments. A number of them are framed in a deliberately radical way in order to stimulate further thinking.*

*In providing such a list, it is vital to recognise that ideas taken from one location must be adapted or radically altered if they are to fit and be adopted in a different environment. A list of questions to provoke this 'creative swiping' process is given at the end of the ideas list:*

1. Hire people who challenge the status quo
2. Bring people in off the street to comment on your organisation
3. Create groups of people who would radically disagree with your own views
4. Use 'corporate jesting' sessions to examine 'undiscussable' problems using the power of humour, in order to convert problems into opportunities
5. If you are using techniques to encourage creativity, make sure that sessions are managed properly using people who know how to select suitable techniques and get the best out of them
6. Model aberrant behaviour e.g. sit in cupboards to think
7. Move people out of roles on a consistent basis
8. Get people to move themselves into unfamiliar roles
9. Develop people in a wide range of creativity techniques so that they are in a position to fit a technique to the prevailing issue rather than having to force fit the issue to the technique
10. Remove job descriptions
11. Remove symbols of status, e.g. job titles, car parking restrictions, executive dining rooms etc.
12. Use outsiders more
13. Set up multidisciplinary think tanks and ideas 'fairs'
14. Use processes for strategic planning that can accommodate chaotic and emergent activity, such as visioning and scenario development
15. Evaluate the success of meetings by the level of purposeful conflict that has occurred

16. Find ways of letting the shadow side of the organisation ferment and grow **without** adding elements of formal structure
17. Remove some low value adding elements of formal structure, e.g. committees
18. Reshape ineffective rituals
19. Make fun a cultural imperative
20. Set up forums to encourage peers to share ideas and practices
21. Let things ferment by recycling ideas that are not ready to be launched
22. Encourage a rapid turnover of staff and continue to use them for their ideas after they have left
23. Reframe rewards systems to encourage persistence as well as results
24. Use unrelated stimuli, e.g. music, theatre, dance to help solve problems
25. Create micro-environments where people of dissimilar backgrounds can listen to one another and question
26. Devise informal and formal systems for the capture, fermentation and distillation of ideas
27. Always carry a pack of post-it notes or a tape recorder with you to capture random thoughts
28. Introduce 'corporate daydreaming' sessions into the fabric of the organisation
29. Build a 'corporate talent' database, to enable people to access specific qualities outside their awareness
30. Use notice boards and water fountains as nominal idea generation environments
31. Introduce fancy dress days
32. Use alternative forms of communication e.g. make contributions at a meeting only using a musical instrument, or use silence
33. Use flexible strategic processes, e.g. scenarios, creative visualisation, supported by hard thinking skills to 'make the strategy happen'
34. Make 'valuing differences' a cultural imperative
35. Keep an ideas diary

36. Phone up 10 people who do different jobs in the same industry sector. Ask them what was the best idea they have ever had and what circumstances caused the idea to be recognised
37. Phone up 10 people who do similar jobs in different industry sectors. Ask them what was the best idea they have ever had and what circumstances caused the idea to be recognised
38. Use music at work
39. Accept that different people need different motivational styles and adjust your own behaviour
40. Develop a creative structure
41. Ask children to comment on the organisation
42. Use worker directors to advise on strategy
43. Make enthusiasm and passion key selection criteria
44. Find ways of changing leadership of a creative project as it moves from 'discovery' status through 'development' to 'routine operation'
45. Set aside separate funding for venture activity
46. Reward adaptive as well as radical creativity
47. Encourage corridor chat and informal networking
48. Send groups to see/work in the customer's environment
49. Gain customer involvement in product/service design
50. Introduce learning outside the professional discipline as a means of generating a thirst for inquiry/tolerance of ambiguity
51. Mix idea generators with idea sensors and advocates
52. Reposition the manager's role as a resource and enabler
53. Encourage people to walk the job regularly
54. Encourage people to take frequent short breaks from work
55. Develop stability zones as resources during rapid change
56. Encourage people to tell stories and metaphors as a way of using unrelated stimuli

57. Encourage people to believe that they can achieve the impossible and get them to commit to stretch targets - 'if you play at being a genius, you become one'
58. Develop the organisation's ability to forget (unlearn) limitations and past ceilings of achievement
59. Create thinking space as an organisational 'ritual' and give it high profile acceptance through formal and informal communications systems
60. Make notes and review your level of creativity: learn from your mistakes and successes
61. Challenge assumptions on a regular basis
62. Do not tolerate complacency, indifference and a lack of questioning
63. Use humour to overcome thinking and judgement blocks
64. Build psychological safety into creativity processes
65. Introduce 'anti-status' symbols e.g. executive donkey jackets
66. Send people to the park to think
67. Demand reports on the numbers and quality of ideas successfully implemented
68. Reward idea 'theft' and adaptation to different environments
69. Encourage the use of a 'too difficult' pile for ideas that cannot be implemented immediately and ensure that these ideas are recycled into the organisation periodically
70. Mix 'small and big chunk' thinkers together
71. Set up conference phone calls or e-mail conferencing on themed issues of importance to the organisation
72. Develop an 'intrapreneur of the year' award
73. Develop conferencing across and outside your organisation on non-intellectual property issues
74. Send people to conferences on subjects outside their professional interest
75. Place post-it notes by the water fountain
76. Set up action centred opportunity finding groups
77. Set up creativity focus groups

78. Devise informal and formal systems for the capture, fermentation and distillation of ideas
79. Use collective notebooks to stimulate thinking
80. Introduce problem notice boards where people can post problems and opportunities without being named for comment by others
81. Set up electronic and manual graffiti boards for new product/service idea generation and unrelated thinking
82. Send your business plans to your competitors (so you'll really need to get creatively competitive!)
83. Pretend you have lost the use of a significant technology (e.g. electricity) either temporary or permanently
84. Extend this loss to include a) your competitors b) the rest of the world
85. Change the pondwater - have your backroom people spend some time with your toughest customers and then ask them what they would change within your organisation to gain more business
86. Have people research, prepare and give a 10 minute talk on subjects that are alien to them but not to their audience
87. E-mail 25 people requesting 20 ideas each for stimulating creativity in organisations
88. Encourage the use of transcendental meditation
89. Issue dictaphone type recorders exchanging & circulating tapes every week.
90. Change the written reporting norms - on fancy dress days all reports have to be written in verse
91. Eliminate all negative words (e.g. no, never, cannot, impossible etc.) for the day - "fine" anyone who uses them
92. Eliminate all industry jargon for the day - "fine" anyone who uses them
93. Invite people back to school for a day - hire local junior school teachers to re-teach your people the skills & fun of learning. Start with the top brass
94. Encourage personalisation of the workplace
95. Have "F 'n' F" days where family and friends are invited to work alongside your people helping to solve their work problems (and being suitably rewarded too).

96. Turn your people into Martians. The Man from Mars approach says that your people know everything there is to know about life on Earth except for the problem at hand
97. Use only animal/baby/cartoon character sounds to communicate at a meeting
98. Communicate in sign language or drawing only
99. Undertake research by encapsulating the organisation's problems in art form and displaying in galleries with comment / suggestion forms for members of the public to fill in. Ditto using the World Wide Web
100. Encourage your people to write articles for the trade press. Reward those that attract the greatest number of responses from the trade/provokes competitor comment that results in worthwhile creative ideas
101. Referring to 1. above produce your own list of 101 ideas



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## Questions for applying the ideas

<b>Questions for 'adaptive' individuals</b>	<b>Questions for 'innovative' individuals</b>
What is your experience and how could this be used to alter the basic idea presented into one that would work in your organisation?	How can you make the idea wilder?
If the actual idea presented is not suitable, what is the principle behind the idea? Can you adapt the principle into a more suitable idea?	What is a stranger way of fitting the idea to the organisation?
How could this idea work in the culture?	Is there a more radical way of making this work?
What are the major barriers and how might these be removed?	In how many ways could you radically alter this idea so that it would be acceptable?
What is the most sensible way to move forward?	

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# HUMAN DYNAMICS

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## Appendix 1 - Interview transcripts by organisation

*These interview transcripts are ‘snapshots’ of the particular organisations involved. As such, it is possible that other parts of the organisations would have different approaches. Where different opinions are expressed within the same organisation, these should be seen as complementary viewpoints on the issue involved.*

*The transcripts are largely recorded ‘as-is’, which means that some of the interviews are in ‘note’ form and others are written as spoken by the interviewees. This preserves the realism of the particular interviews and does not attempt to ‘tidy up’ paradoxes.*

HUMAN DYNAMICS

## GlaxoWellcome Research and Development - Ware and Stevenage

**Overview by Sally Knight - Training and Development, Ware**

### Introduction

GlaxoWellcome is the World's largest Pharmaceutical company, with a strong commitment to innovative drug discovery. This is articulated through its Mission statement (overleaf), company report, strategic plans and values and evident through the investment in Research and Development activity (currently 15% of annual sales), specific targets in terms of the percentage of inventions successfully converted to viable products (of all compounds selected for full development, only one in five survives to the market place) and the number of patents filed per year.

GlaxoWellcome is a large organisation with a variety of sub-units. It therefore has a variety of sub-cultures and approaches to creativity. The viewpoints expressed in this project are therefore complementary, rather than seeking to slavishly adopt one single 'recipe'.

### Culture

The long timescales and significant up-front investments in speculative R&D activity give this part of the organisation a 'bet your company culture'. The culture is visible in many of the 'high profile symbols' such as 'The power of one' 1996 staff report (abstract shown overleaf) and is modelled down to the last detail wherever possible, e.g. by using open plan environments to assist in the cross fertilisation of ideas and the use of 'unrelated stimuli', e.g. the specially commissioned artworks at the Stevenage research facility.

