



Clare Creativity Conference

Managing Talent

Clare College, Cambridge
7th and 8th September 2005

Orchestrated by
The Silver Bullet Machine Manufacturing Company Limited

On 7th and 8th September, in the magnificent surroundings of Clare College, Cambridge, a highly diverse, enthusiastic and talented group of people gathered together to attend a conference entitled

Managing Talent

This document captures the key conference findings.

Contents

Delegate list	3
Conference faculty	7
Conference programme	11
<i>THE BIG DEBATE - This House believes 'talent' cannot be 'managed'</i>	15
Syndicate discussions	23
Recognition and reward	27
Performance measures	35
Talented teams	47
Creativity workshop	59
Building consensus	65
Building the culture	77
Are talented people loners?	89
What do young people need?	97
Feedback	107





Delegate list



Adam Middleton	GE Energy	Strategic Marketing Director
Alexa Wilson	St Teresa's Hospice	Trusts and Marketing Manager
Ashley George	GlaxoSmithKline	Director of UK Support and Chemistry xxx Domain (Cheminformatics)
Colin Beveridge	Remploy	General Manager, Information Systems
Danny Firth	Threadneedle Asset Management	Investment Operations Director
Dr David Hartley	Clare College	Steward
Ian Scott	Independent Consultant	
Jo Donaldson	The Pension Service	Solution Centre Manager
Joy Edgington	The Pension Service	HR Modernisation and Policy Team
June Sarpong	Broadcaster and journalist	
Kate Harrop	United Utilities	Project Manager - World Class Asset xxx Management
Kevin Mansell	Commission for Social Care xxx Inspection	Business Relationship Manager
Kim Saville	Stannah Stairlifts	Manufacturing Director
Liz Scott	NHS Institute for Innovation and xxx Improvement	Head of Priority Programmes



Matt Forrest	Sage	Business Development Manager
Nathalie Moral	PriceWaterhouseCoopers	Consultant
Nick Humby	Manchester United	Finance Director
Nick Mabey	The Prime Minister's Strategy Unit	
Phil Whiley	AREVA	Director of Quality and Change XXX Management
Richard Citron	BDO	Partner
Richard Wilson	Independent Consultant	
Rob Eastaway	Author, consultant and cricket XXXguru	
Roger Leech	Unilever	Operations Manager
Sarah Burgess	Unilever	HR Business Partner
Sarahjoy Boldison	National Institute of Mental Health	Leadership Programme Co-ordinator
Shari Casey	BT Exact	Head of Talent Management, OneIT
Steve Calvert	GlaxoSmithKline	Vice President - Worldwide XXX Cheminformatics
Dr Toby Wilkinson	Clare College	Development Director
Tom Challenor	Threadneedle Asset Management	Strategy and Risk Director
Tony Reiss	Sherwood PSF Consulting	Founding Principal



The Silver Bullet Team

Andreas Kaempf

Anny Sherwood

Dennis Sherwood

Martin Delbridge

Penny Spencer

Tim Paley

Torie Chilcott



Conference faculty



Matthew Parris...

...read Law at Clare, and studied International Relations as a Mellon Fellow at Yale. On his return from the United States, Matthew took up a post in the Foreign Office and then became a member of Margaret Thatcher's staff. He won the West Derbyshire seat for the Tories in 1979, stepping down in 1986 to become the presenter for London Weekend Television's *Weekend World*. Matthew was for many years the political diarist for *The Times*, and is now a freelance journalist and broadcaster.

Sir Hayden Phillips, GCB...

...read History at Clare and was also a Mellon Fellow at Yale. Sir Hayden has had a distinguished career in the Civil Service working in the Home Office, The European Commission, the Cabinet Office and the Treasury before becoming Permanent Secretary first of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and then of the Department for Constitutional Affairs. Currently, he is Chairman of the National Theatre, Senior Advisor at Hanson Capital, Charities Consultant to HRH The Prince of Wales, and is involved with Salisbury Cathedral, Marlborough College and the Fitzwilliam Museum. Sir Hayden and his wife run a farm in Wiltshire.



Annabel Fraser...

...is an architect specialising in exhibition design at Casson Mann in London. During and after completion of her diploma in architecture from Clare, Annabel worked in Paris and New York - keen to experience the profession from other perspectives. On her return to London, Annabel worked for David Chipperfield Architects, before deciding to specialise in exhibition work. Annabel's most recent project, *Between Past and Future - Contemporary Photography and Film from China*, will open at the Victoria and Albert Museum in September.

Dennis Sherwood...

...is Managing Director of *Silver Bullet*, and one of the country's leading experts on creativity and innovation. He was for 12 years a consulting partner with Deloitte Haskins and Sells, and Coopers & Lybrand, and subsequently an Executive Director at Goldman Sachs and Managing Director in the UK of SRI Consulting. Dennis is the author of nine books, including *Smart Things to Know about Innovation and Creativity*, and *Seeing the Forest for the Trees - A manager's guide to applying systems thinking*, and has recently been appointed as a non-executive director of the newly-formed NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement.

John Speed...

...is Director of Human Resources, Informatics and Telecommunications at the European Court of Auditors in Luxembourg, where one of John's key concerns is how best to foster and manage talent coming from the 25 Member States, in the mutual interests of the individuals and the institution, all within the constraints of public sector staff regulations.



Jonson Cox...

...is Group Chief Executive of AWG Plc, the parent company of Anglian Water and the support services group Morrison. Jonson started his career at the Royal/Dutch Shell Group, and has held senior positions at Yorkshire Environmental, Yorkshire Water, Kelda Group, Railtrack and Valpak.

Paul Lee...

...is Senior Partner of Addleshaw Goddard, one of the UK's largest law firms. A graduate of Clare, Paul has been with Addleshaws all of his professional life. He is Vice Chairman of the Yorkshire Building Society and a Director of the CBI. He is also Chairman of the Royal Exchange Theatre and Chairman of the Trustees of Chetham's School of Music, as well as being involved in various charities, especially The Prince's Trust.

Dr Richard Sykes...

...now runs his own practice as a trusted adviser and strategic coach in the information technology industry, creating new ground for his next two decades of talent identification, motivation and liberation. Richard's very wide experience ranges from senior business roles with ICI to chairing young start-up ventures; from activist 'not for profit' roles as a 'Nader Raider' to leading the Trustees of a key British architectural icon of the Modern movement - the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill-on-Sea - into the arts & education arena.

Professor Robert Glen...

...is a fellow of Clare, and since 1999 has been Unilever Professor of Molecular Sciences Informatics at Cambridge University's Department of Chemistry. Robert firstly worked at ICI and Wellcome, and then set up his own biotech consulting business. Robert is an expert in pharmaceutical research, development and marketing, as well as in entrepreneurial start-ups. He is the co-inventor of AstraZeneca's anti-migraine drug, *Zomig*.



Conference programme



Managing Talent

Programme for Wednesday 7th September

The centre-piece of this day's activity was *THE BIG DEBATE*

This House believes that 'talent' cannot be 'managed'

Time	Event	Venue
from 12:30	Registration desk opens	Godwin Room
1:00 - 2:00	Lunch	Great Hall
2:30	Welcome	Latimer Room
3:00	<i>THE BIG DEBATE</i> - Main speeches	Latimer Room
4:30	Afternoon tea	Great Hall
4:50	<i>THE BIG DEBATE</i> - Speeches from the floor and final vote	Latimer Room
5:45	Close of day 1	
7:00	Drinks reception	Scholars' Garden
7:30	Dinner in Clare Great Hall	Great Hall



Managing Talent

Programme for Thursday 8th September

Most of this day was be spent in discussion groups: one in the morning, and one in the afternoon.

Each discussion group had the challenge of solving a particular problem concerning the effective management of talent, and was asked to capture their key findings and ideas on a series of flip-charts. After each discussion, groups were invited to bring their completed flip-charts to the Latimer Room, where each group's findings were presented and discussed in plenary.

Time	Event	Venue
8:00 - 8:45	Breakfast	Buttery
9:00	Introduction to day 2	Latimer Room
9:15	First syndicate discussion or Creativity workshop	Various
10:45	Morning coffee	Great Hall
11:00	Syndicate share	Latimer Room
12:45	Lunch	Great Hall
1:30	Second syndicate discussion	Various
3:15	Afternoon tea	Great Hall
3:30	Second syndicate share	Latimer Room
4:45	Concluding remarks	Latimer Room





THE BIG DEBATE



*This House believes that
'talent' cannot be 'managed'*

The debate was chaired by
Dennis Sherwood
Managing Director, Silver Bullet

The motion was proposed by
Matthew Parris
journalist and broadcaster

The motion was opposed by
Sir Hayden Phillips, GCB
Chairman of the National Theatre,
and retired senior civil servant



This House believes that 'talent' cannot be 'managed'

The debate was conducted as follows:

Following an introduction to the debate by the Chairman, **Dennis Sherwood**, all delegates were asked to participate in an opening vote, as to whether they initially agree with the proposition (aye), or disagree (no).

Matthew Parris then proposed the motion in a speech lasting approximately 30 minutes; **Sir Hayden Phillips** replied in opposition, in a speech of similar duration.

On completion of the speech for the opposition, **Matthew Parris** had the right of reply for some 10 minutes; **Sir Hayden Phillips** then has 10 minutes to reply in turn.

There was then a break for 20 minutes for afternoon tea and informal discussions, after which **Chairman Sherwood** invited speeches from the floor.

At an hour of most powerful speeches from the floor, **Chairman Sherwood** offered the opportunity of making a concluding remark firstly to **Sir Hayden Phillips** and then to **Matthew Parris**.

Chairman Sherwood then asked all delegates to cast their closing votes.



The proposition...

Talent, according to Matthew Parris, is not merely a high degree of competence: it is the spark, the flame, the surprising ideas and solutions that set the individual apart. The heart of the matter is that the needs of talent and the needs of the organisation can often be in conflict:

“Talent is by definition original, and the way talent works is at odds with the way the organisation works. Organisations think incrementally, have structures. And there is always something pedestrian about them. Talent is different. It thinks radically, eschews structure, and sprints. No wonder that each is poisonous to the other. ”

The easy solution to this conflict is mutual avoidance: talented people might choose to live their lives as gifted loners, accountable only to themselves, whilst organisations might choose to recruit only those who are willing to conform. But real life isn't so simple: organisations need talent - and talent needs an income:

“Organisations need talent, but just as Dracula needs the blood of virgins, organisations risk killing what they love. The clever organisation disciplines not their human talent, but themselves not to kill that talent, not to cramp it, not to lose it to other organisations. But just as organisations need talent, talent needs the shelter, sponsorship, direction and of course the remuneration the organisation offers. But talent will always be bridling, straining at the leash.”

A powerful argument indeed. And in response to Sir Hayden's quoting one definition of the law, our collective basis for a civilised society, as “hedges set for men to walk in”, Matthew wryly observed that serious talent is more likely to kick the hedge down and walk through it...

*“I just ask you to picture, across the gates of your organisation, a slogan bearing the four words **TALENT CAN BE MANAGED**. Do you think this will attract the sort of people you would wish to employ? Ladies and gentlemen, I invite you to vote for the motion that talent cannot indeed be managed!”*



...and the opposition

“Let us firstly ensure we distinguish between talent and sheer genius. Wherever you look in history, you find examples of supremely gifted people whose creative genius broke free of managerial shackles. Perhaps the odd deadline or prospect of financial reward might have sharpened their genius and their willingness to deliver - but let us focus on the reality that most of us do not exist at that level, and so have to co-operate with others in order to achieve.”

The need for mutual co-operation was at the heart of Sir Hayden Phillips’s challenge to Matthew Parris. Co-operation needs mutuality, a recognition less of one’s rights, more of one’s obligations. Co-operation requires co-ordination, for otherwise ‘left-hands’ and ‘right-hands’ would not know what each other were doing, and hence do the wrong thing. And co-ordination requires organisation, and organisation requires management.

“Success comes from teamwork, and teams do not occur spontaneously - they need to be managed. The management of talent is a necessary condition for success, both for the team and the individual. This is true for the corporate world, and even moreso in the world of sport. It is undoubtedly true that the wrists and hands of the Shane Warne were given to him by God, but their achievements have been managed by the Australian cricket team’s bowling coach, Terry Jenner.”

The more that talent is required for success, the more important it is that that talent is managed. That, however, throws the burden back on the manager, for the manager must possess a talent for management: without this the whole enterprise will founder on the incompetence of those who are supposed to be in charge.

“We must have a positive, creative and indeed talented vision of what good management should be: it enthuses work with fun and enjoyment; it gives you energy rather than takes it; it simplifies rather than complicates. And under this tree, talent flourishes. This is not an accident: it is a deliberate act of wise, talented management. Talent can indeed be managed - but it requires a talented manager to do it. I urge you to oppose the motion!”



Selected extracts from the speeches from the floor...

“From an organisational standpoint, I wonder if the successful management of talent is an issue wider than that of immediate, local management. To me, an important point is that the corporate environment needs to be receptive to the talent, and be able to absorb it and make use of it.”

Professor Robert Glen, Cambridge University

“If talent equals originality, the organisation needs to take a leap of faith. Managing talent in an organisation is as much about facilitating the transition from spark in an individual to flame in the organisation, as it about recognising and working with any diverse group of individuals, some of whom happen to have the occasional bright idea.”

Joy Edgington, The Pension Service

“To me, talent is a continuum, from the modest to the exceptional. The role of the manager is therefore to identify the talent, and to create the environment in which that individual can achieve his or her very best performance - or even beyond. This requires the manager to be able to adopt a variety of styles, according to context, from coaching to being highly directive.”

Liz Scott, National Health Service Institute for Innovation and Improvement

“I’d like to challenge the stereotype that talented people are renegades and mavericks. I put it to you that people who are difficult to manage are difficult to manage, whether or not they are talented.”

