**ACTION LEARNING**

**Implementation Innovation strategy**

**for graduates of all disciplines**

**(To include Australian and overseas students)**

**Aims of project**

1. To develop an “innovation/enterprise/entrepreneurial and problem-solving mentality” in **all graduates of university and colleges,** and have them apply that mentality **immediately** they enter the workforce, whether it be in medicine, law, engineering, IT, technologies, economics, accounting, the arts, humanities, social sciences, law enforcement, sport, trade colleges or wherever. They ask themselves – “How do I make a favourable impression in the organisation”.

2. Use new graduates to inform companies of the research being undertaken at their university or TAFE college in the discipline(s) they studied.

3. To have Australian universities and colleges **recognized** as the leader in innovation and reform education.

**Project**

1. Students of all faculties/schools are given a set of principles and techniques for inspiring innovation and reform (in the form of a short video and workshop, and a series of supporting publications - E Book format with a number of different authors with direct experience initiating and implementing innovation and reform). The university/college could run a short 1-day workshop with input from staff members in addition to video and E book(s). A set of innovation & reform principles /techniques has been prepared for the university/colleges to consider (see at the end). They could form **a micro-credential course. You can have it free of cost.**

2. University/colleges establish a competition to judge the success of graduates in the **implementation** of their innovative/reform ideas. The competition involves the following.

- On graduation (or during part-time studies) the students participate in a

project that asks them to employ any of the principles/techniques they have acquired from the various material, to the job they have entered. Students are to inform their manager of the competition and their desire to enter it.

* The competition runs for several months (6 to 12months?). During this time, participants are grouped in lots of 4 – with each being from a different faculty/area of study. They are to meet weekly to help each other with their projects – an “action learning” style experience.
* The university publicizes the competition in the newspaper (local metropolitan or The Australian Higher Education).

Regular updates are reported in the paper of progress on the innovations, generating publicity for the university/college and the companies. **The Prime Minister or Minister for Technology and Innovation** could be invited to launch the project. **Overseas Education Ministers** of students enrolled at the university/college could also be invited.

* After 6 -12 months the former students and their manager are invited back to make a presentation at the university/college (to the new lot of graduates) on their achievements. Any new techniques they have acquired would be written up and compiled as an ex-student E book and added to the reading list for future students.
* All those competing in the competitions to receive a “Certificate”. This could be included in the student’s academic record and they could mention it in their CV.
* Special Awards Prizes would be made in the following categories – Science, medicine, law, technology, arts, social sciences, humanities, sport, all varieties of trade occupations, etc.
* Awards will be assessed against any of the following criteria –
* Creation of a new product (good or service)
* A more creative way of running a program/project
* Improved productivity re – time, cost, quality
* Improved profit
* Improved safety
* Solution to a problem (that others have not recognized)
* Improved environmental outcome
* Improved client satisfaction

3. Proposals to be judged by panels representing each area and should comprise a mixture of academic and business / community groups. The first cut-off of assessments could be decided by final years students of the following year - i.e., final year law students assess entries from the law graduates of the previous year; final year engineering students assess entries from the engineering graduates, and so on for all disciplines. This would help generate interest in the program for the next bunch of graduates. Furthermore, they would gain ideas for when they enter the workforce.

4. Final year students to present a list of the top 5 entries in their discipline. The final selection for the top Prize is then made by a panel comprising academic staff and representatives of the peak professional bodies – Law Society for Law graduates, AMA for Medical graduates, Engineers Society, Master Builders Association, Chamber of Commerce, Social Services Peak Body, Arts Council, Institute of Sport, etc.

5. Prizes would be awarded to the winners of each category. The **Minister for Technology and Innovation** would be invited to present the awards. If overseas students are involved, country awards could be given (to China, Singapore, Indonesia, India etc.) and a **political representative from their country (Minister for Education)** could be invited to make a presentation of an award. This would generate great publicity back in their country.

6. There is an **additional role** that graduates **could undertake to promote research that would not cost one cent. They could be given a list (and explanation) of all the** **research being undertaken by all the researchers in the discipline they studied at University.** On entering a company, they could inform the management of the list and the contact details of the researchers. The company could then identify any of the academic’s research work that seems relevant to them. In this way the University graduates would not only be innovators and reformers for the company, they would also be ambassadors for the academic researchers from the University. They would play a role as a “spotter” of opportunities.