### Structure

Much of the organisation is decentralised and the structure has recently been flattened following integration of the two separate companies.

There is a high reliance placed on knowledge based specialists (experts) within Research and Development and many tasks are broken down into smaller elements for convenience (routine specialisation). At this time, jobs are quite highly specified by formal job descriptions. Approximately 30% of people work within a matrix across the organisation as a result of the project based structure. Communication methods which are considered to contribute to creativity within GlaxoWellcome are as follows:

Method	Estimated % contribution
<i>Hard copy mail - letters</i>	2%
<i>Formal meetings (more than two people involved)</i>	20%
<i>Informal meetings (more than two people involved)</i>	30%
<i>Telephone calls</i>	5%
<i>Person to person conversations (1:1)</i>	25%
<i>E-mail</i>	5%
<i>On-line information services</i>	2%

<i>Videoconferencing</i>	5%
<i>World Wide Web</i>	6%



# HUMAN DYNAMICS

### ***Systems that support creativity***

The following systems are believed to be involved in supporting creative behaviours:

- Customer involvement in new product/service design
- Appraisal systems
- Use of 'venture groups' for exploratory projects
- Self-set goals
- Continuous learning policy (this is in its infancy)

In addition to systems that support creativity, it is important that resources are targeted towards those projects which offer the most promise. A key 'trick' is that of killing off projects without demotivating staff. Project reviews and product/service champions are used to maintain a focus on commercial potential.

### ***Skills and resources***

The following methods are used to develop organisational creativity:

- Training and development in creative problem solving techniques

In particular, specific techniques mentioned were as follows:

*Fishbone diagrams*

*Mind Mapping*

*Brainstorming*

*De-Bono's 'six thinking hats'*

*Force field analysis*

*Critical path analysis*

- Out of role 'cross-functional' moves of staff
- Self study/open learning
- Attendance at 'expert' seminars
- Scanning specialist journals
- Coaching

# HUMAN DYNAMICS

## **Individual interviews:**

### **1. Sandy Munro - Team Leader - Inhaled Product Development (IPD) - Ware**

#### **Background**

The role includes line management responsibility for a team of chemists, and also working within a matrix structure on projects in metered dose inhalation products.

Recent events have affected the level of creativity within the group: in particular the integration of Glaxo and Wellcome has helped since it has 'given everyone a bit of a shake up' and opens up the possibility of being more empowered to contribute to other projects. This cultural change process is still ongoing at present.

#### **Definition of creativity**

Creativity in IPD means being prepared to have an opinion or to take a view although creative thought does not have to end with a tangible outcome such as a product. There need to be more of such people who will assimilate information and challenge ideas. At the present time there are many 'passive listeners', possibly because they feel that they have too much work to do or due to fear of being laughed at.

The following factors were felt to contribute to creativity within IPD:

#### **Environment**

Although the building is only 5-6 years old the design does not currently support creative activity as much as it might, e.g. there are no open areas that encourage cross fertilisation etc. It was felt that social mixing has declined in recent years - this may be due to a lack of staff turnover which has led to the workforce ageing with less time to meet others and share ideas as a consequence.

The work environment is pressurised - with a lot of routine analysis to do to very tight deadlines, plus writing up, reports to be produced, attending meetings etc. On the face of it, this does not allow much free thinking time. However, creative people seem to 'make' time for what they consider important **despite** these constraints.

Groups are used to look at continuous improvement. However, these are usually incremental and this does not always coincide with those occasions when people are having original thoughts - the 'flash' ideas.

#### **Behaviour**

Inhaled product development requires a number of engineering devices that rely on creative input through gathering a lot of information at the outset, including information from end users. A few people in the department send off ideas to other areas e.g. the device development department. There is no formal scheme for capturing ideas **across** departments.

A number of key people who are benefactors of good ideas exist. These people can be trusted to take action - therefore it is important for creative people to understand the networks of people who can make things happen and **selectively** target them.

The organisation is divided between people who always go to lunch with the same people and people who 'flit around a bit' - the second group are often ideas people or idea sensors/advocates.

A number of people will come to work at times when they have an idea - this may include working outside traditional hours - more akin to a University research environment. It is currently difficult but not impossible to do this and the company is moving towards a trust time system where people come and go as they please. This will improve the opportunities for creativity.

Some roles enable a more open ended approach - one senior person was mentioned who had a technology development role, with a wide remit. There is a lot of cultural support for being creative through empowerment strategies.

There are no specific financial incentives for creativity - most of the idea generators 'can't help having them anyway' and they have to 'get ideas out'.

### **Capabilities**

The belief here is that creativity is either 'brought to work' as an attitude or it is 'dragged out of you' - formal training is not felt to be that important.

*'If you look at creative people, they have lots of different things on the boil other than their work, e.g. they may be good at music, crafts, languages.'*

In the device area, an interest in motorbikes was felt to be helpful in the approach to device design. Music would also be considered to be a helpful environmental support although it is not currently used within the department due to varying tastes. Sometimes a change in job can release an individual's natural creativity e.g. more responsibility if that meets the person's motivational strategy.

An instrumental attitude to work is not felt to be sufficient to be truly creative.

### **Beliefs**

Creativity is independent of the time available - it **has** to come out.

*'Stage managed' creativity does not work - if you gave the people half an afternoon to be creative, they might just use the time to doss'.*

The 'come to a meeting with three ideas approach' does not work. More often the ideas 'pop into your head' or can arise from unrelated conversations e.g. using washing up liquid as a lubricant (bisociation).

Creativity needs excitement:

*'I was at a meeting the other week and I had this idea and I wanted to draw it but I didn't have a pen - and for the whole of the rest of the meeting, I wasn't really listening to what was being said - all I wanted to do was go back to the lab to draw the idea down and send it off'.*

Interestingly, the 'culture' meant that the individual stayed at the meeting.



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## **Strategies**

The company has had a fairly conservative approach to recruitment which is changing gradually. In the future GlaxoWellcome may need to recruit 'more wierdoes' to stimulate creativity if it wants to make breakthroughs beyond incremental improvements.

There is an emerging system for the formal piloting of ideas, where people can present an idea and obtain resources or time off to progress the idea. This is perceived as positive.

People currently work very hard and this is to be admired. For further improvement, there needs to be a climate where people can feel **passionate** about their work such that they invest their own time in projects.

There needs to be a **balance** between creative people and people who can put ideas into action. On occasion, these talents reside within the same person, but more often they are present in different people.

## **2. Keith Truman - Manager - Inhaled Product Development (IPD) - Ware**

### **Background**

The role encompasses both line management and project management, requiring a clear understanding of the differences in role and the ability to adopt a flexible approach. Over the last year the organisation of IPD has changed so that there is a much greater degree of mixing between scientific disciplines i.e. analytical chemists and formulation scientists. As a result of this mixing Keith has a link role (boundary crosser) to ensure adequate standards and partnership arrangements to ensure a high quality approach to external bodies such as the Food and Drug Administration.

A lot of work has been done to gain a shared understanding of the group's purpose, operating principles and five and ten year vision, using processes that involved **everyone** in IPD. A number of clear objectives have emerged from this work in terms of:

- Science
- Partnerships
- Skills and attributes
- Working environment (hard and soft)

In each case there are 'platform groups' working on making each of these happen.

### **Definition of creativity**

Creativity is the ability to identify some technology that will give us a leading edge over our competitors. Creativity is very important in producing inhalation devices that outperform the competition in terms of:

- Patient acceptability

- How reproducible the device is
- How effective the device is
- How uniform the device is
- How expensive is it
- How many added value features can be added from a marketing point of view

A specific example where creativity has been important was a dry powder delivery system which was designed within the inhalation group. The device was regarded as being the best design for its time, having won several awards.

The following factors were felt to contribute to creativity within IPD:

### ***Environment***

Externally, a big pressure is the competition which is intense and continuous. Intellectual property and patent information is fed in weekly and there are planned improvements to improve the flow of this information.

Internally, the leadership ethos is very important - managers being visible, walking the job, encouraging new ideas, making sure that staff are aware of opportunities. There is a greater emphasis on creating a context for creativity, where people feel safe to experiment within a broad direction.

There is still some way to go in terms of arranging the geography for close contact between groups. This is a historical result of the previous structure which arranged groups by functional scientific disciplines.

### ***Behaviour***

The creative manager's role is to facilitate decision making by teams. The 'upturned pyramid', where managers are seen to be a resource and enabler, has still some way to go. It may be that some staff still prefer a traditional hierarchy. In particular it takes time for people to believe that their ideas will be valued. Walking the job is a regular occurrence (twice daily on average). This is focused around the discussion of problems, provision of resources and idea generation rather than the control of work.

The hard structures tend to stifle creativity, e.g. the grading structure is a problem in a team based environment. Organisational and cultural change is generally coming from the teams themselves and there is an opportunity for Human Resources to be more proactive in promoting cultural change.

Some areas are further ahead than others - not all leaders walk the job, their staff feel that their manager is too remote etc. Strong leadership is required in terms of setting the direction (ends), but there is choice over means. News groups are being discussed as a means of recording learning for idea transfer and adaptation.

### ***Capabilities***

The organisation has been static and the requirements for staff in the next five years is likely to be different. All of the people have the ability - 'what we need to do is to unlock the key'. Training courses have some value but creativity is released over a longer timescale, via a stimulating environment, opportunity, contributions being recognised, people feeling valued and adequate rewards. In a high technology environment intellectual skills are a given - the challenge is to get people using the intellect.

Trying to strike a balance between individual and team recognition is a challenge - and the ability to learn from mistakes is very important. The move towards a learning organisation is a contribution in this direction, where people can learn from best practice elsewhere. Training in team work is currently practised outside the working teams - this could be extended to in-tact teams.