Matt Forrest, Sage

“Large organisations do indeed need talent, but talent does not need large organisations. One way of using talent in a large organisation is by buying it in, as and when the organisation needs it. That’s a win-win game: the organisation can benefit from a burst of talent, whilst the talent does not need to compromise itself by submitting to the groupthink the organisation demands from its employees.”

Nick Mabey, Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit

Note: although these remarks have been presented using quotation marks, they are not *verbatim* quotations - rather, they are paraphrases of what we believe to be each speaker’s intent. We trust we have not misrepresented anyone!



... more selected extracts from the speeches from the floor

"Very often, the talented person can be rejected from - or chooses to leave - the organisation. But their impact can live on by virtue of those whom they influence. Very often, the disciple is a much better, and more effective, manager of change than the master."

Jonson Cox, AWG

"Here we are in the beautiful surroundings of Cambridge, a wonderful environment that clearly stimulates talent. Not everyone is lucky enough to come here. I do a lot of work with The Prince's Trust, so let's remember that talent also needs opportunity."

June Sarpong, Broadcaster and journalist

"For me, the challenge is all about empowering, and creating an environment in which talent has room to breathe. In my organisation, the only thing we have is talent. There is immense power in aligning the personal ambition of the individual with the collective ambition of the organisation - surely that is the role of the leader of a talented team."

Paul Lee, Addleshaw Goddard

"As one of the younger people here - and hopefully a talented person too - let me say that I believe that the relationship between me and my manager should be based on mentoring, but also rigorous and tough: the partnership needs to have mutual respect, and this need not be 'soft'."

Annabel Fraser, Casson Mann

"Yes, certainly managing talent is about respect for the individual, and valuing the individual's talents, about creating the right environment, and about believing the ordinary people can do extraordinary things. But I think there is one further element - an important one too. Timing. Knowing when to intervene, and when to get the hell out of the way."

Adam Middleton, GE Energy

Note: although these remarks have been presented using quotation marks, they are not *verbatim* quotations - rather, they are paraphrases of what we believe to be each speaker's intent. We trust we have not misrepresented anyone!



And the result

Before the debate commenced, Dennis Sherwood had invited delegates to declare their position, 'for' or 'against'. This initial vote was 3 'for', 25 'against' and 7 abstaining.

And at the end of the debate, Dennis again convened a vote: 7 'for', 24 'against' and 5 abstaining.

So, the opposition won - but the proposition had increased its support - by more than 100%!

But most importantly, everyone had enjoyed the event immensely!



Syndicate discussions



The eight syndicate topics

Morning

A	How is talent best recognised and rewarded ?
B	What are the best performance measures for talent?
C	Does a talented team necessarily have to be composed of talented people ?
D	Creativity workshop - how to generate stunning ideas .

Afternoon

E	How can we build consensus within a community of talented individuals - especially as regards situations in which they do not report to a common boss?
F	How can we best build a culture which encourages talent?
G	Are talented people inherently loners ? In which case, how can we best build talented high-performing teams ?
H	What do young, talented people need, or seek, from their bosses to allow their talents to flourish?



What we did

On the second day of the conference, delegates were invited to participate in two syndicate discussion groups, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, selected from the list on page 24, which collectively explore many of the significant issues we all face in managing talent

As can be seen from pages 27 to 118, the various discussions, each facilitated by one of the conference faculty, were well-informed and lively...





Recognition and reward

Facilitated by Professor Robert Glen



How is talent best recognised and rewarded?

Your task

Your syndicate is a cross-functional team set up by the CEO of a global company to explore how best to recognise and reward talented people, so as to encourage creativity and innovation as widely and deeply as possible. Your task is to formulate a set of recommendations relating to:

- the *key issues* associated with the choice of methods of recognising and rewarding talented people
- the *major pitfalls* that someone designing a new system of recognition and reward might encounter, and should avoid
- your suggestions as to *best practice* for the design of the new system for recognition and reward
- any *ideas and recommendations* on this topic that you would like to share with the other delegates.

Please capture your findings on the pre-printed flipcharts, and summarise your findings as a 10 minute presentation, to be given in the Latimer Room.

Some suggestions as to process

Everyone in the syndicate will have had considerable experience of recognition and reward. In the first instance, it may therefore be helpful if, individually and in silence, each delegate makes some notes on:

- various different methods of recognition and reward, embracing all aspects of creativity and innovation both for individuals and teams, that they have encountered
- what worked well for each, and what worked not-so-well
- key elements of best practice
- any ideas on this topic that you would like to explore further.

Once everyone has formulated their own views, these can then be shared, leading to a general discussion, and the agreement of conclusions. It may be, of course, that there is no single, unique 'best' method for recognition and reward - in which case, the syndicate is invited to define what needs to be done to make different methods work effectively.



Recognition and reward

Talent is special. And those who possess and exhibit talent may often contribute more to the task-in-hand - in terms of ideas, drive, flair or delivery - than their less talented colleagues. How should this contribution be recognised? And should it be rewarded - possibly at a premium? Or does such differential treatment merely feed the narcissism of the already self-obsessed? And, at the same time, risk alienating those of less talent, who are nonetheless giving of their best? Is it fair to reward an individual, when, in reality, most activity is as part of a team?

These are tough questions. And to address them, the syndicate first shared their own experiences, which spread over a very wide spectrum, from the City to public service, from academia to big business. As can be seen on pages 30 to 33, there are a host of issues to bear in mind, but also some common underlying principles, notably that:

- **different individuals value different things**
- **money is only one of a number of different manifestations of reward**
- **fundamentally, this is a matter of culture, rather than of process.**



Sharing experience...

- Recognition and reward are different, and it's important to distinguish between them.
- Recognition and reward should be matched to both the objectives of the organisation...
- ... and also the individual - different individuals value different methods of recognition and reward differently, and in particular, people who are already well-paid might give much more value to non-monetary rewards such as time, independence, public or peer approval, or the opportunity to work on 'pet' projects.
- Recognition and reward can often be simple - a picture in a public space gives public recognition, as well as symbolising the valuing of the individual as a person; a 'thank you' can be most motivating (but must be absolutely sincere); and many people value being given a bigger challenge, and a progressive stretching in their day-jobs. Also, 'big' rewards can lead to problems, for example, if there is a dispute about who received it and who didn't (for example, the award of the Nobel Prize to Otto Hahn, but not to his (female) collaborator Lise Meitner), or if it subsequently emerges that the event for which the award was made was not, with hindsight, as successful or important as it originally appeared, or if the individual given the reward is subsequently discredited (many of the controversies surrounding the award of the Nobel Peace Prize fall into these last two categories).
- It's easy to get hung up on whether the reward is a 'this' or a 'that'. Surely the key issue is one of building a culture in which talent is genuinely and enthusiastically recognised and rewarded, rather than the mechanics of the process.
- Should individuals select their own rewards? This ensures that the reward is valued, but it lacks the element of 'surprise' that people like to feel when getting rewarded. Maybe a wise reward system is one in which those making the reward know, in advance, what the individual values...
- It can be better for rewards to be 'private', for rewards that are more public - such as those associated with office space or 'the key to the executive loo' - risk being 'flouted', and could be divisive.
- On what should recognition and reward be based? Some possibilities are inputs (how hard I've tried...), outputs (what I deliver), and behaviours (my attitude). Inputs, such as hours worked, or the number of experiments carried out, are often easy to measure, but do not necessarily take into account effectiveness. Measuring outputs takes much more account of effectiveness, but tends to be more black-and-white, and - especially in the context of creativity and innovation - the final outputs might not crystallise until long after the idea was originally suggested, so building in a long delay between the initial act of talent, and its ultimate recognition. These issues can be very significant in scientific research, such as in pharmaceuticals, where a highly talented individual can do truly excellent work, only to end in failure. Explicit recognition of behaviour is a very powerful cultural signal, especially as regards 'enablers' such as actively building an environment which builds long-term success and encourages the talent to flourish, or behaviours that are ethical role models.



Sharing experience...

- **Should all performance be recognised and rewarded?** Recognised, perhaps, but surely not rewarded - for this debases the currency: only performance of an outstanding nature should be rewarded. Rewards should therefore not be taken for granted, nor should rewards be expected as an automatic part of the 'job done' package.
- Where something has been created, **one method of reward is for the originator to receive, in whole or in part, some of the corresponding value.** This can form the basis of a bonus in financial services (recognising that when things go the other way, and traders make losses, they are never asked to give money back - but they can get fired!); a royalty for an invention; or rights associated with, for example, music or television scripts or performance.
- **Should rewards be giving only to individuals?** Although individuals certainly can and do show outstanding performance, in an organisational context, this is almost never a solo performance. As Newton said, he saw farther because he was standing on the shoulders of giants. So, in many situations, the individual is just one outstanding member of a team. So who gets the reward? The individual or the team? And if the team, where are the team's boundaries?
- **To what extent should annual pay and promotion reviews encompass rewarding individuals for exceptional performance?** Maybe more 'no' than 'yes'. Raising someone's base salary builds any reward element in for perpetuity, and this may not be appropriate, especially if the reward is for an exceptional, one-off event. Likewise, organisational history is littered with examples of people who performed exceptionally in a particular role, but were total failures in the roles to which they were subsequently promoted - isn't that what the *Peter Principle* is all about?
- When an individual or a team receive recognition, or a reward, there is always the possibility that **others might feel jealous, angry or otherwise disenfranchised.** This can be minimised if:
 - the 'rules' by which the award are made are clear, open and honest (noting, of course, that many talented people hate bureaucracy!)
 - in principle, everyone is eligible, and
 - those who are not recognised or rewarded at any time know what they have to do to receive an award, and are not denied any corresponding resources or enablers.
- **Most people are modest**, and are reluctant to nominate themselves. Organisations should therefore not require this, but ensure that the selection of those eligible to receive recognition or rewards should be identified by others, who have the respect of the organisation as appropriate. This need not be 'bosses', but could very well be peers, subordinates or third parties.
- In designing systems for recognition and reward elsewhere - for example in China - **we must take care not, thoughtlessly, to transport our western values into a totally different, and inappropriate, context.**
- **The other side of recognition and reward, of course, is sanction.** It is counter-productive for an organisation explicitly to recognise and reward talent if it tolerates, and fails to sanction, mediocrity and incompetence.



Key issues...

- Everyone is different - so treat different people differently.
- All rewards structures must be ethical, within all relevant rules and regulations
- What is the contribution of the individual, and what is that of the team?
- In a global world, the ideal is to design systems that span all boundaries. In practice, this might not be possible, so local variants will be needed. But when this happens, be alert to issues of cross-boundary equity.
- And remember that all systems for recognition and reward will also relate to failure. Should 'honourable' failure be recognised and rewarded? If so, how? And remember too that if talent is rewarded, then mediocrity needs to be sanctioned.

...and pitfalls

- Much about recognition and reward has nothing to do with money.
- Some rewards can be divisive - especially those to do with space, and those that can be flouted.
- Using promotion as a reward mechanism, and having to live with the consequences.
- Poorly designed processes foster actual - as well as perceived - injustices, which can be very damaging...
- .., and remember that well-designed processes don't have to be bureaucratic: as Matthew Parris said (see page 18), "talent finds bureaucracy poisonous"!



Best practice...

- Match the reward to the individual: different people value different things.
- The human touch is all important - don't forget those sincere thank-yous.
- Any processes must be transparent - if they aren't, they will become discredited, and will soon fall into disrepute.
- External recognition - such as industry awards, accolades in newspapers or professional journals, appearances at public conferences - can have enormous value to the recipient, especially amongst scientists, professions such as the law, and high profile occupations such as in the City or the media.
- Ensure that all rewards, whether to an individual or a team, fully endorse the organisational goals and values.

...and ideas and recommendations

- Reward and recognition are fundamentally about culture, not about process.
- Allow for spontaneous, unplanned rewards - even if this requires stretching things to allow for a genuine expression of recognition
- Reward on contribution to output, not on following a predefined script.





Performance measures

Facilitated by John Speed



What are the best performance measures for talent?

Your task

Your syndicate is a cross-functional team set up by the CEO of a global company to explore the most effective performance measures to encourage talent. Your task is to formulate a set of recommendations relating to:

- the *key issues* associated with the choice of performance measures designed to encourage talent
- the *major pitfalls* that someone designing such performance measures might encounter, and so should avoid
- your suggestions as to *best practice* for the design of the performance measures
- any *ideas and recommendations* on this topic that you would like to share with the other delegates.

Please capture your findings on the pre-printed flip-charts, which, on completion, should be taken to the Latimer Room.

Some suggestions as to process

Everyone in the syndicate will have had considerable experience of performance measures. In the first instance, it may therefore be helpful if, individually and in silence, each delegate makes some notes on:

- performance measures, embracing all aspects of creativity and innovation, that they have encountered
- what worked well for each, and what worked not-so-well
- key elements of best practice
- any ideas on this topic that you would like to explore further.

Once everyone has formulated their own views, these can then be shared, leading to a general discussion, and the agreement of conclusions. It may be the syndicate's view that there is no single, unique 'best' set of performance measures - in which case, the syndicate is invited to define what needs to be done to make different sets of measures work effectively.



Performance measures

We all know the saying 'if you can't measure it, you can't manage it'. So, if you want to manage talent, you must have to measure it. That immediately raises a problem, for although 'talent' is indeed important, surely 'talent' is very different from 'cycle time', 'budget variance', 'last week's sales volume' and all the other measures we routinely use...

So can talent be 'measured', with any reliability? Can these 'measurements' be used to identify 'talented' people, and so perhaps distinguish them from their less talented brethren during the recruitment process? Or should the measures be not around talent itself, but the way talent is managed? Or is the most important measurement somewhere else entirely, looking at the outputs or the results that 'talent' achieves?



Key issues

- “Performance measures for talent” can apply to a variety of concepts. Which of these are we talking about:
 - Measures to identify talent?
 - Measures to encourage talent?
 - What a CEO does in order to foster talent via the measures that he or she puts in place in the working environment?
 - How managers manage talent?
 - How we manage the managers of talent?
- If the measurement is about talented people having great ideas, does the measurement take place at the beginning or the end of the pipeline - with the idea, or its successful implementation?
- And how does the measurement of talent sit within the overall context and corporate aims - for example, we may have talent in the organisation, but is it the right talent for our objectives? And is it being used in the right way?
- Does the attempt to measure talent create an environment which kills it off?
- And does the attempt to measure talent, perhaps inadvertently, encourage a culture of blame or fear, when the measurements show that there isn't enough of it around?



Key issues

Talent flourishes in the right environment... so managers should be encouraged to build it

As Sir Hayden Phillips said in THE BIG DEBATE (see page 19), in an organisation, people work together in groups and teams, and no-one operates in isolation. And we all know that different organisational environments can have very different impacts on individual behaviour. Who, then, is responsible for creating the 'environment'? This question is somewhat similar to 'Who creates our culture?' Faced with either of these questions, it is far too tempting to pass the buck and answer 'the boss', 'head office' or 'someone else'. But the wise manager recognises that the answer is a blend of "I do" and "we do". One of the key responsibilities of any manager is therefore to create the conditions, the environment, in which talent can flourish within that manager's domain, however small and however large. Every manager should create the space to harness talent to meet the organisation's need, 'to build a windmill which will harness human wildness and power, for the benefit of the organisation'. This is what should be measured. **Performance measures for managers need to be structured around the extent to which they get this environment right.** How do managers recognise talent? And if talented people need more than an average amount of autonomy - how well is this fostered? **"Your job is to inspire creativity in your team" might be a much more powerful objective than saying "Your job is to be creative" .**

How should objectives be set?

What needs to be achieved and how? Objectives need to be SMART, so perhaps a 'satisfactory' score can be defined by the organisation, allowing individuals to define what constitutes 'very good'.

And we need to fit with organisational objectives...

...because there has to be an organisational boundary where we have short-term and long-term strategy. and an overarching vision, within which is created a place for **overachievement** and limitless **opportunity for success**. Risk management also plays an important part, and clarity will help both managers and managed.



Key issues

What are the pressures of measures and measurement?

Most systems of performance measurement focus on the short term, and are dominated by finance. A 'balanced scorecard' seeks to include a much broader range of measures, and encourages a longer-term view. 'Management style' is a topic not included in many organisation's management accounts - but it could be within a balanced scorecard. Within such a framework, individuals might be allowed to set their own performance criteria: for example, if a manager believes - or is told - that his style is too autocratic, he may wish to become less so. That manager's balanced scorecard could therefore include this feature, so that the manager can safely receive feedback about progress along the path.

There needs to be some sort of benchmark...

...otherwise talent will end up just being "very competent". The difficulty is getting consensus about the definition of performance: what is satisfactory, and what is being rewarded. There is also a cultural issue around performance: in some national cultures, everyone is graded as 'outstanding', for not to be identified in this way would cause social loss of face; other cultures allow for the recognition that we all have combinations of strengths and weaknesses.

Can we define the nature of talent?

Sometimes we just assume it's about being creative or innovative; sometimes about the successful delivery of a task - if you can do the task well, then you are talented; if you can't, then you are falling below the level of 'talent'. We have to be able to bound it in some way: can we look for role models either inside or outside the organisation, which can then be defined and measured?



Doing the best for your organisation

Knowledge sharing...

Some talented people, are driven by their egos: they like to be the *diva*, the *prima donna*; they seek to stand in the limelight alone; they claim all the credit for themselves. But two people working together are likely to generate better results than the same two people working alone. People in general, and talented people in particular, should be actively encouraged - or obliged - to work with other talents. They shouldn't just be rewarded for being stars, they should link up with others who are also guiding lights to form a galaxy. Knowledge unshared is knowledge wasted. Most organisations go to much trouble to prevent the squandering of physical assets. How much trouble do you take to look after, and increase, knowledge?

...and the development of others

Talented people also have an obligation to use their talent to stimulate the talent of others, even (or rather especially) others less talented than themselves. How well do talented people develop others? How committed are they to doing this, and what evidence and proof is there that they are actively doing it? This may not be as difficult as it sounds - feedback from mentors, coaches and buddies can help.

Building client and customer relationships

How well are client and customer relationships generated, serviced and developed? All company talent should be aware of their own positive impact in this area.

Broader measures

Measures need to be non-financial as well as financial: how does an individual contribute, for instance, to the 'reputational capital' of the company? This has an important knock-on effect - talented people → great ideas → great publicity → better profile for recruitment → more talent. A good reputation, driven by talent, attracts more talent, for the organisation is seen to be 'a great place for talent to work in' and so fuels a powerful virtuous circle of being a true 'magnet for talent'.

Getting out of the box

Organisations should offer people flexibility: perhaps by allowing them to design 20% of the day themselves. Now there's a thought!



What to avoid...

- Over-emphasis on short-term, usually financial, measures at the expense of long-term measures and vision.
- Premature evaluation of ideas!
- Misalignment of organisational and individual aims.
- Failure to develop a shared understanding of the meaning of talent, of the importance of talent, and of its role.
- Over-engineering the whole process, so destroying what it's trying to nurture.
- Ending up stifling talent rather than encouraging it - after all, if talent really wants to 'walk through a hedge' (see page 18), it will do!
- Inertia - the corporate immune system may get the better of you.
- Promoting people out of their talent zone.
- De-motivating others: get the balance right between high flyers and the rest, for if you don't, then by switching some people on, you may well end up switching other people off.



...and what to get right

- Providing the environment and context for talent.
- Benchmarking talent - what does it mean, and to what extent is it aligned with the organisational objectives?
- Recognising talent, in both senses of the word: identifying talented people, at recruitment and throughout the organisation, and giving them the (often public) recognition they deserve (and are quite likely to find highly motivating).
- Making sure your organisation can attract talent.
- Recognising other people's good ideas. It's so easy to say 'no', and no-one will ever know - except in areas such as publishing, where the managers who turned down Jane Austen and JK Rowling have much to regret! Backing someone else's idea is risky. So those people who have a talent for spotting a good idea, on what is inevitably slender evidence, is a great skill.
- Recognising that you have to have performance measure at two levels: firstly for the talent itself, and secondly for those managers who devote their time for getting the environment right so that talent can flourish.





Best practice...

- There is no single 'silver bullet' for measurement. Rather, use a thoughtful and appropriate matrix of criteria and measures.
- Are the measures absolute or comparative? Beware the danger of absolute measures - they may not sufficiently account for context.
- What's right and appropriate for your organisation may not work everywhere - but the principles must be consistently applied.
- A 'balanced scorecard' of measures is more meaningful than the conventional financial-only set.
- Go beyond 'normal performance' - help people to see just beyond what they believe they are capable of.

...and ideas

- Be flexible - allow talented people to design 20% of the day themselves, plus self-definition of performance measures.
- Set choices, for example being able to accept a risk and reward balance.
- Encourage talent to be shared.
- Risk and reward: give a talented person a more risky project!
- Introduce a measure showing how people evaluate the ideas of others. Is someone who always says "no" stifling innovation? Is someone who always says "yes", with the result that there are many failures just taking too much risk, and squandering the organisation's resources? Who is it in your organisation who has the eye for backing winners?





Talented teams

Facilitated by Jonson Cox



Does a talented team necessarily have to be formed from talented people?

Your task

Pragmatically, most of us have to play with the cards with which we're dealt. And often - especially when we have to address a problem at very short notice, or in 'difficult situations' such as corporate turnarounds - maybe the team of people we have isn't quite as talented, individually, as we might wish. But does that mean that the team, as a team, is necessarily constrained, or can we make the team as a whole highly talented, even if each individual is lacking in one or other respect? What can a leader do to make 'the whole greater than the sum of its parts' in this way?

Your task is therefore to:

- identify some *specific situations* from your experience in which talented teams have successfully been built - or indeed otherwise
- specify, as precisely as you can, *what constitutes a talented team*, in contrast to a talented individual
- formulate some recommendations as to *what the leader of a team should do* to enhance the team's performance.

Please capture your findings on the pre-printed flip-charts, and summarise your findings as a 10 minute presentation, to be given in the Latimer Room.

Some suggestions as to process

Everyone in the syndicate will have had experience of this situation. In the first instance, it may therefore be helpful if, individually and in silence, each delegate makes some notes on their personal thoughts on these three bullet points.

Once everyone has formulated their own views, these can then be shared, leading to a general discussion, and the agreement of conclusions.



Talented teams

In the summer of 2004, Greece won the European soccer championship. Greece? Who's ever heard of Greece as a soccer team? What ever happened to Germany, or Italy, or France, or the home team Portugal - whom Greece beat in the final - or indeed England? Yes, soccer results can sometimes to be something of a lottery, but in a knock-out championship of several rounds, something has to be going right for a team of relative unknowns to win again and again.

So, does a talented team necessarily have to be formed from talented individuals? Or is there the possibility that bringing together so may talented individuals causes such a clash of egos that the team, as a team, is totally dysfunctional? And, if you can form a talented team from a community of 'ordinary' folk, how can 'the whole be made to become greater than the sum of its parts'? And what is the role of leadership in this?

To address these intriguing questions, this syndicate firstly shared some experiences concerning successful teams, and also unsuccessful ones. As the points captured on pages 50 to 53 clearly demonstrate, leadership is key, and one particular word - *charismatic* - pops up again and again. The syndicate then examined what a talented team looks like (pages 54 and 55), and finally, what the leader of a team should do to maximise the release and fulfilment of the team's individual and collective talent (pages 56 and 57).

Overall, the resounding conclusion was that **yes, you can build a highly talented team from 'ordinary' folk**, for talent is a continuum, and a **wise leader** is able to get the best not only from each individual, but also from the team as a whole. Leaders, however, need to be allowed to lead, and so another important attribute of a high-performing team is something that gets much less attention in the management textbooks - **willing followership**, and the **active and continuous subordination of one's own personal interests in favour of those of the team**. And, however attractive and elusive charisma might be, it is **not** an essential ingredient: **strength of character, which is much less obvious and far more subtle than charisma, is much more important**.



Some examples of teams that worked...

A car manufacturer

In the mid 1980s, the charismatic CEO of this company built a team to accomplish two missions - the recovery of an ailing business and improving the product and also organising a buy-out. The team was highly successful: it achieved one of the most successful privatisations with the highest employee participation in share ownership of all the privatisations.

The team set up had a number of qualities:

- A great leader, who was charismatic (but not always right).
- Enthusiasm and commitment.
- Determination.
- Excellent engineering skills.
- Clear vision and focus.

A key element of the team's process was the weekly evening where the team members from all disciplines met to help solve the major issues facing the company. All team members contributed, so, for example, the finance and HR team members would seek to contribute to an issue such as a problem with the manufacturing of a car sun roof.

The team achieved dramatic improvements in the quality of the manufactured product produced and helped the business survive transitional problems where, for example a product was launched before it had been fully developed.

A retailer

In the mid-1980s, this retailer had a charismatic leader who assembled a completely new team to re-energise the business. The team leader had the talent to lead and motivate, and to make everyone - from top to bottom - feel they could become a director of the company.



.....and some more examples of teams that worked...

A school music department

The good news: A new music teacher was appointed within a school that had a weak music department, and no history of major musical talent. Over the next five years, the school went from 'nowhere' to playing in the national orchestra championships. This was despite the fact that the orchestra some good players, but none were particularly special. How did this happen? By virtue of the new teacher's talents, especially his ability to be enthusiastic and to generate enthusiasm, combined with being a tough disciplinarian in rehearsals. These 'managerial' talents - a subtle blend of control and empowerment - made up for the lack of technical excellence within the orchestra.

But now for the bad news: After five years, the teacher became de-motivated, and within a further five years all the progress made had been lost.

The moral: A key role of leadership is to inject energy and enthusiasm into the team. But who injects energy and enthusiasm into the leader? Especially when the leader in this case - the music teacher - reported to another leader - the head.

A utility

This example illustrates how the Myers-Briggs classification of behavioural preferences proved to be a very useful tool in helping to get all the people in a team to work together. Briefly, the Myers-Briggs system (see www.myersbriggs.org) describes our preferred behavioural styles in terms of four scales: introversion ("I") - extroversion ("E"); using the senses ("S") - following intuition ("N"); feeling ("F") - thinking ("T"); and perceiving ("P") - judging ("J"). This case concerned a team of eight, two of whom fought the rest of the team on every matter, and would only work issues through in a group. Furthermore, these two 'difficult' people exhibited a touch of paranoia, thinking that decisions were being made behind their backs, outside the formal meetings, and believing that the apparent consensus reached in meetings was being changed afterwards. In fact, this was not the case. The insight provided by Myers-Briggs was the recognition that these two people were both "E"s, whilst five of the others were "I"s. "I"s prefer to think things through quietly, at their own pace, after the discussion and before reaching a decision. "E"s, in contrast, like a faster pace, and prefer group discussion and interaction. After all the team members became aware of the behavioural differences due to personal preferences, and the corresponding impact on the dynamic of how decisions were reached, the team functioned much better.





...and some examples of teams that didn't

A telecommunications company

One of the major divisions within this company wanted to turbo-charge its internal innovation. So they built a team of very talented people. The leader was innovative, and there was a unified sense of purpose. But the team's effectiveness was limited by all the members wanting to claim ownership of the ideas put forward. As a consequence, there was a lack of acceptance of ideas which bridged across more than one function, for example, ideas that impacted both sales and marketing. Overall, the team was dysfunctional, and - arguably - the whole was less than the sum of its parts.

An FMCG company

This company wished to change the way in which it distributed a particular product range in India. One member of the team, not the leader, was extremely charismatic and vital to the success of the project. This charismatic team member left room for others to claim some space. He had a very nice style, was very inclusive, and was very effective in influencing others, up down and across the organisation.

A key aspect of the distribution method the team devised was to provide certain women in the various villages with a handheld computer which could be used not only to order product but to obtain advice. Over time, these women came to have a much enhanced local status through the knowledge they could access using the computer, and the project achieved far more than the limited original objective.