To use tools like Kepner Tregoe, 'you must be in the mood' - tools are less important than the way in which they are used (environment, culture).

### **Beliefs**

'I learn something every day'

'Everyone has the capacity'

'Leadership is about providing support'

'Creativity is an internal feeling of having really accomplished something'

We have some way to go in terms of 'attaching' the culture to what we do e.g. only 20 people went to the 1st learning organisation meeting from a total of 450 staff.

### **Identity**

There is a pride in what we do - the high profile corporate communications are doing very well to spread this message.

Bringing people round the site also helps.

## **3. Bill Brickell - Head of Chemical Analysis Department - Stevenage**

### **Background**

Chemical Analysis Department is part of Chemical Development Division, with responsibility for analytical support to new chemical processes en route to their commercial supply. The department consists of 55 people from school leavers to PhD scientists, and has a very flat structure. The department is essentially new, having merged people from the Beckenham, Dartford, Research and Pharmacy areas and has a number of post-integration issues to be resolved at this time. This mixture provides a high potential for creativity through difference.

### **Definition of creativity**

Creativity within the department is connected with totally original thought combined with a strong element of risk taking. Because creativity is not tried and tested it needs a lot of assertiveness/confidence. At present the new organisation needs to establish more of this. A concrete example which relied on a more creative approach to management is that of changing the nature of group meetings as a forum for getting questions. This required some degree of risk taking since there was uncertainty over the confidence of team managers to do this and the nature of the questions that may arise. In practice, staff have asked for more of these and they have proved enormously successful.



# HUMAN DYNAMICS

The following factors were felt to contribute to creativity within CAD:

### **Environment**

The Stevenage site provides immense opportunities for bouncing ideas off other individuals due to the conscious design of the building. The building was designed to include a number of 'nodes' which signify the meeting points between various scientific disciplines - these spaces are calm, controlled, functionally efficient and quiet and include a number of specially commissioned works of art to maintain the ethos of 'quiet quality'. They double as discussion and recreation areas and were in use for both purposes during the visit.

There are formal workshops and improvement teams which are run by the staff rather than by management. Even potentially 'dry' subjects such as safety are done in this way - this has transformed the approach to such subjects.

The premises are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to enable people to work when they are most energised to be creative.

The information environment is important. Many people have personal computers at home to assist in capturing ideas. Additionally there are a number of internal world wide web sites where people can drop in ideas - these sites are not moderated and are left for people to develop their own approach. There are a number of 'robust' conversations on the web sites and these are encouraged - a typically scientific approach.

*'If someone comes up with a crap idea, we tell them so'.*

There are a number of technique groups that focus on pushing specialist knowledge by scanning the external environment.

Collaborations with academia and industrial areas exist although this part of the Development organisation is not so strong as Research at this.

### **Behaviours**

*'We have developed the understanding that you expect your own ideas to be challenged'*

A measure of successful leadership is the recruitment of people who will challenge leadership and the system rather than people who we will be comfortable with. When this happens, a culture of creativity can emerge since people will see themselves as being expected to challenge and not accept what they are asked to do without questioning it. This is just as creative as having an off the wall idea.

It is also necessary to demonstrate your own creativity. Particular examples where this has occurred within the department are when all the team leaders were taken on an outdoor leadership programme (Editors note - this was creative due to its 'relative novelty' - the group were the first within the division to use the outdoors for development). The group believed that it would involved sleeping in tents and this myth was not disturbed to give the event an element of surprise (hotel accommodation was provided). A further example is the

'Chemical Development Challenge', where people were given an 'examination' surrounding awareness of the strategy. (Editors note - the essence of this was not the actual idea itself, but the 'shock' involved with providing something that people were uncomfortable with - i.e. stretching the comfort zones). Another principle here is to create different rituals around 'dry' subjects.

Team meetings use a rotating chair, which includes the secretary - they run whether the head is present or not. 'If you give people responsibility for their ideas they will become more creative - delayering has facilitated this'.

Structures that assist include performance related pay - this both helps and hinders. Creativity is part of every person's role specification which they are assessed against. There is a balance to be struck between individual and team reward for creative behaviour. At present, the 'dual ladder' reward system (technical and managerial) has lapsed and this must be allowed to assist in the future.

There are a great deal of improvement initiatives which provide opportunities for people to take a blank sheet of paper and contribute at a different level to their existing job. In this sense, integration has provided a number of opportunities for creative management.

The workload is very heavy and this may hinder creativity - however, the committed person will always find time for creativity;

*'If you want something done, find a busy person.'*

### **Capabilities**

Creativity is **hired in** by importing people who challenge the system.

An active policy of secondment into different areas is used, both to challenge what goes on and to learn from it. This operates on a local and international level, as 'missionaries'. The secondments vary from a week to six months and encouragement is given to go for six months. Since some people are nervous to go on secondments in an organisation that has downsizing, a letter to the secondee is always provided to Human Resources at the start of a secondment which states the date of return to give reassurance.

The group needs a wider portfolio of creative thinking tools in order to provide a wider choice - the main tools in use are 'sticky walls', Kepner Tregoe and brainstorming.

### **Beliefs about creativity**

'A challenge to current practice'

'Creative people provide the 'germ' (seed) of new ways of working' - the creative person can plant the seed within the shaper and completer-finisher. A bit like throwing bananas.

*'We need more banana throwers. We also need people who can pick the bananas up and turn them into policy'*

Creative people stimulate creativity in naturally uncreative people (people who are reticent to offer their own ideas). Editors comment: 'The creative person stretches someone's thinking like an elastic band and the other person has to adjust their thinking in order to reduce this stretching'.



# HUMAN DYNAMICS

## **Identity**

Creativity is actually mentioned in the high profile statements about GlaxoWellcome, e.g. company report and its approach to becoming a learning organisation. The major 'icons' of creativity have disappeared from the organisation during the integration:

*'We did have some people who you would follow over a cliff.'*

The most important factors are that of stimulating people to challenge the system so that they maintain an interest in the organisation. Also an outward looking focus on career development through secondments is important. This includes letting the best people explore other possibilities rather than trying to handcuff them to your department:

*'Creative utilisation of the resource for the group's betterment.'*

GlaxoWellcome needs a company culture - it does not have one at present. Wellcome had one and Glaxo did not have a strong sense of one. The result of the merger is no culture at present.

## **4. Melanie Lee - Research Unit Head - Receptor Systems**

### **Background**

Receptor systems sits at the exploratory end of the organisation within this unit - Melanie is responsible for a variety of specialisms, from molecular biologists, through cell biologists, pharmacologists to biochemists.

### **Definition of creativity**

Creativity requires that people are very well read and knowledgeable. Then they must also have a vivid imagination to make connections that sheer computing power cannot - it is the dimension **beyond the hard wiring** that computers have.

A concrete example that relied on creative input was to take the traditional discipline of pharmacology and build a model that would give an instant measure of receptor activity through a simple colour change. The new procedures avoid the need for lengthy and hazardous procedures that had been necessary.

A further example of visionary leadership and creative strategy was the work done by the research directors to design the new research division (way in advance of knowledge of the merger) and set up a multidisciplinary organisation. It means that the research company is very different to other companies and should place GlaxoWellcome at an advantage in the future. Teams are comprised from different disciplines based on the task needs rather than by scientific discipline.

The following factors were felt to contribute to creativity within GlaxoWellcome:

## **Environment**

For a description of the physical layout, see the interview summary with Bill Brickell.

One disappointment with the physical environment was the physical separation of biology and chemistry. The offices are also somewhat removed from the labs - this is a throwback to the historical organisational structure. (Editors note - and may only serve to demonstrate the fact that building structures only last for so long). These physical barriers are being removed to accommodate better mixing of disciplines.

There is an excellent social underlay which provides further opportunity for networking via the on-site fitness centre.

Extensive access to the World Wide Web is available, externally and internally. This includes group discussions which include a lot of trivia at present. This is changing as people learn how to get the best out of electronic conferencing.

## **Behaviour**

The managers are not hierarchical - they are approachable - people are open to suggestion. Silly questions are not criticised. If leaders practise it, the others will follow.

People are expected to keep up to date in their expertise.

There is currently an action forum to assist with redesigning HR systems that will encourage creativity, including questions around individualising role specifications, simplified grading structures, performance related pay based on individual and team contribution and international reward structures.

In a matrix research environment, we have tried to create interdependence between units - however, with approximately 30 unit heads, there are inevitably many different aspirations. Also at this time, there is a lack of a psychological contract between individuals for matrix management to work well, due to the shattering of informal networks from the integration process. This means that favours are not so frequent and networks take time to build. This is currently minimised by teaching the behaviours required to run projects, appreciating differences, encouraging dialogue.

People are currently rewarded for initiating projects and they need to also be rewarded for exercising sound judgement to terminate projects.

## **Capabilities**

A key capability is that of encouraging and appreciating differences - all the training in the world will go to waste if this is not in place. Management potential has always been rewarded in Glaxo (editors note - this was also true of Wellcome) and we have not always equally recognised scientific potential till now. Grade descriptions within GlaxoWellcome will now accommodate a whole range of specialisms, both managerial and technical.

***Beliefs about creative people***

'Creative people must be happy'

'Creative people need knowledge across boundaries - often they have a broad base of science'

'They must believe that their environment will welcome a wacky idea'



HUMAN DYNAMICS

## **Identity**

The corporate identity is very strong and is reinforced constantly. This includes less obvious approaches such as family days and fun days. There are relatively few personal 'icons' of creativity as the new organisation is very young.

## **Summary**

Truly creative environments require staff to be contented, there need to be good facilities and people must not be afraid to be wrong.

Major upheaval stifles creativity in the short term - there is a loss of trust and networks and few examples of people in the new organisation who have survived 'failure'. As a result, there is a reluctance to take risks.

In terms of the future, a little bit of stability in the short term would help enhance creativity.

## **5. Robin Carr - Head of Discovery Chemistry**

### **Background**

Discovery Chemistry involves striking a difficult balance between applying and developing technologies and making compounds of commercial interest.

### **Definition of creativity**

Creativity in discovery chemistry is about being happy to take risks and making it safe for others to take risks. It is targeted towards solving identified problems.

### ***'Getting more out for less input'***

It is important not to keep all the eggs in one basket - a number of research strands may be kept going for a while - oddly enough it is often the strands that seem less important that lead to big breakthroughs. A particular example concerned someone who was working on a minor project which was deliberately sustained for long enough to get into the mainstream of activity.

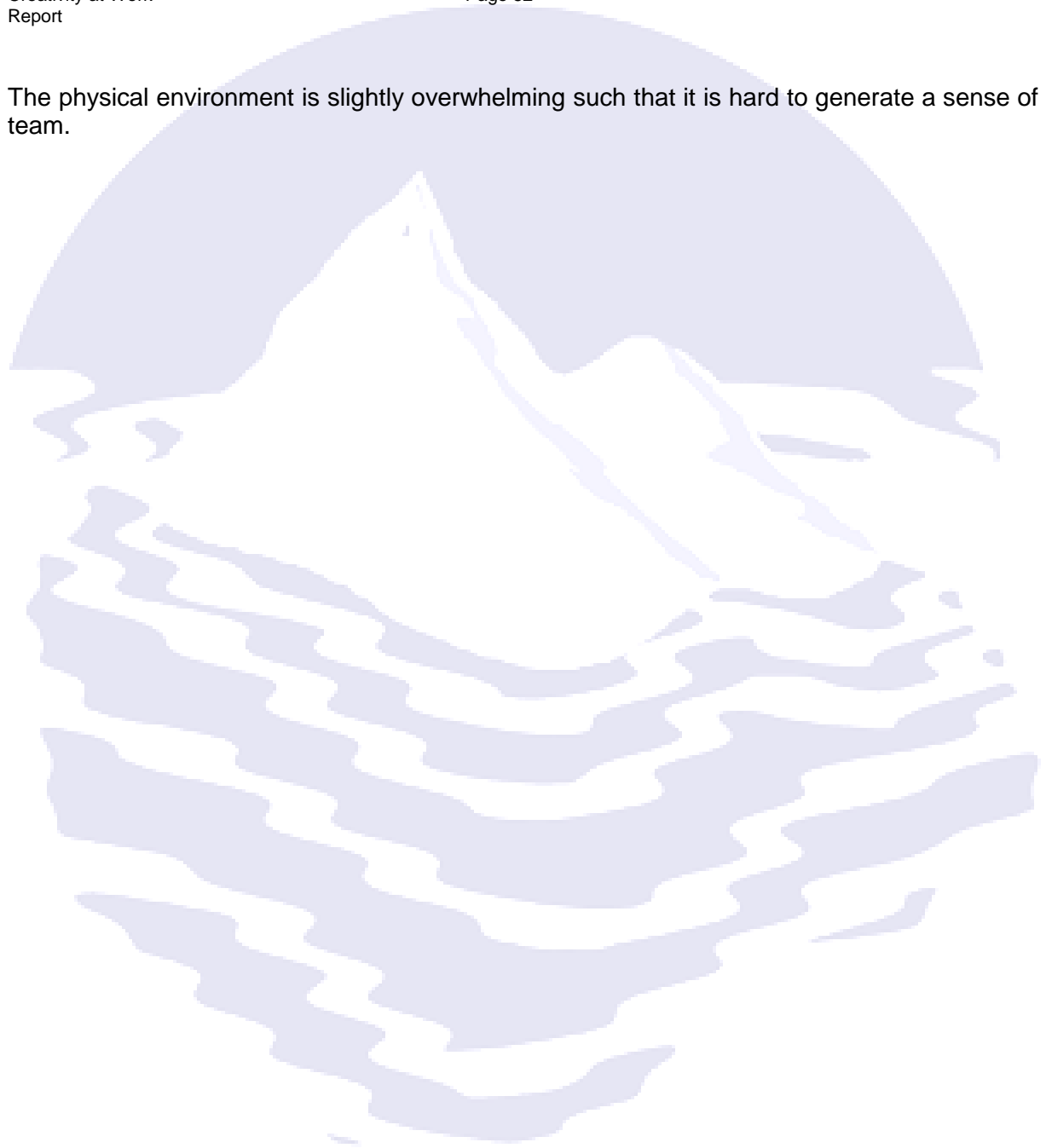
It is hard to know when to stop - tenaciousness is good for creativity but being bull-headed is not. This is a particularly difficult balance to strike in practice and requires good use of information to make informed and timely decisions.

The following factors were felt to contribute to creativity within discovery chemistry:

### **Environment**

The company is now so large that many people feel awash. There is so much information that it is possible to lose the feeling that you are aware of all the relevant information.

The physical environment is slightly overwhelming such that it is hard to generate a sense of team.



# HUMAN DYNAMICS

## **Behaviour**

There is a constant personal battle between offering constructive criticism and giving open support to ideas and/or projects. Since there are inevitably insufficient resources to do every project, it is important to make sound decisions based on informed judgement whilst not diminishing projects that do not attract resources.

A conscious attempt is made not to put too much pressure on people. Leaders need to give people enough time before evaluating the outcomes.

### ***'The headless chicken syndrome hurts creativity'***

Leadership should create a 'certain sense of anarchy' within a safe environment. For example the people in the unit have committed approximately 1 month's time on ideas that are a long shots - these are not punished for failure as long as the experiment is well done. HR systems generally do not contribute to creativity.

Politicking does not assist creativity and there has traditionally been a culture in Glaxo where having a high profile is important for career development. A lot of credit is given for initiating. It can be creative to close things down. Most creative behaviour is low profile and there is a need to find ways of encouraging and rewarding it. At present this is done verbally.

Stress associated with the integration process has made people very task focused. It is necessary to be able to see the bigger picture in order to put individual work into context - this tends to increase self confidence.

## **Capabilities**

***'It's remarkable to notice how many parents believe that they have gifted children and yet it is also remarkable to note how few adults are creative. In other words, the 'raw materials' have been affected before we get them - people have learned to fit in'***

It is important to have the ability to choose the members of a team in order to achieve a balance. It is also necessary to have high self confidence to be creative within Glaxo Wellcome. One or two specific training courses have helped., e.g. 'Managing people' provided the insight that it is OK to treat people differently as long as it is fair.

## **Beliefs about creative people**

'Creative people are able to think laterally' - they can hear and absorb a wide range of information. It is a rare quality to find someone who can listen to a lot of disparate information and learn from it.

'Creative people have a lack of need for approval'

'Creativity involves having the courage to fail'

'Persistence'

People need to feel confident about their careers.

## **Identity**

Key creative 'icons' have now departed the company during the integration exercise. Some of these people are very interesting, e.g. John Clitheroe was qualified in a number of disciplines and had a particularly low key approach to his 'expertise'.



HUMAN DYNAMICS

## Merck Sharp and Dohme

Merck Sharp and Dohme (MSD) is the UK subsidiary of Merck & Co., Inc. which is one of world's most successful pharmaceutical companies, with a strong commitment to innovative drug discovery and development. To maintain its position as a market leader, MSD has to continuously develop innovative new products.

This interview focused on the research facility at Harlow which is dedicated to the scientific investigation of neurological diseases and the discover of therapeutic agents to cure and alleviate their effects. A brief overview of the research facility is shown overleaf. Since MSD is a very large company, the contents of the interview cannot be interpreted as being representative of the whole organisation, yet they show a 'snapshot' of creativity in use within a specific functional area.

Interviewee: Alan Watt - Senior Research Chemist

The role involves the leadership of a small group of analytical scientists, looking at various aspects of drugs, e.g. identity, purity. This requires a balance of managerial activity and leadership and motivation.

The definition of creativity in MSD is looking for new ways to do new things - looking of non-obvious solutions to obvious problems.

A specific example where creativity made an important difference was the coupling of liquid chromatography with mass spectrometry in 1992. This enabled the group to examine low levels of drugs and metabolites, removed the need to use radiolabels and speeded the whole process up. At the time, this was working at the frontiers of what was possible. Since then, this innovation has influenced the way MSD thinks about drug research as a lot of work that was traditionally thought of as development is now handled by research. In this case, the idea was originated and developed by one individual but there was a resource lack (mass spectrometer was in another department). This required persistence, a visible demonstration that the technique could work in practice to gain the required support and senior management support for the idea.

### ***Strategies that encourage creativity***

MSD has recently started using people to work full time on speculative projects - this is an approach to managing diversity.

The following factors were felt to contribute to creativity within MSD::

#### ***Environment***

Physical environment is important. The local structure keeps all the relevant disciplines under one roof - it should therefore be possible to find all the necessary expertise easily. This has been valuable recently in one example, where the group has needed to learn how to use some new technology which had been previously used by the biochemistry group. The necessary expertise was quickly accessed and transferred. Although all disciplines are

under one roof, the group is functionally separate. This sometimes restricts access to particular specialists although informal networking with 'problem solvers' across disciplines minimises the effects of the formal structure.



# HUMAN DYNAMICS

The level of funding and the specification of equipment is important in order to put creative ideas into action. This separates industry from academia, where the equipment may have to be built over a few years - this would not be consistent with commercial need.