This highly successful outcome came from a most unusual situation: one in which the true leadership came through someone who was not formally the 'leader'. This requires a very high degree of teamwork, and one in which all parties - the formal leader, the acknowledged but informal leader, and all others on the team - are flexible and adaptable enough to make it work.



What constitutes a talented team?

It's very tempting to drift into equating 'talent' with 'genius', and to dream that we have an abundance of Einsteins, Picassos and Maradonas in our organisations, all of whom are wilful mavericks - but also valuable assets. Of course life isn't like that. Most people in most organisations are just normal human beings, positioned along a spectrum of ability and enthusiasm. When building a team, the ideal is to be able to select those who, in the selector's judgement, are collectively most likely to succeed; the reality more often is that we are obliged to play with the cards we are dealt. To maximise the talent of the team is therefore a question of developing and harnessing the talent that is naturally present, so here are some thoughts as to how this might be done:

- **Those who have a talent have a responsibility to continue to develop and improve it:** a talented person in a dance group must continue to put in the hours to practice. If this doesn't happen, then the individual - no matter how talented - may let the team down.
- **In a talented team, today's successful leader may not be appropriate for later circumstances.**
- **There is a talent in being a follower as well as a leader.** There are lots of books on leaderships and teams, but there are virtually no books on followership. Good followership is not easy, especially for those who prefer to be the leader, for these people need to suppress certain characteristics and to conform in order to fit in, even where this is not their natural behaviour. Clearly, the most mature people can act either as leaders or as followers as the circumstances require.
- **Talent needs freedom** to express itself, to explore, to take risks, and - within limits - to fail. There is a need to avoid a 'blame' culture, and on occasions to be tolerant of failure. And sometimes there will be people in the team whom the rest of the team (or its leader) are obliged to carry along.
- **There are significant differences** between teams assembled for a particular purpose - such as a crisis team, thrown together and close-knit - and a team running a business over the long term. Teams assembled for the long term often find it healthy to have disputes on from time to time. In contrast, crisis teams have fewer disputes and perform in short bursts of extremely high energy and intensity. Also, in crisis teams, people tend to have well-defined roles (for example, in the team assembled to deal with a major incident in a hospital) and that this helps the team to be effective within a very short time period.



What constitutes a talented team?

- **Is it possible - let alone sensible - to attempt to maintain the same team for a relatively long time, say, over a five year period?** Apparently, some US research claims that it is difficult to form an effective team in less than three years, and that the people have to stay in role in the team over that time before the team is really effective. The research also indicated that if a team needs to be refreshed, it is almost as effective to swap people around as it is to bring new people in.
- **Talented teams can be assembled in many different ways:** how, for example, are teams built in the creative arts such as music and drama? In a major orchestra, for example, there are very strict 'rules' of membership - not only do you have to be able to play the trumpet, but you have to be able to play it extremely well. Also, many truly brilliant orchestras are formed from players who have been together for many years. This is even more true for chamber ensembles such as string quartets, where the interpersonal interaction constitutes a most intense and even intimate experience, as the whole team works so closely together through rehearsals and performances, often requiring them to open themselves up entirely to their fellow players. In the theatre, relationships are different: the actors in a play are melded together as a team to produce the best possible performance in a relatively short time, and the team is usually disbanded when the run is finished.
- As the example of the orchestra illustrates, **selection is an important key to success when setting up teams.** In larger organisations, there is a pool of resource from which to select the required talent, so the team leader might be in the favourable position of being able to pick and choose. But in a small organisation - a hospice, for example - far less resource is available, and although the people assigned to team roles will often have particular specialist skills, they may not have the specific talent that is ideally required. Under these circumstances, members assigned to a team will be given the role to which they are most well-suited, and then have to use the talents they have to the best of their ability.
- **Talented people may be lazy and egotistical.** But these attributes do not necessarily stop the team from being recognised as talented.
- As the story about the FMCG company illustrates, maybe **the most sophisticated talented teams don't set roles in concrete but allow for fluidity:** sometimes the official leader takes back-stage to allow someone else into the limelight; roles change as circumstances evolve...



What the leader of a talented team should do

- **Understand how each member of the team ticks.**

It may be helpful for the team leader to understand the personalities of the various members of the team and to analyse the team members preferred styles and ways of working using tools such as Belbin (see www.belbin.com) or Myers-Briggs (see www.myersbriggs.org) .

- **Spot talent early.**

When looking for a future leader, the current leader should take a view on the potential candidates long in advance. At Tesco, for example, Sir Terry Leahy was identified as the new leader in 1991, but was not appointed until 1997. Sir Terry is widely regarded as a highly talented leader, credited with launching internet shopping using the stores rather than specialist picking warehouses, and the introduction of the loyalty card.

- **Blend different talents.**

People play different roles in the team, and it is up to the leader to make sure that differently talented individuals work closely together to provide all the required skills.

- **Add thought value**

One of the greatest responsibilities of the team leader - whether Chairman, CEO, programme director or project manager - is to think of the things that other members of the team are not thinking about.

- **Some leaders are decisive and tough...**

When circumstances demand, the team leader may be required to be decisive and even ruthless, especially where it is vital to achieve a specific result. In some cases this can result in a 'revolving door' environment - if the performance isn't achieved, people go!

- **...but some allow some degree of failure**

A leader, if circumstances permit, may be happy to try lots of things and happy to have some failures. An example of this is Richard Branson, who is an ideas man and a publicist as well as being charismatic - but he might not be regarded as a team leader in the classic sense.



What the leader of a talented team should do

- **Not all good leaders are charismatic.**

The team and its leader should not necessarily be concerned if there is no charismatic leader. Although charisma is compelling and engaging, there are plenty of examples where effective leadership has been shown by relatively unimposing people. And sometimes - as we have all experienced - charisma is but a thin veneer. Maybe strength of character, which is much less obvious and far more subtle than charisma, is more important.

- **Team leaders organise - and lead - their teams.**

Team leaders need to assign individual specialist skills in the team as a way of arranging responsibilities and work. In doing so, it is important to allow freedom for the team members to focus on, and successfully deliver, the responsibilities they have taken. In so doing, however, there is a risk they might lose the big picture. It is therefore the responsibility of the team leader to bring the specialists back to the table to look at wider issues at appropriate times.

- **Overall, in leading a team the team leader should:**

- Create a vision: articulate the team's aims, and what is trying to be achieved, in a compelling way.
- Recognise that talent is a continuum, and aim to get the best out of each individual.
- Set rules.
- Allow freedom to act.
- Create the right environment.
- Strike a balance between privilege and responsibility.
- Avoid a blame culture, whilst accepting that on occasion there will be failure.
- Get the team composition and balance right.
- Recognise achievement at various points in a business situation.
- Assure buy-in.
- Recognise that charisma is very important, and that often passion is vital from the team and its leader.
- Remember that individuals within a team can make a difference.
- Recognise that it's not just about leadership, but about followership too.
- Encourage teamwork across the team.





Creativity workshop

Facilitated by Dennis Sherwood



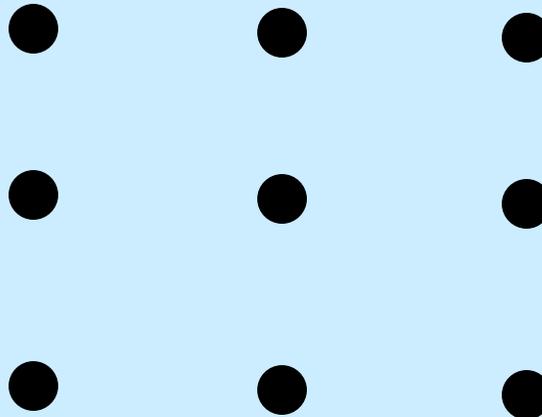
Creativity workshop

This session is different. Rather than a syndicate discussion, this is a 'master class' in creativity, and will address the question:

"How can talented people turbo-charge their creativity, and be confident of being able to generate stunning ideas 'on demand', even in areas outside of their technical, or normal, expertise?"

The workshop will be highly interactive, and a lot of fun!

Here is an exercise in creativity...



How many different ways can you discover of joining all nine dots with a single straight line?



Creativity workshop

How creative are you? One way of finding out is to do one of the (very many) psychometric tests that claim to do just that. You'll find lots of them on the web if you search on 'psychometric test creativity'. And one of the ones you will find is this: in two minutes, write down as many possible uses as you can for a brick. Try it. If you get more than 20 or so, you're really creative. But if your list is around ten or a dozen, well...

Now try this. Imagine (or, if there is one handy, look at) a brick. Then *describe* it, as richly as you can. "Describe a brick?" I hear you say. "Richly???" Good grief - it's only a brick!" Yes, I know it's only a brick, but even such a simple object can be described quite richly: it has mass, weight; sharp edges and corners; it's usually rectangular in shape, with a dimple in one face; it's often rough; it can be made of clay, or plastic, or indeed gold; it often has a pinkish colour... What other attributes can you identify? And once you have compiled this list, for each feature, ask "*What use can I make of this feature?*" Of mass and weight? Of sharpness? Of rectangular-ness? Of the dimple? Of roughness? Of its material? Of colour? Yes! That's how Michaelangelo finished the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel that Sunday evening when he was out of pink paint and his local B&Q was closed - he saw a brick, hit it with a hammer, ground the fragments to make a fine powder, mixed the powder with oil, and made just the right colour pigment for those flesh tones... If follow this process - which is far more powerful than arbitrary guesswork - you will find that you will generate a huge number of ideas for how you can use a brick, especially if you work in a small team.

Is this just a party trick? No. Far from it. What this is is just a simple illustration of how to make the apparently 'mystical' process of creativity totally deliberate, systematic, transferable, repeatable and safe (see page 63). And to do so, you, personally, need to do two things, and the environment in which you are working needs to contribute one. The first thing you need to do is to *observe*, insightfully, what you see around you - if you don't notice that a brick is pink, it's a lot harder to spot that you can use a brick, in dust form, as a pigment. The second thing you need to do is to be *curious*, to ask *what else can I do with this?* or *how might this be different?* For the world doesn't have to be the way it is - as Koestler's Law (see page 62) implies, all creativity is about the discovery of a *different pattern of things that already exist*. And the thing you need from the environment is *permission to ask the question*. If all you hear is "the world is as it is, and must for ever stay that way", neither you nor anyone else will ever have an idea.



Koestler's Law and emergence - the twin keys to creativity

In *The Act of Creation*, first published in 1964, Arthur Koestler writes:

The creative act is not an act of creation in the sense of the Old Testament. It does not create something out of nothing; it uncovers, selects, re-shuffles, combines, synthesises already existing facts, ideas, faculties, skills. The more familiar the parts, the more striking the new whole.

Koestler's definition is enormously important:

- Firstly, it states that *you don't have to be a genius, or lucky.*
- Secondly, it tells us that the process underlying idea generation is *the formation of a new pattern of component parts that already exist.*
- Thirdly, as a result, *we can all contribute - we can all be creative*, for there is a process we can all follow: a process of pattern formation, just like manipulating a jig-saw, or playing with *Lego* bricks.

Examples of Koestler's Law are everywhere. All music comprises different sound patterns of the same notes; all matter is formed from different molecular patterns of the same chemical elements; the Sony *Walkman* is a physical pattern characterised by neatness, the cassette tape, and headphones, but without the conventional tape recorder's ability to record. Sony did not invent neatness; nor the cassette tape (first introduced by Philips); nor headphones (which pre-date speakers). But Sony were the first to create the new *pattern*, formed by bringing these pre-existing component parts together. And they did it 'just right' - the *Walkman* wouldn't work if the jogger had to carry those bulky speakers.

The 'just-rightness' of the *Walkman* is a powerful example of *emergence* - the property of a *system of appropriately connected parts* to exhibit characteristics that appear at the level of the system, rather than at the level of any of its components. An example: "*I went to the bank*". This is a system, which we call a 'sentence', of appropriately connected parts, which we call 'words'. The system demonstrates the emergent property of 'meaning' - we understand what the sentence is saying. This meaning cannot be inferred from the individual component parts: I can study the word 'to', in isolation, for ever, yet this will never throw any light on the meaning of the sentence, which can be inferred *only* from the system *as a whole*. Also, if I connect the parts together in another way, say, "*the I bank to went*", the meaning disappears; likewise, if something is missing - "*I went to the*" - this doesn't work either. 'Good' patterns can therefore be distinguished from 'poor' patterns by virtue of the presence, or absence, of emergence.

Creativity is the formation of a new pattern, from pre-existing component parts, such that the resulting system exhibits an emergent property that has interest or value, in an appropriate context.



*InnovAction!*TM - A process for deliberate creativity

- **Step 1 - Select the appropriate focus of attention**

"We need to invent some new products in the bottled water market."

- **Step 2 - Define what you know**

"I drink it" ... "It comes in clear bottles" ... "It's healthy" ...

- **Step 3 - Share**

"The cap on the bottle is either flat, or like a baby's bottle to make it easy to drink."

- **Step 4 - Ask "How might this be different?"**

"What if the cap were not flat?"

- **Step 5 - Let it be...**

"Mmm...It might be cone-shaped" ... "Or a hemisphere" ... "Or hemisphere upside-down, like a dimple" ... "Which could form another container" ... "What would we put in that?" ... "Cordial, perhaps" ... "Or whisky" ... "Or aspirin" ... "So you mean a twin pack of two aspirins in the cap of a small bottle of water, just enough to take the aspirins with?" ... "I hadn't thought of it quite precisely as that, but now you mention it, what a good idea!"

- **Step 6 - ...Then repeat steps 4 and 5 for another feature...**

"What if I didn't drink it. Who - or what - else might?"



Nine dots revisited

Here's how the *InnovAction!*TM process can unlock the nine dots puzzle...

- **Step 1 - Select the appropriate focus of attention**

"We need to join all nine dots with only one straight line."

- **Step 2 - Define what you know**

"There are nine dots" ... "in three columns" ... "and three rows" ...