Links with academia are also important in terms of external environment - being able to develop targeted relationships with various academic groups helps in terms of getting 'sparks' from the external environment.

The potential information environment within MSD is massive and a challenge is the desire to develop integrated information systems that enable knowledge management to become a reality. At present, idea transfer is mainly through informal human networks.

### **Behaviours**

Within scientific research, it is possible to recognise the creative people and the 'followers'. The creative people are always looking for ways of improving what they are doing, with incremental or radical improvements and the followers, who are very rigorous in what they do. Importantly, the second group may need to be more highly rewarded than the first and there is a natural bias towards this group. Left to their own devices, creative people do not produce high performance. The other group provide an important 'moderating' influence.

MSD rewards results (**ends**), i.e. drugs on the market rather than the process (**means**) of getting there. In practice this means that there is considerable latitude of approach (how-to). It also assists in dropping research projects that are not delivering real benefits, since people want to be associated with winning projects.

Pressure of work due to priorities hinders creativity, since this tends to reduce the tendency to split resources over a number of promising projects.

The group take a pragmatic view of the need to 'kill' projects that are not delivering the expected benefits:

*'No-one gets shot for having a good hypothesis that didn't work'*

Where a project takes on an unexpected benefit, i.e. it has a serendipitous therapeutic gain, the organisation is 'loose' enough in order to be able to exploit this.

### **Capability**

In the main, MSD buys in the creative people it needs in competition with other major pharmaceutical companies. No great reliance is placed on creativity tools and techniques - rather more importance is placed on encouraging an open culture. The tall structure may be a barrier in achieving rapid progress on the cultural issue.

### **Beliefs and values**

These are the over-riding factors that drive creativity in MSD, such as:

***'Do good science and the drugs will follow'***

These are modelled, by encouraging the publication of articles and are built into the reward system and career development structure e.g. to be a top scientist, you are expected to publish a specific number of papers per year.

At a personal level creativity requires giving people space and the ability to tolerate a certain amount of failure.

***Identity***

Identity level symbols and 'myths' in MSD are all connected with working at the highest possible levels of scientific excellence.

***Evaluation***

In summary, the main contributing factors that affect creativity are:

- The right people in the right place doing the right jobs
- A suitable environment i.e. the space and the constraints under which they can work

This is not a recipe' - it is constantly under review.

If creativity was absent within the organisation, the long term strategic consequence would be a shift from innovative based R&D towards a 'generic' pharmaceuticals manufacturer.

In terms of continuous improvement, as younger people move up through the organisation, the practice of creative management will tend to become more widely understood.

HUMAN DYNAMICS

## **Drusillas Zoo Park - Alfriston, East Sussex**

### ***Introduction***

Drusillas is a Zoo with a difference - it includes a board of junior directors who advise on a range of issues relating to the continuing improvement of the premises.

It is recognised as having some of the best facilities for animal care. The mission statement is shown overleaf. Drusillas was originally a tea house in the 1920's and it has gradually adapted to the changing needs of the community it serves. It currently employs 150 people in the high season and 30 in the low season.

Focus Group participants:

Caroline Coles - Personnel and Training  
Martyn Williams - General Manager  
Sara Parket - Restaurant Supervisor  
Peter Tobin and Melanie Barker - Wacky Workshops and Discovery Club

### ***Background***

Ten years ago, the organisation was at a turning point - the zoo was separate from the leisure side and shops. At that time, the facilities were old and in need of development. It may be that the level of dissatisfaction with the zoo at this time led to the degree of energy invested in improvements. For example, the zoo side is nearly 100% new and staff are very satisfied with the 'product'. The shops used to compete with one another whereas now the shops are split from one another in order to more adequately appeal to different market needs e.g. schoolchildren versus coach parties. Increasingly, the layout has been designed to meet the 'traffic flows' of different market groups.

### ***Definition of creativity at Drusillas***

Drusillas define creativity as the freedom, encouragement and involvement to feel part of something that the public want. It is also linked to the intrinsic outcomes of unsolicited positive reactions from the public. These generate repeat business and referrals through children's recommendations to others. Working at Drusillas is 'the best kind of work' since it is based on personal enjoyment.

### ***Creativity in action at Drusillas***

Drusillas runs a number of themed exhibits which are linked to charitable and educational aims. This year's focus is the Maasai, which combines fund-raising with information.

Specific examples of products and services that are directly connected with creative input are:

1. ***The Discovery Club*** - This is a 'true fun finding out day' where children come along to find out more about animals and the natural world in an interactive 'behind the scenes'

day. The day includes a paint and make workshop, talks and a tour, discovery learning all delivered through 'low tech multimedia'. The idea came directly from a staff member who was responsible for its organisation and presentation with total support for the management. Drusillas have had as many as 120 children who have attended these days.

2. **Communication** - Drusillas value failure as a means of learning from mistakes - an example of this was where communications about special events were not shared. This resulted in some staff being unaware of event details which in turn meant a lack of involvement. Communication has since been made the responsibility of a senior team member and briefing sessions are held on current and future projects such as those for 'Tree time' and 'Maasai'.

The use of ideas extends beyond full time staff - the sub-contract welder noticed the need for a focal point within the zoo and a bandstand was introduced. The Trading Post idea was originated by the person who worked in the garden centre due to a personal enthusiasm for green issues.

### ***The culture***

Drusillas has a 'work hard/play hard' culture as defined by Deal and Kennedy: Fun and action are the rule here. Employees take few risks, all with quick feedback. To succeed, the culture encourages them to maintain a high level of relatively low-risk activity. There is an open door policy by all managers - all staff know that they will be heard if they have an idea that they wish to share - sometimes the projects have taken some years to bring to life, but all ideas are listened to.

### ***The structure - formal and informal***

Due to the small size of the organisation, relatively few services are centralised (Finance and Administration). Flexibility is important in terms of the structure although job descriptions will be introduced shortly and this will tend to define jobs more precisely. The main communication structures are hard copy mail, formal and informal meetings and 1:1 conversations.

There is a real passion for ideas and a great diversity of people who bring different ideas to the party. People are very flexible and tend to move around Drusillas according to what the business needs are and individual skills and talent. Drusillas runs small trial projects based on staff ideas, which encourages them to practice and to improve on them further.

### ***Creative management***

The management style is very hands on and this enables them to observe, listen and discover through working together where their staff's latent talent lies. Additionally, there is a high natural turnover of talent since Drusillas deliberately employ about 120 students every year for seasonal work. Typically this means that there is a completely fresh supply of minds every two or so years.

Drusillas use the appraisal system, self set and business associated goals and continuous learning as the main systems that encourage creativity. New ventures are reviewed periodically to ensure that the most promising projects get resources and others are recycled or killed off.



# HUMAN DYNAMICS

## ***Where does creativity come from?***

A scan of the levels of depth at which creativity operates revealed the following features:

### ***Environmental (external and internal)***

Competition has been a positive stimulus (Sunday trading, the other tourist attractions in East Sussex), evidenced by the fact that the recession did not affect Drusillas as much as other tourist attractions. Internally, staff are all working towards a positive learning experience. Drusillas are well known for their environmental concerns and the care they provide for animals in captivity. Informal message boards are used to tap the motivations of staff for specific projects. A good social network also helps .

### ***Behaviour***

- The open door policy
- Job rotation based on individual desire/potential
- Hands on management style - it is not uncommon to see the MD clearing tables when there is need.
- Approachability
- People muck in when there is a crisis
- More forums are needed to improve creativity

### ***Capabilities - selection and development of potential***

At the interview stage, Drusillas use group interviews which aim to discover potential so that people can be best fitted. The selection process includes non-conventional exercises such as drawing. From the very start there is an attempt to move people towards their strengths. This is kept under review, since in some cases, the latent talent does not come out on the first day. Training courses are organised to promote self confidence, so that people will articulate their desires. Some training is done in creative problem solving techniques such as brainstorming. Mentoring is also used to develop latent talent.

### ***Beliefs***

- Drusillas is 'a fun finding out day'
- Caring for animals in captivity - the keepers love the animals
- To provide a more positive outlook on the environment and animals

### ***Identity***

Creativity is mentioned within the staff handbook, company report and strategic planning process - thus it is 'woven into the fabric' of the 'corporate identity' rather than being added on as an afterthought. It is also evident in the style of the CEO Michael Ann, who 'breathes' enthusiasm and encouragement.

## **Summary**

The main ingredients of creativity in Drusillas are:

- A continuous desire to improve the organisation
- A tolerance of mistakes
- An enjoyment of learning



# HUMAN DYNAMICS

## The College of Guidance Studies - Hextable, Kent

The focus of this case study is the use of creativity in strategic management processes by employing creative approaches and techniques for overcoming thinking blockages.

Contact: Alaine Sommerville - Principal

### **Introduction**

The College of Guidance Studies is a specialist higher education College. Currently the College specialises in the education, training and work segment of the guidance community but it has plans to move into counselling, health service, business - anywhere where guidance is practised.

The College's mission to be the guidance community's centre of excellence in education, training, research and development both nationally and internationally. To enable it to achieve this mission, it offers opportunities in:

- Initial training
- Continuing professional development
- Research
- National resources

The focus of interest in this case is the use of creativity in the strategic planning and review process.

### **Creative Strategy at the College of Guidance Studies (COGS)**

The College has a very deliberate strategic management process which consists of three elements:

- **Analysis: internal and external**
- **Choice: identification and selection**
- **Implementation: systems, values and structure**

Creativity is required at each stage. Some examples of the approaches which we have taken are given:

**Strategic analysis** - Projective techniques were used to analyse the organisation - this involved thinking of how the organisation would be if it were an animal. This produced two pictures : one of a furry crocodile and one of a cygnet. This was used to examine underlying assumptions. The cygnet was chosen because:

- The College had grown
- A cygnet can grow into a swan

- A lot of activity goes on beneath the surface
- It is loyal
- It looks after its young
- It has few predators other than man

The furry crocodile was chosen because it:

- Is swift and powerful on water but lumbering on land
- Is respected in its environment
- It scans the environment from the swamp
- It is large in its own environment
- It has a cuddly feature in its furry underbelly
- It is vulnerable to predators outside its domain
- It lays eggs and returns to check on them

This process raised a number of assumptions about how the College saw itself which were investigated and it was also fun

**Strategic choice** - Generic strategic choices were identified using a model like the Ansoff matrix. However, there is the need to evaluate and choose between these options. Our experience is that we could sit and talk and talk about these matters but that would not necessarily result in a decision. So, people were asked to vote using a scoring mechanism with the criteria of feasibility, acceptability and suitability. We were each asked to give a score to each of the options using these criteria. These were then factorised and collated to give a priority ranking. The results were fascinating in terms of how people saw each of the options. Although there are issues about using such a scoring approach it provided a way of sorting out the wheat from the chaff.

**Strategic implementation** - Having decided on the best options the focus was changed towards we needed to do to make this happen. The process used encouraged us to 'think outside the box' by imagining what we would be like in the year 2000 by thinking about:

- Our belief system
- Our behaviours
- What we had "let go" of
- Looking back from the year 2000 what we had needed to change
- Our physical appearance.

To encourage us in this thinking, music and a guided imagery sequence was used to create an atmosphere which was conducive to being creative and visionary. The result was that everyone had pictures that reflected who and what we wanted to be. Two of them are reproduced overleaf.

## Summary

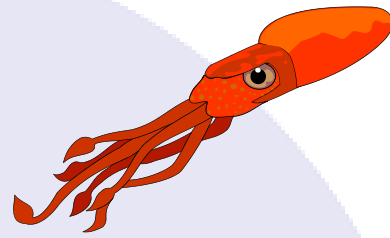
'The whole process left me thinking at a deeper level about the organisation and has enabled me to challenge some old assumptions which I believe we all have to do to achieve that future place we want for ourselves.'



HUMAN DYNAMICS

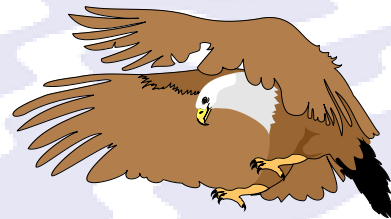
### The Octopus vision

- Fast moving, quick to respond
- Can be predatory
- Niche market (sea)
- Capable of reproduction - baby octopuses (franchising)
- Can cover its tracks if necessary (ink)
- Cold and warm water
- Lots of arms (products or markets)
- Reaching out
- Central Resource



### The Eagle/Condor vision

- Able to survive in different climates
- Adaptable
- Robust/Strong
- Sociable
- Vision
- Able to soar
- Caring and loyal
- Very fertile



HUMAN DYNAMICS

## Kent County Council

KCC is an organisation with a variety of sub-units, with differing approaches to creativity. Four viewpoints have been taken of the organisation which are complementary.

### **1. Personnel and Training Services**

Contact: James Butcher - Personnel Consultant

#### **Introduction**

The Personnel and Training unit's main function is:

*'To enable management in Kent Public Service to enhance the individual and collective contributions of the people to the short and long term good of the service'*

The unit currently has approximately 35 members.

The business plan makes specific reference to the need for research and development in order to deliver new services. In recent years, these have been enacted in a number of ways e.g. 'New ways to solve old problems', which uses a menu of creative approaches to organisational problems.

#### **Culture, style and values**

Research and development activity is funded in order to deliver new services.

Participative leadership practices are used, such as using line managers on the 'employment strategy board'.

#### **Structure and systems**

At a corporate level, Personnel, Property Services, Legal, Information services and Finance have a central function.

Within the unit, there is a fairly flat structure (average number of layers between leader and most junior staff member = 2, maximum = 4). In one case there are 16 people reporting to one person.

A large emphasis is placed on use of knowledge based specialism (experts) within the unit. Although formal job descriptions exist, there is a relatively low level of definition within individual job descriptions allowing room for individual flair.

Of the wide variety of communication systems available, the ones that it is believed contribute most to creativity are meetings, 1:1 conversations and e-mail.

Learning sets, a continuous learning policy and self-set goals also provide further stimuli to creativity within the unit.



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## ***Skills and resources***

Some emphasis is placed on training and development in creative problem solving techniques, especially brainstorming, mind-mapping, creative visualisation and synectics. Mentoring is also used to develop skills in this area.

## ***2. Focus Group approach***

Participants:

Danny Chesterman - Head of Personnel and Training  
Muriel McIntosh - Manager Individual Pupil Services - Education Department  
Bob Trigg - Head of Corporate Personnel

## ***The impact of history***

The very nature of Kent's geography and history is felt to contribute to the creative mindset of KCC e.g. Kent was a Kingdom and has had to face a wide range of challenges in history. It is strategically important as the gateway to Europe - it has a large amount of coastline which means that the county has to provide a wide range of services requiring it to use resources creatively.

External pressures such as Compulsory Competitive Tendering have generated the need to adapt rapidly and has created 'pockets of creativity'.

## ***Examples of creativity within services***

A number of specific services were mentioned as being related to creative input by individuals:

- EuroCAST - This is a joint funded project to provide a curriculum activity and advice/support organisation. This came about by adopting a very creative approach to working with other countries - this pulled together a number of diverse strands and relied on one person having a bright idea. The idea was picked up informally and this did cause some problems, since it did not pass the formal 'hurdles' in the right order, however, the fact that it survived through to implementation is indicative of 'corporate tolerance'.
- Using 'front-line' people as 'pioneers' in the organisation:
  1. A group of care workers sought out their own mission and developed their own appraisal system - this was much more useful than using the KCC standard one.
  2. A group of roadworkers decided to take turns to stop and talk to the general public about what they were doing when they were digging potholes. The result was that complaints went down rapidly and job satisfaction increased. Previously, they had felt the angst of the public whilst they were doing the work.

### **Multiple definitions of creativity within KCC**

*'There is an abundance of creativity hindered by management processes'*

Creativity comes from the 'shadow side' of the organisation. An example is Kent Job Club - a personnel service for people who are in transition between jobs. This was started by one individual who found that people were demanding more of her time than she could spare. She developed this into a fee earning business. This stemmed from individual initiative and risk taking.

*'It was able to flourish perhaps because KCC is so big that it is usually possible to find someone in the organisation who will think it is a good idea - the trick is finding them and getting them interested'*

How anxiety is handled is also important - people are most creative when their anxiety is 'held'. Having a number of 'stability zones' within the organisation helps people in providing a base from which to be creative.

Further definitions of creativity are:

- Creative problem solving in groups.
- Seeing things differently - in seeing 'what is' in a different light.
- Creativity comes partly from seeing something of value in every proposal for change.

The following factors were felt to contribute to creativity within KCC:

#### **Environment**

- **External** - An environment of change due to statutory legislation - what used to be a linear relationship between strategy and outcomes is no longer valid.
- **Internal - Physical** - An open environment with colour and ambience and fresh air is important. No physical barriers between people. The nature of conventional meetings hinders creativity - it is important to know what kind of meeting you are at e.g. the rhetorical type versus the problem solving type.
- **Information** - There has been insufficient communication between departments - team briefing has helped improve the flow and quality of information exchange.

#### **Behaviours that increase the potential for creativity**

- Activities that enable people to 'make sense' of their own and others experiences assist - tolerance that there are a huge variety of approaches within KCC and acceptance of this variety.
- One of the participants felt that flexibility of language is important - i.e. the use of different language for the same issues to communicate with different parts of the organisation. Another participant felt that different vocabulary was problematical as it

generates misunderstanding. This may reflect the different places from which this issue is perceived (Central Personnel and a business unit).

- Challenging the process - using smaller groups (rather than committees) help this process.



# HUMAN DYNAMICS

### ***Behaviours that reduce the potential for creativity***

- Excessively high workload is a barrier to creativity.
- The ritual of being 'pressurised to find answers to questions' rather than asking better questions dilutes creativity. This models typical 'advocacy processes' within KCC that have led to limited solutions in the past.
- Lengthy bureaucratic processes hinder creativity. On the other hand people don't always take responsibility for decisions - they will seek approval for things that they could make decisions on themselves. For example, it wasn't long ago that all letters from the education department had to be signed by the director.
- High formality causes conformity and stifles creativity.
- Top-down decision making tends to deprive people of making creative input.
- High risk areas such as special education are constantly under the public (media) eye. This can prevent ideas being taken forward. Paradoxically, there are very few negative outcomes that would attract media interest (people do not storm the gates and the council is not overthrown if mistakes are admitted). Perhaps this shows that it is people at a local level who are susceptible to pressures to minimise risk taking.
- On the other hand, it was thought that very few front line staff would agree, as they feel that risk taking is dangerous. The organisation is tolerant towards risk at a strategic level, but this remains to percolate to front line staff, i.e. they are expected to get their casework right.

### ***Capabilities***

Important interpersonal skills needed to encourage creativity include: listening; asserting; questioning.

Some tools are relevant, e.g. synectics, brainwriting, wish lists, imagery and drawing, metaphors, stakeholder analysis, nominal group technique, transactional analysis, magnetic hexagons, whiteboards, .