- **Step 3 - Share**

"The paper is blue" ... "and the dots are black" ... "The paper isn't moving" ...

- **Step 4 - Ask "How might this be different?"**

"What if the paper wasn't blue?"

- **Step 5 - Let it be...**

"It could be any colour we like" ... "say, white, or red, or yellow" ... "or black" ...
"which would cause the dots to disappear" ... "That's interesting... how could we make
the paper black?" ... "Use paint, I suppose" ... "and a brush" ... "or a roller" ... "Roller!
That's how we join all the dots! As long as the thickness of the 'pencil' is wide enough,
we can join all the dots with one straight line..."

- **Step 6 - ...Then repeat steps 4 and 5 for another feature...**

"The paper isn't moving...suppose the paper could move as well as the pencil?"

How many other solutions can you find in the same way?



Building consensus

Facilitated by Paul Lee



How can we build consensus within a community of talented individuals - especially as regards situations in which they do not report to a common boss?

Your task

There are many situations in which collective action is required across a community which does not share a common boss. Not only does this community need to agree that, yes, 'this' specific action must be taken, they also have to be motivated to support the action, and maybe to find resources of time or money to make the action happen.

- What are some *specific examples* of such situations, both where a successful positive consensus was built, and where it wasn't?
- In those cases which were successful, *how* was the consensus built? And in those cases which were unsuccessful, *why so*?
- What *recommendations* would you make to someone about to embark on a project which requires cross-boundary consensus?
- What *ideas* do you have on this topic that you would like to share with the other delegates?

Please capture your findings on the pre-printed flipcharts, and summarise your findings as a 10 minute presentation, to be given in the Latimer Room.

Some suggestions as to process

Everyone in the syndicate will have had considerable experience of such situations. In the first instance, it may therefore be helpful if, individually and in silence, each delegate makes some notes on:

- specific examples, both successful and unsuccessful
- what worked well in each case, and what worked not-so-well
- key elements of best practice
- any ideas on this topic that you would like to explore further.

Once everyone has formulated their own views, these can then be shared, leading to a general discussion, and the agreement of conclusions. It may be, of course, that there is no single, unique 'best' method for building cross-boundary consensus - in which case, the syndicate is invited to define what needs to be done to make different methods work effectively.



Building consensus

“Well,” said Sam. “Thank you all for a very lively discussion. My sense is that we are now agreed that we should implement the proposed new policies for recognising and rewarding talent. Good. Let’s now take the next item on the agenda...”

“That may be your sense,” thought Andrew as he continued his doodling, “but it sure isn’t mine...”

Have you ever had the experience where, at a meeting, “Sam” asserts that agreement has been reached, but afterwards, the “Andrews” go back to their desks, and continue to behave as if nothing had happened?

In a connected world, effective action requires that people agree on a collective course to follow, and then back that agreement up with commitment and the corresponding deeds. This applies at all scales: from “Andrew’s” behaviour as regards the implementation of the new reward policy in his part of the business, to the entire situation around the war in Iraq.

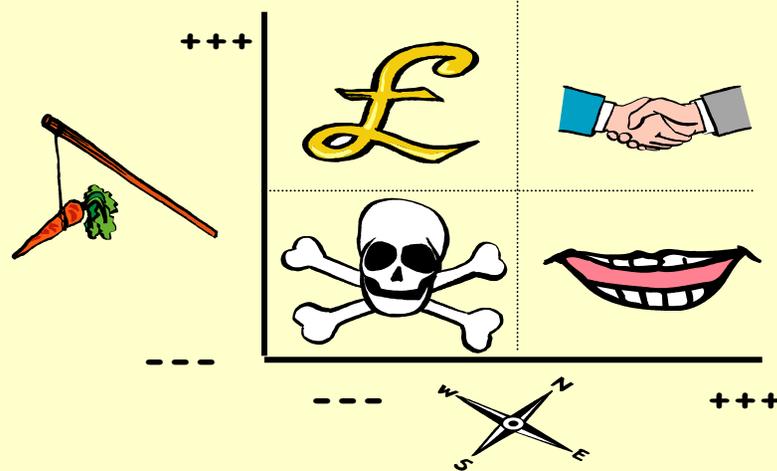
The key issue here is how to build a sincere and sustainable consensus: a consensus to agree, to commit, and to act. In an autocratic organisation, there is no problem: the “big boss” just says, “You do agree, don’t you?”. But in empowered organisations, and in circumstances in which agreement and action are required across boundaries - from a trade association to the United Nations - things can be much, much more complex. Especially when those who have to agree and commit are talented, intelligent, articulate, politically astute, wilful, and are balancing precariously on the tight-rope slung between the demands of the community they represent and the needs of the community across which consensus is sought.

How, then, can you build true, valid and lasting consensus in such circumstances? What experience do we have of what has worked, and what hasn’t? What is best practice? And what advice and recommendations would we make?



Alignment and motivation - the twin keys to success

Here is a way of thinking about how to manage consensus across organisational boundaries:



In this grid, the horizontal axis represents *alignment* - "do we agree?" - and the vertical axis represents *motivation* - "are the benefits sufficient for me to commit my resources?"

The bottom-right quadrant represents a situation in which we all agree, but none of us are particularly motivated to act. We'll hold meetings, write papers, attend conferences, take resolutions - we'll talk for ever. But not actually *do* anything.

In the top-left quadrant, one, or a small number, of the parties involved sees some form of advantage. They don't care whether or not there is general agreement: they will 'break ranks', and do 'their own thing'. This is the domain of the maverick entrepreneur.

Only in the top-right quadrant, where we all simultaneously agree *and* are motivated to commit our resources, can action be taken. So the 'big project' starts. And whilst the community is within the top-right quadrant, the project is successful. But if either alignment drifts ("no, I don't see things like that") or motivation erodes ("we have some other priorities right now"), then consensus falls apart, and the project drifts into the bottom-left quadrant, which is not a good place to be...

To build and hold consensus, you must actively manage both axes simultaneously, keeping people conceptually aligned with the vision, and ensuring that they remain motivated enough to keep to their commitments.



Some examples of building consensus that worked...

A large retail bank

The objective of this project was to deliver economies of scale by centralising the learning and development function. But one business unit within the organisation didn't want to participate as they felt they were 'different', and so should not be part of the project.

Consensus was eventually achieved and a successful outcome obtained by:-

- designing a solution that offered a 'win-win' based around a combination of cost savings and service improvement; and
- articulating the benefits to all the heads of learning and development across the whole of the organisation, and securing senior commitment.

A large legal firm

The issue at stake here struck at the very heart of a professional partnership. Suppose that a partner in the firm leaves. That partner will have strong relationships with his or her clients. What should the firm's policy be as to whether or not the firm explicitly allows - or at least turns a blind eye to - the individual who has just resigned to continue to serve that client in one capacity or another? The former partner need not necessarily 'steal' the entire portfolio - perhaps just the service in which he or she is expert. And what makes the formulation of policy particularly piquant is that every partner sitting around the table can envisage a situation in which he or she might be that very partner in question...

The outcome was that a strong consensus was built that former partners should not be allowed to continue to work in the firm's clients. The firm was seen as more important than the individual.



Some examples of building consensus that worked...

A Mental Health Authority

The proposal here concerned the Authority's intention to introduce changes to the annual performance evaluations, including changes concerning the holding of relevant data. Recognising that a change of this nature affects people very personally, the Authority deliberately chose to involve an independent consultant to act as facilitator and advocate. Because of this independence, the consultant was seen as objective and impartial, and this was a major factor in successfully building the consensus that was required.

A large financial institution

One of the institution's core processes is the way in which it makes investments. The institution believes that having a single investment process is a key to its success. Maintaining this single process within the organisation involves maintaining consensus across the investment management team.

The organisation has found that it is relatively easy to achieve consensus across the internal investment management team as the benefits of keeping a single process can be easily articulated and understood across the team.

In contrast, when the organisation is making an acquisition, it sometimes finds that it is impossible to persuade the incoming investment team to accept that they should adopt the buying institution's investment process. This failure to reach a consensus has resulted in otherwise very attractive investment opportunities being lost.



Some examples of building consensus that worked...

A government / private sector initiative

This project concerned a government-sponsored initiative to support sustainable development in tourist destinations, and one of the keys to success was to build consensus amongst a number of large private sector organisations.

The approach to building consensus adopted for this initiative proved successful, and involved devoting significant effort and energy to get engagement from the private sector companies - including using the appeal of invitations to No 10 to allow the team to orchestrate the lobbying of senior private sector executives to support the initiative.

Consensus and support were achieved through:

- stressing the benefits from the initiative in terms of the enhanced (or at the very least, not damaged) reputation; and
- framing the changes required in a way so that the cost to the private sector companies of moving in the direction the government wanted was seen as relatively low.

A pharmaceuticals company

This example is a classic instance of successfully managing the conflict that can arise when talented staff are required to step out of a line role for a limited time to deliver a particular project, such as a product launch. Building high quality project teams requires encouraging good people from right across the organisation to participate in a project. Getting people to leave their line jobs for a time can sometimes be very difficult: few bosses like to see their best staff 'poached', and the individuals concerned may feel that the safety of the day-job is preferable to the possibility of failure on the project. The organisation found that most senior managers appear to be willing to release their resources when they think the probability of success on the project is the high. Building consensus to provide quality support to projects, across the potential contributors of resource, has involved reminding senior managers that the better the staff on the project, the greater the likelihood of success. Releasing their best people will itself help build success in - "success comes when quality looks for quality". And the success of the project will reflect well on everyone, those on the project, and those bosses who helped the talented team be built.



And some examples that didn't...

A government initiative

In a project to implement changes following the publication and acceptance of a report on a government priority, the initiative failed due to there being no appropriate sufficiently senior person (due to Ministerial and Departmental changes) with the experience or influence to build the consensus needed to make the project a success .

Two key factors which contributed to this failure concern the individuals who were trying to build the required consensus:

- they were too junior to exercise clear authority across Departmental boundaries
- since these individuals were not specifically accountable for the initiative's success, for them, the initiative had a relatively low priority.

A UK professional services firm

In a consultant-facilitated project to improve client relationship management, the initial work went extremely well. The consultant set up a steering group (comprising both supporters of the initiative and those who were against) and achieved 80% consensus as to the way forward. And when presented to the board, the proposed approach was given quiet endorsement.

The project progressed, but in truth delivered little. Why? Because of the absence of wholehearted and enthusiastic endorsement by the board. In this culture, the lack of real consensus and commitment was masked by a quiet, polite formal approval.



...and some examples that didn't

An international group of professional services firms

This example concerns a programme in which ideas for tax planning would be shared across an international community of tax professionals, and then sold to local clients. To get things going, the individual driving the project set up an international team of professionals to work together and share ideas - despite the fact that the firm's international management structure allowed a large degree of local autonomy, and had no mechanism to direct the participating organisations to support it.

The programme was very successful in developing relationships which resulted, over time, in increased revenues for the local firms. This additional revenue, however, was often in areas of business other than tax - as far as the original objective of selling tax planning ideas was concerned, the programme was only minimally successful.

The value of the programme is now being questioned, and the team recognise that they may not in the past have spent sufficient time building and maintaining consensus about the value of the programme across the international community's senior management. This has put the whole programme at risk.

A large legal firm

This situation concerns the intention, by a group of senior partners, to change the profit sharing arrangements in the firm. In fact, the proposed changes had to be withdrawn, for there was no consensus across the partnership as a whole to support this change. With hindsight, it is evident that, for an issue as personal as partner remuneration, it is absolutely essential to ensure a very strong, and broadly based, consensus before announcing, let alone implementing, such a change.



What contributes to success?

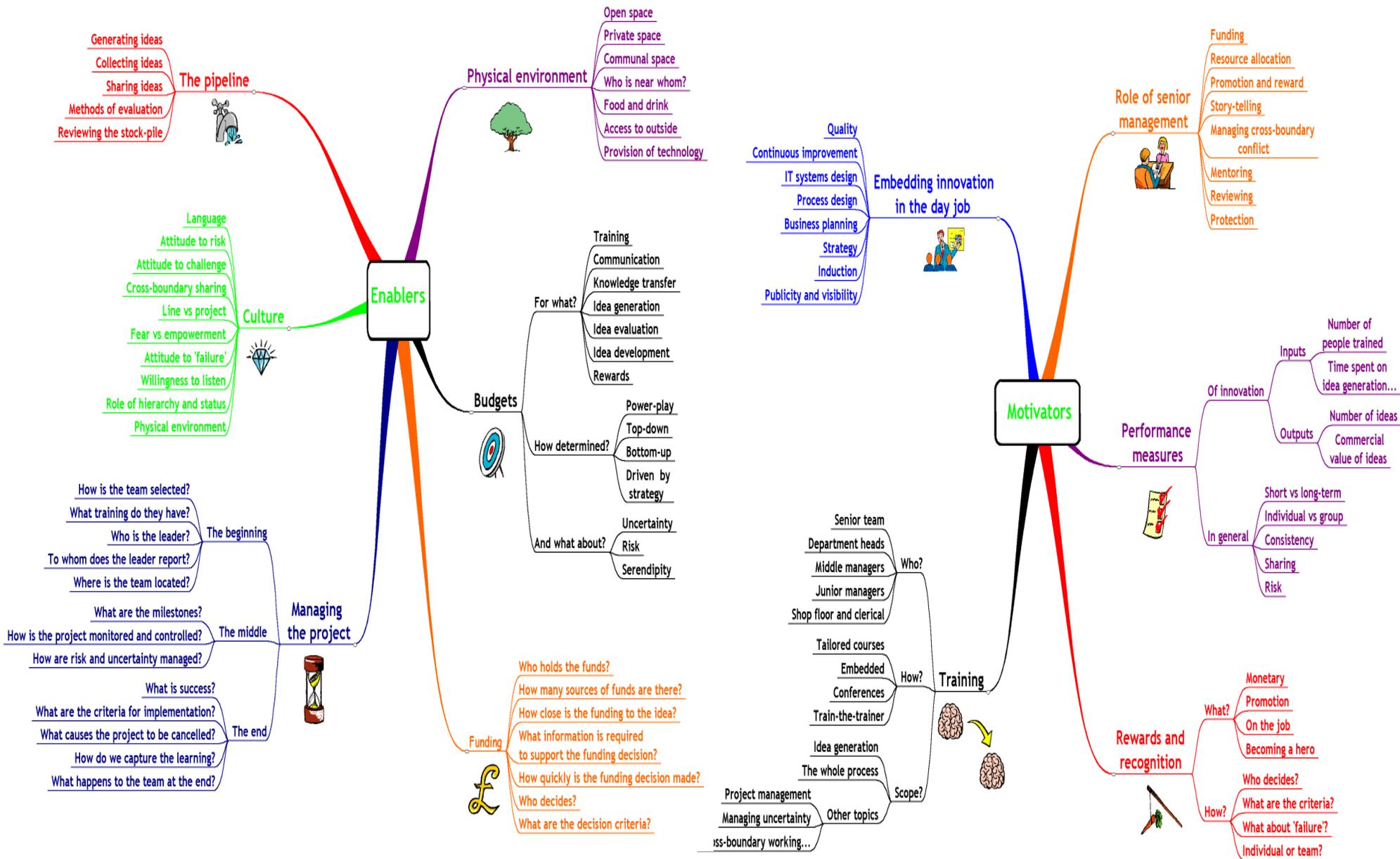
- Clearly identify the parties that have to be 'in' the consensus - this is totally obvious, but often not done!
- Deliver on the promises made during the consensus building - if you don't, trust will be lost.
- Define a very clear initial focus on what needs to be achieved, and then manage the project to avoid 'mission creep' - too many initiatives lead to distractions that prevent consensus.
- Articulate, with crystal clarity, a common goal, so as to draw people together.
- Show explicitly the real value or benefit from reaching consensus. This value or benefit can take many forms - for example it may be the avoidance of negative publicity or the enhancement of reputation, as well as being the more obvious forms of value such as enhanced revenue or lower cost.
- Win both 'hearts' and 'minds' by appealing to the emotional, aspirational side of people's nature, as well as to the more rational side.
- Ensure that someone owns the problem or idea, so providing a focal point for the building of the consensus.
- Address and resolve prejudices directly and decisively - for example, whenever "we refuse to work with them because they are [whatever], or did [this] in [that] situation". This is particularly relevant in some sectors (for example, those dominated by people or organisations with ethical positions) where it is impossible to reach consensus until these prejudices have been addressed.
- Use external facilitation, particularly where independence and objectivity is valuable in helping people reach consensus, or where consensus is being built in a team that comprises a diversity of personal styles.
- Building consensus top-down, so that bosses are seen to lead. This makes it much harder for those down the line to break ranks.
- 'Ambassadors', keeping people 'aligned', are as valuable as 'champions', keeping people motivated (see page 68).



Recommendations

- Identify all the stakeholders, and make sure that their interests are addressed. Keep them well-informed, and invite them to contribute their ideas.
- Identify all the personal agendas - and deal with them.
- Communicate, particularly during the consensus building, to mitigate concerns and anxieties.
- Take time and explain why something is being attempted and keep explaining - keep reminding everyone of the purpose of the initiative and the value that it will add.
- Keep repeating a single message - continually.
- Don't fall into the traps of believing that you are further ahead than you really are, or of saying that something will be done before it has finally been approved.
- Be aware of different cultures, respect diversity, and make sure that all the parties can see the objective and value or benefits from their point of view.
- Know when consensus is not possible - and walk away.
- Don't confuse achieving consensus with making a decision...
- ...and don't try to dress up a decision that has already been taken as something which is still undecided and which you are seeking to obtain consensus on - this insincerity will always get found out, and destroy all credibility.
- Pay great attention to maintaining, right across the community within which consensus has to be built, both the alignment of goals ("we all agree") and also the motivation to act ("we all continue to be willing to commit resources"), as discussed on page 68.
- There is no law saying that you must join all the clubs to which you are invited. Know when to walk away.





Building the culture

Facilitated by Dennis Sherwood



How can we best build a culture which encourages talent?

Your task

"We need new ideas around here," said the CEO. "But everything - absolutely everything - is designed to maintain the status quo. From the performance measures to the procedures manuals, from the reward system to the influence of the hierarchy. I'm not wishing to throw all the babies out with the bath-water, but I would like something to be different! I have the will to make something happen, and we have some funds to finance the programme too. But every time I try something, the treacle slows it down, and then totally suffocates it!"

What would you advise?

Please capture your findings on the pre-printed flip-charts, and summarise your findings as a 10 minute presentation, to be given in the Latimer Room.

Some suggestions as to process

Everyone in the syndicate will have had at least some experience in how stifling an uninnovative culture can be, and how difficult it can be to turn things round. In the first instance, it may therefore be helpful if, individually and in silence, each delegate makes some notes on:

- the *key characteristics* of a culture that encourages talent...and of a culture than stifles it
- examples of *initiatives and interventions that have been successful* in building a culture that encourages talent...and those that haven't
- your *recommendations* to the CEO
- any *ideas* on this topic that you would like to explore further.

Once everyone has formulated their own views, these can then be shared, leading to a general discussion, and the agreement of conclusions.



Building the culture

At the end of the day, almost everything in organisational life is a question of culture. And, as far as managing talent goes, this is indeed the case - how many other references to 'culture' are there in this document?

The concept of 'culture', though, is very slippery. Different people use the term in different ways, and definitions like "the way we do things around here" hardly shed any light. 'Culture' is big, diffuse, nebulous; how do we get our arms, let alone our heads, around it? Its origins are hard to fathom, lost in the myths of 'the founder', and no-one seems to have any ownership of it - somehow, the culture is simultaneously 'ours' yet 'no-one's'. Added to all this is the complexity introduced by sub-cultures, and by the diversity of cultures in large, often international, organisations. And when it comes to 'culture change', where do we start? This syndicate grappled with these problems, firstly by sharing some of our own experiences, and then by seeking to 'unpeel the onion', to get beyond the surface to the deeper picture.

Yes, cultures are complex, and changing them is difficult. But if we recognise that, ultimately, culture is about behaviours, and that behaviours are influenced by our personal judgements and by the systems and processes we experience, then maybe there is some light at the end of the tunnel. A very simple example of how systems and processes influence behaviour is that of the reward system: people will naturally behave in ways which maximise their likelihood of being rewarded, and, conversely, of avoiding sanctions. Any organisation will have many such systems that influence behaviour - some check lists are shown on page 76. One of the key things to get right in any culture change programme is therefore to ensure that appropriate interventions are made in *all* the internal systems so that they are all, consciously and deliberately, designed to reinforce the *same* behaviours *consistently*. But even if the systems are 'perfect', individual people - especially talented ones - will still behave individually, especially where they are empowered to make choices. How can individuals be guided towards those choices which define, and are in harmony with, the organisational culture? One technique is to use 'parables': as described on page 86, a 'parable' is a mini case-study, which presents a real situation, in which someone has had to make a choice...



Some examples of cultures...

An international consultancy

This consultancy has a world-wide reputation, which has been built on very visible innovation in management thinking, tools and techniques. Within the firm, however, consultants have very little scope for innovation, for they are drilled in following whatever methodology is determined for any given assignment. Furthermore, the pressures on billings and margins drives innovation out. Somewhere, though, talented people do flourish, for the flow of new intellectual property continues - maybe this happens at senior levels, where there is perhaps more time and space than on the shop floor. But what a stultifying impact this culture has on the younger, highly talented, staff!

A government agency

It's very hard to build and sustain a vibrant culture if the organisation keeps restructuring - but this is what has been happening over many years now in this particular organisation - hardly two years go by without something dramatic happening to reporting lines, performance measures or targets. What has stayed the same throughout all this organisational turmoil, though, have been two very important things: the job we do, and the commitment of the front-line staff to doing it. And the result is a lot of creativity and talent at the bottom of the organisation, but a totally dis-empowered management team. Oh dear...

The entertainment business

Entertainment, too, is a tale of two cultures: throughout the entertainment industry, from television production to sport, there are always two communities: the 'talent', whether scriptwriter, producer, performer or footballer; and the 'grey suits', who control the money, set the performance measures, hire and fire... Matthew Parris had quite a point when he observed that "each is poisonous to the other" (see page 18)...



...and some more cultures...

A city institution

This institution isn't one culture but two - the 'front office' and the 'back office'. The front office is where the money is made, where the power is, and is archetypally macho; the back office is where the costs are, where people work very hard focusing very much on delivery and not making mistakes, and is subservient to the front office. Recently, there has been a mover towards giving people more responsibility for their own growth and development - so far, this has consumed a lot of effort, but with relatively limited results. The jury is out...

Another government agency

Another member of the syndicate related a very different story - at least to start with - as compared to that of the different government agency described on page 80. In this agency, soon after it was created, there was a pressing imperative to deliver a major new system to support a new government policy. This well-articulated common goal, which everyone could understand, 'feel, touch and see', proved to be a wonderfully unifying force in drawing people together, and generating energy and excitement, commitment and enthusiasm. Overall, the culture that emerged was vibrant.

The system was implemented successfully, and since then, the organisation has been coming to terms with the change from a go-go-go project to delivering a steady, routine day-job, and a day-job that requires far fewer people - 8,000 rather than 20,000, with a new call-centre as the dominant organisational unit. This transition is having a major - and negative - impact on the culture. However, to encourage and stimulate innovation, the agency has opened a new Innovation Centre.

A multi-national software development company

The culture here is totally focused on beating the competition, almost to the point where what 'we' do doesn't matter as long as what 'we' do stops 'them' from doing anything similar. The environment is intensely competitive, and there is no sense of joy.



...and some more...

An international drinks company

This company grew extremely quickly as the result of acquisition. Rather than building a culture based on any of the predecessor organisations, the company built a new culture altogether, which, in the UK headquarters, was explicitly élitist, 'Oxbridge', a meritocracy - and highly successful commercially. Given the diversity of a global group, the top team did not seek to impose detailed rules in each operating unit: rather, they adopted the slogan "Think global, act local", and to underpin a culture of empowerment, "Just do it". Teamwork across the business is also real, and not just a word you see on the mission statement.

A financial services organisation

Like the drinks company, this organisation also grew by bringing two predecessor organisations - one British, the other French - together in a merger. The two original cultures were very different: one was rather like a university (open, honest but non-commercial); the other, very 'civil service' (hierarchical, rules-bound, risk-averse). Rather than building a new culture, the management team chose to perpetuate the two prior cultures. This resulted in confusion and muddle.

An international investment bank

This bank is commercially enormously successful, and has a strong and distinctive culture. It also nurtures and encourages talent, and is excellent at sharing knowledge. An important aspect of the culture is building teams, and one way they do this is to ensure that people regularly get together, from around the world, from early in their careers. That way, people across the organisation get to know one another personally, so building long-term relationships. They also have a very strong ethic: if, for example, different laws or regulations apply in different geographical territories, the firm will adopt the most stringent standard, and apply it world-wide.



...and yet more

A television production company

This international company wished to stimulate creative talent in scriptwriting by bringing all the talented people together into a central innovation unit. By building a centre of creative excellence, they thought, they would generate more, and better, ideas for TV shows, which could then be rolled out around the world.

This had a number of 'unintended' effects. Firstly, everyone who was not in the central unit felt disenfranchised from having ideas, so they either resigned from the organisation, or sulked. The creative talent pool therefore got smaller. Secondly, managers in the geographical business units discovered all sorts of ways of rejecting the ideas from the centre - "that won't work in my market". Thirdly, because the central unit became progressively more remote from the local markets and viewers, the innovators progressively lost touch with what local markets wanted. This, combined with the desire of the central unit to be noticed, resulted in their ideas becoming more and more bizarre and extreme.

The overall result was that, after about three years, the central unit was closed down, and talent was encouraged in the local business units, with as much communication and networking across business units as possible.

A telecommunications company

This company wanted strongly to encourage innovation and talent. But it also set very stringent targets on new ideas: any new idea that was to be progressed had to be associated with a business plan showing an ongoing annual revenue stream at a particular level after two years. The target amount was so high that almost no idea could feasibly deliver it. Managers didn't want to over-egg their sales forecasts too much, in case they were held accountable for the failure to meet the targets, and so the result was that very few ideas were ever submitted for approval, and many, many good ideas that might have become blockbusters over several years were lost. Talented people also became disenchanting, and then they began to leave. The end result was no new ideas, and no talented people either.



Some characteristics of cultures that encourage talent...

- A deeply shared vision of where the organisation is going...
- ...a vision which is vibrant and animated, not just a static statement...
- ...that makes the vision exciting and real.
- Good two-way communications - not top-down, but face to face briefings.
- The sustainable will to encourage and nurture talent.
- Sensible license to 'play' on company time.
- Intelligent KPIs (see pages 35 to 45)...
- ...that are not 'set in concrete', but evolve as circumstances change...
- ...and ensure that performance is measured regularly.
- Talented people in the organisation are proud that they work there...
- ...and recommend other talented people to join it.
- A mature and sensible approach to 'failure'...
- ...that distinguishes negligence and incompetence from forecasting error...
- ...encouraging learning rather than blame...
- ...whilst not condone under-performance...
- ...so that those who under-perform go.



...and those that don't

- Not being allowed to ask "why?".
- Tolerance of taking credit for others' ideas.
- A dull or mean physical environment - visible proof that the organisation is too cheap to spend anything but the minimum on its staff.
- Conflicts of interest from silos, fiefdoms.
- Fear of change.
- Absence, from the top, of any interest in staff morale.
- Lack of honesty, clarity and openness.
- Performance measures drive the wrong behaviours...
- ...and encourage people to play games to 'beat the system'.
- Budgets which are too tight: "that's a great idea, but it isn't in the budget...".
- Undervaluing creativity and innovation.
- Over-engineered, clumsy, bureaucratic people processes.
- Arbitrary, inflexible rules ("it's our policy").
- Cultural muddle, with different cultures and sub-cultures in different parts of the organisation.