Skills - these are the practical application of skills - there is a belief that provision of tools in their own right is not enough:

*'We attended a project management tools programme but we do not have the opportunity to use those tools very often - so we have not necessarily acquired skills'*

### ***Beliefs about creativity within KCC***

Values such as caring, humility, commitment assist - more people work in this organisation because they care about the nature of the services than making money:

*'They care and they dare'*

*'Educational psychologists are an example - they get lots of brickbats thrown at them but still manage to be creative. I believe that this is partly because they have skills and sufficient*

*background (breadth of experience that they have to have to become a psychologist) and confidence in themselves to weigh up and take risks. They also have good supervision and support systems which have been built into their processes'*

People need a 'terrier' mentality to successfully get an idea into action - tenaciousness. Many of the services provided are 'process led' e.g. giving a child an education - exams are an output, but the process is more important. The resources required to deliver this are focused more on the hearts and minds of service deliverers rather than 'hard' resources such as money.

Some management processes hinder creativity e.g. tightly drawn project management processes and corporate boards who nit pick over 'bids' for money.

### **Identity**

There is a need for belonging that is related to professions - this is linked with structuring activity around smaller groups.

An identification with the organisation is important - a feeling of social engagement with the issues.

### **Strategies for encouraging creativity**

- **Individual** - A personal strategy is that of helping people find out what they are good at and then to get them to enact it purposefully. The assumption is that each person has something to contribute to the organisation and relies on individualism. In such a world, corporate strategies that work on a collective basis become less valid. A particular example of this is job descriptions where we define a job and then look for a person to fit it. We may need to reverse this.
- **Individual** - There may be a need to find a way of nurturing ideas within the organisation that are antithetical. Perhaps creativity should come from individuals rather than the organisation. For example, we recognise that our staff have the ability to influence 1 in 4 households. What would happen if each employee adopted a network market research approach to discovering community needs within their immediate sphere of influence?
- **Individual** - Encouraging subversive activity helps - this is similar to Tom Peters' notion of simultaneous tight-loose properties.
- **Organisational** - There is a belief that you cannot have a 'strategy for creativity' - under these circumstances, the focus group concentrated on the identification of those factors which make it more probable that creativity would occur. Future Kent is a creative organisational strategy - the theme of the proposal is the shape of the organisation beyond April 1st 1998. This involves opening up minds to think about the future of Kent and requires a rethinking of the traditional idea of consultation. The timescale is likely to compress the ability to widen the scope of the consultation process.

There are a lot of regulations (genuine barriers) to creativity. Others are open to question.



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The nature of consultation does not always encourage idea generation - this is because the timing of consultation tends to put boundaries around the extent to which new ideas may be taken on board. Creativity occurs in spite of this - this is thought to be connected with:

- The organisation's complexity
- The organisation's size
- Some individuals either do not perceive or accept the limitations

The group recognised that text was an imperfect methodology for distilling the essence of the group process. A further representation of the outcomes is given in the accompanying 'mental model'.



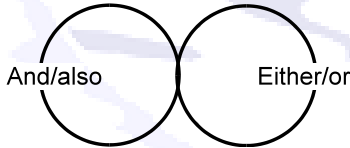
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### 3. One on one 'dialogue' approach

Participants:

Danny Chesterman - Head of Personnel and Training  
Peter Cook - Principal, Human Dynamics

The dialogue process involved an emergent communication process about a number of issues from which the issue of creativity was 'approached at a tangent'. The main insights may be summarised as follows:

- Creativity is concerned with making sense of paradoxes, not by choosing between issues (either/or mentality) but learning to tolerate multiple realities (and/also mentality). A model that represents both possibilities is shown opposite:  

- Creativity exists where chaos and structure meet within the organisation.
- In a chaotic environment, expressions of standards and value are useful not because they inform action, but because they represent something fixed and solid which it is possible to agree/disagree with. A metaphor for this is an organisational 'dartboard' which people may channel energy towards (positive and negative).
- There are problems associated with launching radical ideas due to the issue of cognitive dissonance (ideas which are far removed from the dominant presentation of the present reality are 'disposed of').
- It is also connected with the asking of naive questions. In transactional analysis terms, this involves a cycling between 'free child' and 'adult' states. Leaders could be typified as 'nurturing parents' to encourage creativity.
- It may also involve starting processes differently, i.e. from a non traditional place. The dialogue itself was unfocused and we 'sneaked up' on the question of creativity, thus the process was emergent. Ideas to escape from mental tramlines included bringing in someone off the street to formal meetings to act as a disturbance and using children to question the 'obvious'.
- In terms of creative change management, we should learn to create 'stability zones' within organisations. These are akin to an oasis in a desert, where people would return to on an occasional basis. Other organisations have mentioned training as one such stability zone. These could be provided by the organisation (paternalistic mode) or, more likely in an age where lifetime employment is highly unlikely, these need to come from within individuals.



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#### 4. Environmental Management Unit

Interviewee: Stephen Rees - Member of Environmental Management

##### **Background**

The purpose of the Environmental Management group is to generate continuous improvement in KCC's approach to environmental management against a backdrop of extreme organisational change. The main factors contributing to change have been new legislation, cuts in public expenditure, Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT), devolvement and structural change. The Environment Programme started in the late 1980's and arose out of a number of individuals who had an interest in various departments with little co-ordination and collaboration. A ground swell of pressure released this human potential:

- The 15% green vote in the European Parliament
- Friends of the Earth produced a charter of 177 things that local Government could do to improve the environment
- A co-ordinated resource within KCC to address the environmental issue

##### **Definition of creativity**

There is no single definition of creativity, since the principles on which creativity emerges are based on an **individual response** to creativity. In training sessions on environmental issues, there are four typical reactions to creativity and a number of corresponding strategies for addressing these reactions:

Reaction to creativity	Strategy which addresses individual reactions to creativity
Cynical	Finding ways to break down barriers
Pragmatic	Giving people practical things (on a plate) that they can do which fit in with particular constraints e.g. time, resource, work priorities
Idealistic	Enabling people to translate ideas into action by finding levers, catalysts and incentives
Parasitic	People who do not care - in work for themselves

Specific examples of products and services that are connected with the use of creativity include:

Shifting perceptions about the environment from 'green fascism' and the 'green stick' towards a more business focused positive action approach. This has been enabled by the use of pump priming funds which encourage improvements and motivate action.

A number of partnerships have been used e.g. air quality, countryside, heritage.

In one example, nine waste incinerators were under consideration for development in the North West of the county - there was no way of assessing the cumulative impact of these units on air quality. Through the creative use of internal and external resource, a computer model was developed which allows any scheme to be appraised. This required a recognition of the problem by an individual officer and the senior management officer who had a link to the environment department. Because of the pump priming funds, the idea was able to be put into action to produce a Kent Air Quality model. In terms of learning, the unit has recognised the value of using external resources in ways that allow internal staff to learn. In some cases, these ideas have been translated into different areas e.g. other forms of pollution monitoring and appraisal such as solid waste, water.

The following factors were felt to contribute to creativity within the environment unit:

***Environment (physical, political, informational etc.)***

A good deal of creativity has been used to tap into structures where environmental issues are taken as part of the business. This has been through structural arrangements such as tapping into existing communication, networking and creative interfaces.

Artificial structures have also been developed e.g. green teams consisting of action orientated people who can propagate ideas and put these into action.

Peer pressure through benchmarking has been use to inform, educate and encourage action.

Where nothing has been done before a pilot approach is used to minimise risk.

Idea transfer is facilitated through a promotional strategy which aims to spread best practice. A number of sustainability indicators and monitoring procedures are used to generate pressure for improvement.

***Behaviours that increase the potential for creativity***

There is a perception that creative leadership has been lacking due to organisational pressures to follow a central government agenda. The creation of a number of core values has begun to rectify this imbalance, providing local ownership and direction.

The unit uses a number of 'identity free' elements (outside consultants) to create incentives for original thinking by releasing potential.

Systems are available to recognise creativity but sometimes do not achieve this aim. In general, creative individuals are not hindered by these systems.

The environmental unit can be perceived as threatening by some people in terms of altering the way they work. This has been addressed by finding ways to resolve conflict and provide pragmatic alternatives to current thinking and work.

A recent test in corporate innovation is the use of an information system from the USA which allow idea contribution from a group without requiring people to identify their ideas - akin to a computerised nominal group technique. This releases ideas from less extrovert individuals.

### ***Behaviours that reduce the potential for creativity***

A number of anticreative behaviours were mentioned e.g. cynicism, vested interests, ownership. In the case of vested interests, this can sometimes increase creativity due to the connection with risk taking, i.e. people can persist with a direction that eventually yields a positive result.

### ***Capability***

A lot of training is done - this addresses issues such as hopes and fears, myths and individual potential to act in the short and long term with the aim of releasing individual creativity. Capability is also developed by tapping into creative resources. Some techniques have been used to stimulate creativity, e.g. team development and 'green rating games', where individuals rank a number of environmental issues on importance, then they meet with others in order to come to a convergence. In given circumstances, the techniques are very valuable. They are less valuable in politically charged or time constrained situations.

### ***Beliefs***

The personal beliefs that support creativity were listed as:

- The need to continuously adapt (arising from a background in anthropology) tempered by the view that you cannot predict what will happen (arising from the knowledge of chaos theory and practice).
- Many people have locked themselves up with a lot of cultural baggage that prevents them being creative. This is a limitation on the potential within the individual and organisation.

The recent organisational values have been a very positive step forward in making progress.

### ***Identity barrier***

There is a certain level of idealism in the environmental department that needs to be tempered if it is to be taken seriously. External resources help to overcome this. KCC does

a lot of high level promotion of environmental awareness which is very positive, and yet the KCC 'rubber stamp' can put some people off (due to lack of ownership?).