The power of 'parables'

The essence of 'culture' is *behaviour*, for culture can only be manifest by how individuals behave. And the essence of behaviour is *choice*. If people have no choice, if everything they do is totally constrained by the 'rule book', or by fear, then individual behaviour is totally constrained. In this almost totalitarian world, the culture is explicitly defined by the leader - as the darker parts of the history of the twentieth century show all too well.

But what happens when people have choice, when they are empowered?

Let's take a concrete example. Imagine that, one day, the manager of a department is approached by the most able person in the team, who requests a transfer to another department. What might the manager do? There are many possible choices, for example, the manager might say:

- "Thank you for coming to see me. Let's discuss it at your next appraisal."
- "Those decisions are made by our HR people. Why don't you speak to them?"
- "Thank you for letting me know, but I'm sure you realise how important to the company your current role is."
- "I'm very sorry, but that is out of the question."
- "Thank you, I'll discuss it with the Departmental Director."
- "Thank you, please tell me more. What can I do to help?"

There are of course many other responses too, each of which is symptomatic of a distinctive culture. Different organisations will prefer different responses in each situation, and the 'culture' is that set of behavioural choices which it 'expects' people to take under various circumstances. In practice, many of these choices are underpinned by a consistent set of values - so, in this case, the value 'people are chattels' leads to the response "it's out of the question", whereas the value 'we trust our people' leads to "how can I help?".

How, then, can people in the organisation 'learn' the culture? And how can the culture be changed?

Try 'parables'. 'Parables' are mini-case studies, just like "Imagine that, one day, the manager of a department is approached by the most able person in the team to request a transfer to another department. What might the manager do?". Each is very simple, and highlights a real situation in which individuals have choice. Convene a small group, and invite them to discuss the case, and to identify as many different responses as possible. Then, from the large range of choices, explore which responses are to be preferred to others, and why.



Ideas and recommendations

- Ensure there is a compelling business vision...
- ...which the CEO must articulate, own and communicate sincerely - you can't fake this one!
- Then deliver the vision through cross-boundary teams to:
 - develop the roadmap as to how to move from 'here' to 'there'
 - get people to connect to vision...
 - ...for example, by asking them how they, personally, can contribute...
 - ...then initiate some well-focused culture change projects (see page 76 for a check-list of where intervention might be required)...
 - ...recognising that it's unlikely that everything needs to be changed - a few, wise interventions will be much more productive than shaking everything up...
 - ...and that 'parables' (see page 86) can help people change their behaviours.
- Appoint good managers and trust them to manage.
- Recognise and reward good behaviour...
- ...and sanction bad behaviour.
- Tolerate failure, but learn from it.
- Constantly go back for review.
- Measure through actions
- Changing the culture can be a long haul, so create a sense of urgency to motivate people, ensure there's a champion, don't give up, keep it going...
- ...and celebrate success when you get there, and along the way too!
- And in a merger, don't leave two cultures at war: get one culture right.





Are talented people loners?

Facilitated by Dr Richard Sykes



Are talented people inherently loners? In which case, how can we best build talented high-performing teams?

Your task

Many talented people are strong-willed, and, sometimes, rather disdainful of those with (in their eyes) less ability. And even in the company of those of equal (or indeed greater) ability, they can be hyper-critical and un-co-operative. How, then, can we build high-performing teams of talented people? Your task is therefore to address this question by considering:

- some *specific examples* of where talented people have successfully formed high-performing teams, and where they haven't
- the *conditions* under which success, and indeed failure, have occurred
- your suggestions as to *best practice* in building talented high-performing teams
- any *ideas and recommendations* on this topic that you would like to share with the other delegates.

Please capture your findings on the pre-printed flip-charts, and summarise your findings as a 10 minute presentation, to be given in the Latimer Room.

Some suggestions as to process

Everyone in the syndicate will have had experience of building teams from talented individuals. In the first instance, it may therefore be helpful if, individually and in silence, each delegate makes some notes on:

- some specific examples of building such teams, with both a successful, and a not-so-successful, outcome
- what worked well for each, and what worked not-so-well
- key elements of best practice
- any ideas on this topic that you would like to explore further.

Once everyone has formulated their own views, these can then be shared, leading to a general discussion, and the agreement of conclusions. It may be the syndicate's view that there is no single, unique 'best' way of dealing with this issue - in which case, the syndicate is invited to define what needs to be done to make different approaches effective.



Are talented people loners?

We all have, in our mind's eye, a stereotypical view of the archetypal "talented" person. How might such a person be described? How about wilful, self-obsessed, exceedingly able within their appropriate domain, petulant, unreliable, unmanageable, challenging, enormously valuable to the organisation when they get it right, charismatic, mercurial... the list goes on.

Yes, this is a stereotype, but there is a grain of truth. And is one of the other characteristics a preference to act alone, rather than as part of a team? In most organisations, this is indeed a problem: we depend on one another, and we just can't act effectively totally by ourselves. We need to act as teams, often high-performing teams. But if talented people are loners, then, by definition, they cannot be part of a team, implying that teams have to be formed from those who are perhaps less talented, but more willing to suppress their egos in the interests of the team as a whole. That seems to be a pity, for it seems as if a team composed of less talented people could not achieve the same level of performance as a team of talents, who have actually managed to get it right.

And there are some notable examples. Greece, surprisingly, won the European soccer championship in 2004, beating 'talented' teams such as Germany, France and Italy. And many of our top orchestras are formed from players whose names are unknown - the star soloists are not part of the orchestra: they are just that, soloists.

So in an organisational context, can you harness talented people into a super-talented team? Alternatively, what can a leader do to create a talented team from less talented people?

These were the questions this syndicate explored. And their overall conclusion was that

*talented people are not necessarily loners...
...but many loners are probably quite talented.*



Examples of success...

- Where the task to be achieved has been well-articulated, and is compelling - so much so, that even the most self-centred individual is willing to take part.
- Where management has effectively recognised the different strengths and weaknesses of individuals, and blended them together.
- Where there has been an awareness and recognition, within the team itself, of the value of diversity, and that the skills of any one individual can be enhanced by co-operating with talented colleagues.
- Where individual, as well as team, effort is recognised and rewarded.
- If the leader is respected by even the most talented person on the team, that helps. Maybe the leader is in fact the most talented person, and if that leadership is a combination of intrinsic task-related talent and the talent to manage, that is a very good place to be indeed.

...and failure

- When individuals are totally self-centred, and disruptive.
- When an inordinate amount of management time, effort and emotional energy is expended on one or two individuals, to the detriment of everyone else on the team.
- Where leadership is weak, and fails to curb disruptive individualistic behaviour. This failure to act is often visible throughout the team, which is a double whammy: the talented narcissist knows he or she has 'got away with it', and so is encouraged to continue to demand his or her own way; simultaneously, everyone else can see this happening, so eroding their respect for the manager.
- Blame cultures are particularly disruptive, and can often arise amongst egocentric, talented, people.



What conditions favour success?

- Astute, energetic and decisive leadership are absolutely essential.
- Sometimes it is better for the loner, however talented, to be expelled from the team, for the value destroyed by that individual's self-centred behaviour is greater than the value the individual might add by virtue of his or her intrinsic talent.
- Ensuring that any team is never formed from people who are too similar: a team of too many loners is a particularly pathological case!
- To help get a team well-balanced, various profiling diagnostics - such as Myers-Briggs or Belbin - can be very helpful.
- When trying to rope one or two loners in, it is critical that the interests of the loner are, sustainably, the interests of the team too. With loners, if there is ever any conflict between the interests of the individual and the team, the individual will always win.



Best practice

- Use psychometric profiling - such as Myers-Briggs or Belbin - to give team members self-awareness of their own preferred behaviour styles...
- ...but also recognise, and get the team to recognise, that the most effective people can adapt their style according to context - not in the insincere manner of the 'organisational chameleon', but in a much more mature way that appreciates that different circumstances need different behaviours.
- Use value stream analysis.
- Don't be hidebound by the formal structures, and don't say "Joe is the leader of this team because Joe has the highest position in the company, or the greatest seniority, within the team". Look "beyond the organisation chart", and assign team roles that are fit-for-purpose.
- Don't upstage the leader. Yes, we all want to be leaders - but, at the appropriate times and in the appropriate contexts - we must all be willing followers.
- Ensure that the team members have the skills required - and, if they haven't, ensure that they receive the appropriate training.
- And even if you are relatively senior, if you need training, don't pretend that you don't. No one is too old too old to learn - but many people are too pompous to recognise the need to.
- Don't be arrogant and believe that everything can be done by the local team. Sometimes there is a need for some injection of external experience or expertise - the internal team, however talented, just don't cover all the bases. And this does not necessarily imply external to the organisation - it may simply be external to the local silo. So ensure you benefit from every opportunity for the constructive challenge of issues, and the potential for the cross-fertilisation of ideas.



Ideas and recommendations

- If you try to build a team from individuals who are all loners, you will surely succeed in building a team of loners. In this case, you will be lucky if the whole is just the sum of the parts, for the loners are unlikely simply to work by themselves - much more likely will be squabbling and sulking, jealousy and selfishness. This might make a good context for *Big Brother*, but it surely won't produce a high-performing team. One or two loners can be brought into the fold, but if there is a preponderance of natural loners, forget it.
- One way, however, of usefully deploying natural loners is to invite them to act as internal evangelists, or consultants, to spread the value of their talent, and to encourage others to develop their talents. Loners enjoy the recognition of being a role-model, and of standing in the lime-light - and this can be a source of inspiration to others.
- Talented people may warrant special privileges or reward, which may be totally justified. But recognise the likely consequences on them, and on others, that the bestowal of these privileges and rewards might have. So, for example, it is usually better to give a one-off reward for a special achievement, rather than to build the reward into something that has longer-lasting repercussions, such as promotion or an increase in base salary.
- Talented loners, especially those at the *prima donna* end, can consume a huge amount of management time, energy and attention. There comes a time when it's just not worth it, and maybe the best solution long term is that if the *prima donna* does throw a fit and threatens to resign, you let it be.
- And related to that, there is a great danger that management time and energy is spent on the talented loner to the detriment of the talented co-operator. This can cause the talented co-operator to become jealous, demotivated or just plain angry - which is of no use to anyone. So beware of robbing the co-operative Paul for the sake of paying the loner Peter.
- Maybe the best leaders of teams of talented people are themselves talented - talented in two dimensions, in the technical task, so that they command respect, and also in management. How do we develop talented people so that they can, over time, become talented managers?





What do young people need?

Facilitated by Annabel Fraser



What do young, talented people need, or seek, from their bosses to allow their talents to flourish?

Your task

Many bosses see only the view from the top. Even the theme of this conference - *Managing Talent* - takes this stance. This syndicate group has the opportunity to look in the other direction: what do 'those who are being managed' need to allow their talents to flourish? Your task is therefore to make recommendations to the 'boss' accordingly, covering, for example:

- some *specific examples* of what has worked well, and what hasn't
- how best to get the *balance right* between 'individual freedom' and 'organisational oppression'
- thoughts on *performance measures, incentives and reward*
- any *ideas and recommendations* you have that you would like to share with the other delegates.

Please capture your findings on the pre-printed flipcharts, which, on completion, should be taken to the Latimer Room.

Some suggestions as to process

Everyone in the syndicate will either be young, or was young once! So everyone will be very well-qualified to contribute. In the first instance, it may therefore be helpful if, individually and in silence, each delegate makes some notes on:

- what, specifically, is different about managing younger, rather than older, talent
- specific examples of what has worked well, and what not-so-well
- key elements of best practice
- any ideas on this topic that you would like to explore further.

Once everyone has formulated their own views, these can then be shared, leading to a general discussion, and the agreement of conclusions. It may be, of course, that there is no single, unique 'best' approach - in which case, the syndicate is invited to define what needs to be done to make different approaches work effectively.



What do young people need?

Talent is a characteristic that almost always manifests itself in the young. Creative talent, especially, is closely associated with youth. The Mozarts - those who display truly exceptional talent as children - are just that, truly exceptional. But there is a wealth of evidence that talent flourishes during people's twenties: Einstein was 26 when his landmark papers of 1905 were published; Jane Austen wrote *Pride and Prejudice* when she was 21; Picasso painted his ground-breaking *Les demoiselles d'Avignon* when he was 26; Orson Welles was 26 when *Citizen Kane* was released; Igor Stravinsky was 30 when *The Rite of Spring* caused a riot in Paris; Richard Branson started *Virgin Records* at age 22; Michael Heseltine was 25 when he founded Cornmarket Publishing, later rebranded as Haymarket.

These days, most people in their mid-twenties are just a few years out of University and professional training, right at the start of their careers. If it is this age group that has the talent, what conditions do they need for that talent to flourish? That's exactly what this syndicate - which included some very lively young delegates - explored...

"It's a total pain to be managed at all...I don't want to be told what to do because I might as well be a robot and there's no thought in that...and if someone holds my hand too much, I don't really learn."

Hmm... How might you, as a boss, react to hearing that? And if you are a boss, how do you *really* know what your young, talented people are thinking? What a great way to begin our discussion...

But why should youth be the central feature of the discussion? Surely older people are talented too? And doesn't their talent need to be encouraged in the same way? Well, there are some important differences. Firstly, a younger person might not be so organisationally and politically savvy; secondly, younger people don't always recognise the value that "experience" can bring and can often be (wrongly) dismissive of its importance; thirdly, a younger person might be more sensitive to "management" (look no further than the quote above), and so "development and training" might be less evocative of being stifled; and lastly, younger talent may want to *explore* things more, not being channelled by past failures. So young people are indeed different from older people, and need to be 'managed' accordingly...



What a wise manager should do, and should not to do

- Don't use the word 'manage'.
- Make it absolutely clear *what* you want done, but not *how* you want it done - define ends, not means.
- Help young people to learn from the whole team - from their colleagues and not just the boss.
- Remember that young people might be reluctant to speak, especially in the presence of dominating, more experienced, and older people - so help them to get their voice heard.
- Help when things go wrong. This is key, for young people feel much more personally and strongly about failure than more experienced people who've learnt how to take the knocks. Make sure there is positive learning from "failure", and that young talent doesn't suffer from a serious lack of confidence as a result.
- Create the right environment to encourage exploration: a boss who listens will mean that a young person will listen.
- Don't just let young people 'get on with it', without a safety net - it's far better to give a sense of direction and some boundaries. Yes, it might be flattering to be given a completely free rein, but too much freedom too early might not be for the best.
- Get the balance right between allowing a young person to make their own mistakes, and forcing your hard-won wisdom on those who might benefit from learning.



Failure hurts

What happens when young people make a mistake, fail? To a young person, even the smallest error can appear to be a catastrophe, driving a crisis of confidence, which is all the more damaging if they get the blame, rather than their manager. Older people know that they can recover (one would hope so!); and older, more experienced, person might have the foresight to see trouble coming, and also the confidence to say “I need help here” or “that job’s just not doable to the right quality in that timescale”. There is a really difficult barrier for a less experienced person to overcome here: younger people are less likely to spot problems in advance, and, when problems do arise, they can be troubled by the anxiety of not knowing if it is OK to ask for help, or by the fear of potentially appearing to be incompetent.

Many younger people feel that when they are being given a task to do, it is, in some form, an ‘intelligence test’, on which they are being judged. What really helps here is to have a relationship of trust and openness, a relationship in which the manager makes it quite clear that it’s OK to ask for help; a relationship in which the manager says “thank you, well done” at the end. So managers should be accessible, sitting near their people, and not behind closed doors.

Other aspects of the relationship are important too. More experienced people are role models for behaviour. Watching good performers is a good way of learning. And although young people don’t want to be treated with kid gloves, there needs to be good, trusting two-way communication, and not just on what is going well. Young people respect behaviour which counsels rather than lectures, is clear not woolly, and doesn’t patronise by ever saying “when I was your age...”.



Communication and feedback

Feedback is one of the most important channels of two-way communication. Here are some more tips:

- Ask the young person how they would like to be 'managed' - that way the young person can be party to setting the 'rules of engagement'.
- Make it genuinely safe for the younger person to give feedback upwards, without fearing that there might be negative consequences - an especially difficult situation when the person giving the feedback is also responsible for the pay rise.
- Make sure that there is always someone else that the young person can talk to and relate to - for instance can they talk to their line manager if they are not getting on with a person they are working with?
- Anticipate how a young person might react to feedback, especially negative feedback. Ask what feedback they might give to themselves before launching into something negative, so helping to develop all important self-awareness.
- Make feedback a regular part of working life, not just a big deal once a year
- Don't just give feedback in a way that makes a less experienced person become a clone; each person is an individual, and should be allowed to develop in his or her own unique way to make their own unique contribution, rather than being forced become a rehash of somebody else.
- Which leads neatly on to which person who should be "the manager". Sometimes this person needs to be big enough to say "I'm not the right person to be your manager". And the person who might be able to help here is the Mentor. After all, you can choose your mentor (well, in properly structured mentoring processes, you can...). This can be a more personal relationship which doesn't suffer from the same constraints of that of the line manager; it's a more long-term relationship, one where more doors can be opened.



Recognition and reward

- Is recognition the same as for older people? Perhaps things appear to be more profound when you are younger; if you're not getting regular, or indeed any, feedback, you feel uncertain and frustrated, and this usually leads to a situation in which you convince yourself that "I must be performing badly - if I wasn't, surely they'd say 'well done' from time to time...". This, of course, depresses motivation... and can soon become a self-fulfilling prophecy in which everyone loses. Getting recognition from your boss is great; getting it from the boss's boss is even better. All of which implies that the boss needs to be a special kind of person who feels pretty secure with him or herself, and unthreatened.
- Incentives need to be structured around giving maximum job satisfaction, and providing opportunities for the younger person to develop through interesting work, as well as by taking on increasing levels of responsibility as soon it can be taken. Being in a meritocracy is a key incentive.
- Promotion is sometimes the only reward, but this needs to be done in such a way as to recognise technical expertise, and perhaps the desire to continue using that expertise. As one example, nursing has got this wrong: we need to reward the best nurses for nursing, and - if they wish to continue in this career - not promote them away from the things that they love doing.



What works...

- Lead by example - for example, a young person is more likely to be willing to do the photocopying, or to get the coffee, if they see that the boss does this from time to time as well.
- Channel experience, don't just direct or tell.
- Create an atmosphere of openness and honesty, of trust and mutual respect.
- Expose the young person to an appropriate level of risk, whilst providing a safety net, and gradually increase this exposure as the young person develops.
- Ask the question "why are we not getting the best from this individual?" even when things are working, because they might be even better...
- Ensure young people know what is expected of them,...
- ...that the task is not an 'intelligence test'...
- ...and that they are 'allowed' to ask for help.
- Encourage learning from mistakes: "how might that have been done differently?"

...and what doesn't

- Lecturing!
- "When I was your age..."
- Being jealous of junior staff who are more talented than you are.
- Cloning - don't try and mould, or over protect, or force me to be a replica of you.
- Don't be parental, otherwise the young person will behave like a child...
- Don't confuse age with experience.
- Avoid a blame culture...
- ...but if blame is appropriate, make absolutely sure the blame falls in the right place: manipulative managers can be very clever in making scapegoats out of their junior staff.



Performance measures, incentives and rewards...

- Young people appreciate, and feel rewarded by, personal recognition...
- ...job satisfaction, growth and development...
- ...so that the young person is taking on increasingly more responsibility, risk and opportunity.
- Young people value being treated as an equal - not as an inferior, or as a child...
- ... as well as being offered support in an unfamiliar, and often aggressive, environment - so, for example, in meetings, young people are often rather reticent, and appreciate being helped to feel that they can speak up and be heard...
- Young people fear mistakes, and so when mistakes do happen, they appreciate sensible tolerance...
- ...and a feeling that they are being encouraged to learn, rather than just chastised.

...and recommendations and ideas

- Managers need to remember to have some fun, and at times show some irreverence!
- Feedback is key - ensure an open dialogue, and make a contract which clarifies two-way expectations.
- So too is recognition, especially from people high in the organisation: the line boss should feed good news upwards about the talent they are managing, and the 'big boss' should take the time and trouble to say "well done!".
- Managers should see dealing with young people as a relationship - listening, showing respect.





Feedback



Scores

	bad					good					average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
The event overall							1	6	7	10	9.1
<i>THE BIG DEBATE</i>						1	2	3	6	10	9.0
The syndicate discussions						1	1	7	9	6	8.8
The syndicate share					1	2	6	6	5	3	7.9
The venue overall							2	2	5	15	9.4
The rooms				1		1	3	2	8	7	8.6
The dinner						1	1	4	5	12	9.1
Breakfast and lunch						2	2	6	6	8	8.7
Administration							1	5	5	13	9.3

The figures in each column represent the number of delegates scoring each item at the stated level.



What were the most enjoyable features of the conference?

- The excellent debate.
- High quality debaters; opportunity to spend time, and share, with a stimulating group of people in an environment of work and fun.
- Meeting so many interesting and different people, and having great conversations!
- The debate, dinner and drinks in Clare, discussing the issues with everyone. Great bunch of people.
- Variety of thought and delegates.
- Networking, overall topic, venue.
- Quality of networking and discipline of thinking and learning.
- The contributions from the floor in The Big Debate.
- The stimulation of the debate.
- The thought-provoking nature of the syndicate discussions.
- The syndicate sessions.
- Meeting people with similar problems, but from a different background.
- Mixing with such a varied group of people to look at common challenges.
- The dialogue we all shared.

- The debate, the syndicate sessions, the dinner, the venue, old friends...
- Meeting such a diverse and talented group of people.
- High level of all interventions.
- Talented individuals.
- The syndicate groups on the second day were extremely beneficial - particularly the discussion on what young talent needs.
- The Big Debate was excellently orchestrated and presented.
- The creativity workshop.
- The Big Debate - charismatic and eloquent speakers.
- Interactions with colleagues.
- Social interaction, assortment of people, food for thought.
- People - breadth of knowledge, age profile.
- The setting!
- The debate - excellent, thought-provoking presentations and discussion.
- Shared experiences from other people.
- I particularly enjoyed the debate, and the contributions from Matthew and Sir Hayden.



And the least?

- The time constraints.
- Long speeches (not the debate!!!) - this tends to loose the younger people.
- Syndicate share - I haven't had time to think of an alternative, but it was rushed and teams didn't distil: it was an onslaught of information.
- No TV! Hotel room 2 star barely (frayed desk chair!). No light bulb in bedside light.
- Feedback sessions a little dull. Too rushed.
- Getting back into gear at 7:30am!
- The lack of time towards the end.
- The groups were too large to interact really effectively with other delegates.
- The final feedback session was a bit rushed.
- The small towels!
- Too few coffee cups.
- No TV access for the Test Match.
- The debate is a good idea, but the subject probably led to furious agreement!
- Feedback sessions felt rushed.
- Morning syndicate discussion - too long, feedback unstructured. Perhaps 3 - 5 main bullet points, and then generate discussion.



To what extent has the conference helped you tackle some important issues for your organisation?

- It has helped me re-focus, and confirm previous practices.
- Extremely helpful.
- Good to appreciate different perspectives.
- I has certainly made me more aware.
- Helped by giving me an opportunity to reflect, and develop my thinking.
- Renewed my zeal to challenge myself to find creative solutions, and communicate to my staff - and my manager - our ability to succeed.
- Somewhat. Might have helped if we had worked on some real live issues.
- Has helped me focus a key aspect of my own practice intellectual property, and has given me the confidence to scope and build it further.
- The extra perspective I gained on talent management.
- I derived a model based on the Balanced Scorecard for measuring talented performance.
- Definitely - but the challenges are large!
- Not sure yet: but very thought-provoking.
- I hope to apply some of what we learned - I guess time will tell.
- Generally useful ideas on maintaining talent, and fostering the right environment in the organisation.

- The conference has helped a lot - particularly the idea that organisations need to give 'permission' to people to be creative.
- The idea that creativity can be deliberate.
- The event has given me food for thought and I am sure it will influence my future working practices.
- Putting the *processes* for developing and managing talent into context.
- Shared understanding of issues related to nurturing talented individuals.
- Great background - will come is very useful in the future.
- More relevant to my work than I thought it would be! I will run a creativity workshop on my return.
- Relevant at every step, but specifically the concept of talent as a continuum.
- Provided some good frameworks - I need to work on practical applications.
- Very good input to a range of performance goals.
- Considerably - some great ideas for developing and nurturing talent in a new organisation.
- We will have to see...



What advice or recommendations would you offer for any future conferences?

- More time for feedback.
- Do the syndicate session with the 'young' people earlier - this will help to break the ice.
- Maybe widen the scope out from talent.
- Clear themes, like you had this year.
- Make people aware of the event much more widely, and earlier, to encourage strong participation.
- More formal input from Dennis and his team.
- More time for the syndicate share.
- Perhaps an evening discussion topic.
- More provocative debate!
- Possibly longer syndicate sessions - certainly not shorter.
- More on innovation.
- Use smaller groups, with a shorter, more focused feedback. How do this this well is hard - does this suggest the need for some innovation on how to run the feedback sessions?
- Have some space where we can share and display our favourite resources.
- Publish a book based on the conference discussions.
- Keep current format if possible - it's well-balanced with two syndicate groups.

- If you do have more 'chalk and talk', make sure there is plenty of discussion time.
- Possibly some kind of initial group exercise or syndicate to relax people prior to the debate.
- 3 days would be good, and a half-day built in for enjoying the Cambridge venue.
- Understanding the characteristics and competencies of managers managing talented people.
- Coping with uncertainty or random events in business.
- Retain numbers at 50 delegates.
- The second afternoon felt rushed - what about a longer event, allowing more time for syndicate feedback, a second dinner, and another night's stay, with people leaving early the next day?
- Keep the subject matter relevant!
- A clearer idea of the logic behind the syndicate questions.
- More time for final plenary - with more input/provocations from Dennis and others.
- Don't stress so much that all the facilitators come from Clare - it makes those of us who come from older institutions feel like outsiders!
- Communicate the case for attending better!



Additional comments

- Another great experience!
- I was amazed by the quality of the audience, and even more so by their fluency in speaking up!
- Thank you!
- Excellent event - thanks for organising it!
- Good documentation - but put the agenda at the front.
- Really delighted to be present! Very much enjoyed the whole event.
- Very interesting due to the diversity of people.
- Very relaxed atmosphere - didn't feel like any other conference I've been to!
- A well-organised and facilitated conference that I found enjoyable and useful. There was a good mix of academic debate aligned with discussion of real work issues.
- Thank you for taking the time, and making the effort, to run this event. I look forward to future conferences.
- Thank you- the creativity workshop made me think.
- Yet another enjoyable and valuable meeting.
- Tremendous - and fun - conference. Great diverse group of people.
- Class A hosting!
- Thank you all!
- Great conference!
- A great couple of days!
- I can't think of any other event where I have been in contact with such an eminent group. Dinner worked wonderfully well: I very much enjoyed speaking with a number of people and being asked for my opinion - and being listened to as everyone's views were valued. Great.



Idea generation,
evaluation and
development

Making innovation
happen

Silver Bullet

Strategy development
and scenario planning

The Silver Bullet Machine Manufacturing Company Limited

Innovation, Innovation, Innovation

Building
high-performing
teams

Barnsdale Grange, The Avenue, Exton, Rutland LE15 8AH
E-mail: dennis@silverbulletmachine.com
Website: www.silverbulletmachine.com
Mobile and messages: 07715-047947
Telephone: 01572-813690

Training and
knowledge transfer

Conferences

Business and
market modelling