### ***Strategies that contribute to creativity***

- Incentives - finding out what makes people tick in order to identify the possible direction for creativity to emerge.
- Opportunities and incentives - providing mechanisms to exploit creativity.
- Using identity free catalysts who do not pose a threat but catalyse the release of potential within the organisation.

One danger of using creativity in the unit is the tendency to continually look for new opportunities to use creativity rather than optimising initiatives that have taken off. This may be supported by the short term focus of many people who wish to demonstrate that they have initiated something rather than continued or improved something.

Creativity can be optimised through the challenging and breaking down of identity based beliefs. This represents the future opportunity for continuous performance improvement by the unit at individual, professional, organisational and communal levels of operation.



# HUMAN DYNAMICS

## Tibbett and Britten Consumer Group - Regional Distribution Centre - Bristol

### **Introduction**

Tibbett and Britten provides high quality distribution of food for Asda in South Wales, South and South West England. The mission statement is shown overleaf. The company started out as a small management buyout team (Lowfield Distribution) with a contract from Asda. By October 1989, the company was bought by Tibbett and Britten. The Regional Distribution Centre currently employs 420 people

The Bristol operation is wholly aligned with the Asda group in the management of its distribution processes and the business is housed within the Asda building to facilitate this. It is known through the Asda group as being a very innovative depot, by implementing new ideas and sharing them with others.

### **Definition of creativity within Tibbett and Britten**

Tibbett and Britten define creativity as:

*‘The desire to be the best - to be the best we must develop ideas all the time’*

This can be achieved either through adaptive or radical creativity, dependent on the business need.

In terms of services that can be attributed to creative activities on the part of individuals, Tibbett and Britten cited the following:

- Backhaul - this is delivering out to a store and then picking up a load to return to depot which reduces the need to travel empty.
- Absenteeism control - a pro-active approach involving using return to work interviews to control one-off incidents and telephoning people who do not turn up for shift.

### **Structures**

The organisation structure is largely functional - there are no centralised functions and little reliance on experts. Tasks are broken down into smaller elements (routine specialisation) and jobs are highly specified by formal job descriptions. Approximately 70% of people work for more than one manager. Communication methods which contribute to creativity within Tibbett and Britten are as follows:

<b>Method</b>	<b>Estimated % contribution</b>
<i>Hard copy mail - letters, memos, reports</i>	25%
<i>Formal meetings (more than two people involved)</i>	5%
<i>Informal meetings (more than two people involved)</i>	10%
<i>Telephone calls</i>	10%
<i>Person to person conversations (1:1)</i>	50%



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### **Culture, style and values**

The culture is described using the Deal and Kennedy grid as a mixture of a 'Tough guy/girl' culture (A world of individualists who regularly take high risks and get rapid feedback on whether their actions were right or wrong) and a 'Work hard/play hard' culture (Fun and action are the rule here, and employees take few risks, all with quick feedback; to succeed, the culture encourages them to maintain a high level of relatively low-risk activity). The culture has moved from a 'tomorrow will do' mentality to 'second to none'. In the past, budgets were not devolved and all decisions were made by the head of the unit. This tended to disempower staff resulting in negative behaviours.

A number of changes of top management have taken place since the beginning of operations. Tibbett and Britten have put considerable effort into getting empowerment into action, summarised as a 'can do' culture where change is a norm. Importantly, Tibbett and Britten recognise that with empowerment comes responsibility and active steps need to be taken to ensure that people are not afraid to take responsibility for their actions.

The values that support creativity within Tibbett and Britten:

#### **High impact**

Making connections  
Impetuous  
Takes risks  
Curious  
Imagines  
Intuitive  
Open to anything

#### **Low impact**

Uses seeming irrelevance  
Realistic  
Supports  
Recognises patterns - left brained  
Uses dreams - right brained  
Alert to possible danger  
Does not mind being wrong

The values that hinder creativity within Tibbett and Britten:

#### **High impact**

Makes impossible wishes  
Fearful  
Punishes wrongness  
Makes rules  
Avoids risks  
Avoids surprises  
Censors  
Probably punishes anything parents disapproved of  
Punishes mistakes

#### **Low impact**

Feels  
Speculates  
Likes surprises  
Plays  
Evaluates  
Breaks rules

## **HUMAN DYNAMICS**

### **Where does creativity come from?**

A scan of the levels of depth at which creativity operates revealed the following features:

#### **Environmental (external and internal)**

- Increased pressure on performance - the need to save money due to budget cuts
- A highly competitive marketplace drives pressure to be the best

- Challenges from our key client - because we are a small business that services a single large client we have to respond imaginatively to their changing requirements. This includes a regular contract review - 'we have to be good.'
- Team meetings where people are able to discuss issues openly
- Team management days based on open air activities that are fun, mentally and physically stretching.
- Encouraging our people - everyone is encouraged to take part and make a difference by getting involved in work decisions, layouts and improvements.
- Single status is modelled throughout the environment - i.e. no reserved spaces in the car park and canteen
- Social and sports club encourages social networking and ideas
- The premises are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- The open plan environment, collective notice boards and the 'share my skills' programme assist in the cross fertilisation of ideas

### **Behaviour**

- Management are open and accessible - if a particular department had a problem requiring assistance, it would be taken on by the whole business and not treated as if it were 'someone else's problem'
- Using communications champions to open channels both ways in the organisation both for asking and listening
- Information availability - there is very little information at the site that is not available to any employee
- Asda have acted as a stimulus to creativity. However since the organisation is much larger there are occasions when the Asda structure is slower to respond to new ideas than would be desirable
- A continuous incremental approach to improving the business - adaptive creativity
- Tibbett and Britten expect a continuous flow of new product service ideas to be evaluated every year.

### **Capabilities**

- 'Swapping comfort zones' - this involves going to visit colleagues in their workspace and not expecting them to come to ours
- 'Stretching minds' - getting people involved in areas not directly related to their current role
- Tibbett and Britten have a very strong management team who together manage adversity, resolve problems and are accustomed to asking for help from one another. Effort is used to convert weaknesses into strengths.
- Tibbett and Britten are starting a competency development programme which will give each manager a personal development plan to realise potential using internal and external training as appropriate.
- NVQ's are used across the board - level 2 - warehouse, level 4 - middle managers, level 5 - senior managers and level 6 - general manager.
- On the job coaching is also used to develop competence on a continuous basis

- Training and development in creative problem solving tools is used to build skills. Specific techniques used are; brainstorming, fishbone diagrams, mindmapping and critical path analysis. Other forms of development include cross functional moves, learning outside professional role, coaching and mentoring.



# HUMAN DYNAMICS

## **Beliefs**

The beliefs that encapsulate the way in which Tibbett and Britten operate are as follows:

- 'We can be the best'
- 'The desire to be better tomorrow than we are today'
- 'No fear of ideas'
- 'Our ambitions know no boundaries'
- 'You can make it happen'
- 'We understand individual capabilities'
- 'I can make my job better' - this relates to the approach that has been taken towards empowerment
- 'Creativity can come from any level'
- 'Equality - everyone's different' - this is visible through the welcome letter, the fact that everybody is referred to by first names and through the single status environmental features.

## **Identity**

- 'Big breakfast' - the company gives its employees breakfast as a reward for special achievements. These types of events are changed regularly so that they do not become stale.
- Use of humour - the management team get a lot out of using humour to break down identity based barriers and solve problems.

Generally the group felt that there was less to say about identity. This was thought to be due to the newness of the organisation. A number of 'culture building' critical incidents were mentioned, such as the first Christmas, when there was considerable pressure to meet the demands. However these were not shared by newcomers who had not perceived the period of 'struggle'. Although Tibbett and Britten Bristol are one of the best distribution outlets this is not apparent to those staff who have not experienced the other end of the spectrum, described as 'greasy sheds'. Since people notice differences, this presents an opportunity to raise awareness of the quality of the Tibbett and Britten operation, by getting staff to benchmark themselves.

## **Strategies**

- Appraisal systems that are linked to business focused improvement projects that are meaningful. The appraisal process is also used to reinforce the message that individuals can change things and develop themselves and includes an open discussion on personal development
- The 'quality day' - this is a reward for something outstanding. The individual gets to choose the hours of work for one day and a topic of work, e.g. a visit to a store, a secondment. The minimum agreed outcome is a satisfied employee - if the company gets an idea out of the day as well then this is a bonus.
- Continually challenging the 'system' - not afraid to question

- Involvement strategies - talking to people on the shop floor, asking for ideas, encourage discussion, all ideas listened to, acknowledgement, encouragement
- Competitive - The Bristol depot wants to be best and to be measured. ASDA do this all the time



# HUMAN DYNAMICS

### ***Frontiers for development***

One of the features of Tibbett and Britten is the continuous desire to exceed current performance. A number of issues were raised in the course of the focus group. These were in the areas of:

- Empowerment - how to make further practical improvements
- How much are ideas in the control of Tibbett and Britten when it is a small business working for a very large one. Big ideas have to be fully justified unless they are at no cost to Asda. A challenge here is to make proposals that show sufficient return for Asda within minimal or no downside risk or to develop a pilot approach.
- How to mitigate against the limitation of having people with only distribution experience
- Having an information strategy - employees need to get information on which they can have relevant ideas
- Office environment is very open but short of time/forums for ideas generation
- The need to spend more energy on creating an environment where people can be creative - There is doubt as to whether it is possible to turn creativity on like a tap. The analogy is that people often get ideas in places where there is no mechanism to record them. One member of the team has experimented with using a Dictaphone on their journey to and from work to capture ideas. Other 'low tech' ideas include keeping post-it notes around, idea diaries etc.
- Getting together socially may be an area where ideas may flow more readily - this has been practically difficult due to geographical factors.

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