**FOURTEEN FACTORS FOR IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS**

**AND DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS**

**Check all factors**

A common error in problem-solving exercises is tojump too quickly to what you think may be the CAUSE of a problem, and hence too quickly to what you think is the ANSWER. If you do, you could easily miss other options. For each for the 14 factors listed below you can seek guidance from **Rudyard Kipling’s** “Six honest serving men” who taught him all he knew. Their names were - **“why, what, when, where, how and who”.**

**FOURTEEN FACTORS FOR IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS**

**AND DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS**

1. **People** (sex, age, race, yourself, family, work colleagues, clients, social groups etc.
2. **Systems** (administrative, scientific, biological, personal, social, economic, marketing strategy, political etc.)
3. **Rules** (formal / informal) legislation, regulations, laws (legal / scientific), conventions)
4. **Data** (thoroughness, validity, reliability etc.)
5. **Materials** (iron, wood, coal, gas plastic etc.)
6. **Technology / infrastructure** (books, videos, computers, social media, buildings, roads, water and energy utilities – their characteristics such as strength, weakness, colour, durability etc.)
7. **Organizations** (internal management structures, suppliers, distributors, retailers, advisory services, etc.)
8. **Natural elements** (weather, rivers, soil, atmosphere, etc.)
9. **Other living species** (animals, plants, micro-organisms etc.)
10. **Timing** (appropriate action at the appropriate time)
11. **Culture** (social / religious beliefs and social environment)
12. **History** (past behaviour, activities)
13. **Geography** (location)
14. **Finance** (investors, money markets)

Ask if any of these factors could be contributing to the cause of the problem in your workplace - a policy, strategy or leading to a fall in productivity. Likewise, could changes to any or a collection of them lead to a possible solution / improvement. This analysis may not always solve the problem and produce an innovative idea, but it will certainly make you more thorough and make it more likely you will be successful.

**COMMON ERRORS TO AVOID**

1. Do not confuse a “strategy” for an “outcome”
2. View through the eyes of the client – not only through your discipline
3. Do not allow past experiences, dogma, ideology dictate your thinking
4. Avoid the trap of “more of the same”
5. Be wary of rigid adherence to rules, regulations and existing policy.
6. Be sure to recognise negative flow-on effects
7. Consider the organisational issues
8. Have courage and determination
9. Check the authenticity and thoroughness of data
10. Keep an eye on activities at the counter
11. Start by focusing on the total picture
12. Understand the mind-set of those you wish to influence

**INNOVATION PRINCIPLES**

1. Steal ideas from nature
2. Identify ideas, products, concepts, skills that could be used

in different situations

1. Pilot test risky ideas
2. Identify unclaimed opportunities
3. Seek use of discarded or assumed useless materials
4. Challenge traditions, conventional beliefs, strategies and theories
5. View problems through different eyes
6. Value-add or piggyback onto existing products or ideas
7. Look for incremental improvements
8. Commence by being positive and determined
9. Change direction / think the opposite
10. Gain an understanding of social media and associated IT networks
11. Build up knowledge by sharing ideas with staff and colleagues
12. Gain support of clients
13. Visualize the total picture – White paper - National Latin American Bank
14. Monitor tasks and evaluate outcomes – Accomplishment Documents

**LEADERSHIP**

**BE A REFORMER**

Irrespective of whether you enter an arts or science, or retailing, or whatever career you choose, reform is more likely to be successful if you are **inquisitive,** **pragmatic,** **enterprising, and are a doer.** Below is a summary of some leadership reform principles and techniques that, through trial and error, I discovered to be useful during my career. They are self-explanatory. Some have already been mentioned in other chapters. If you agree with them you can employ them as another check-list. If you do not agree with them, then define “why”.

1. Gain a reputation as a reformer by flooding the organization with ideas. A

good question to ask staff is – “Why?”

2. Seek talent. Go looking for it.

3. Inform staff of your philosophy for the company / organisation**.**

4. Share ideas & accept ideas from staff at **all levels.**

5. Accept criticism of your own ideas. Encourage upward expressions of

doubt.

6. Never function on unconditional trust – with staff, business associates, or

clients.

7. Use clients to help introduce reform.

8. Establish networks at all hierarchical levels to keep you informed of what is

happening throughout the company / organisation.

9. Administer with a sense of fun.

10. Do not change your personality when promoted – unless you have always

been a pig

11. Be seen by staff. Don’t hide away in your office.

12. Do not abuse anyone in front of his / her staff. This is a sure way to lose

loyalty.

13. Motivate by methods you appreciate yourself.

14. Provide staff with clear guidelines.

15. Provide feedback on performance.

16. Never allow a “too hard basket”. You have to do it sometime, so the sooner

the better.

17. Create an atmosphere of cost consciousness. Start by setting an example

yourself. Instead of expensive business lunches, have important lunchtime

meetings in your office over a few sandwiches.

18. Take an interest in operations at the counter for that is where your

organization first presents itself.

19. Make line managers share staff development responsibility with trainers.

20. Be conscious of the importance of status to Reglets.

21. Design accountable management structures. Matrix structures can be

dangerous as it can be difficult to know whom to hold accountable if things

go wrong. Alas this is one reason why it appeals to some managers.

22. Implement sensible delegations with appropriate feedback and check system.

23. Beware of the impact of organizational titles on thinking. They can detract

from logical / rational thinking. A Forestry Dept. will favour chopping

down trees whereas an Environmental Dept. will have a different view.

24. Ensure essential organizational linkages.

25. Never become isolated from the action 🡪 go out and inspect activities

causing concern.

26. Be conscious of the possibility of a changing external environment.

27. Understand the difference between an outcome & a task.

28. As a CEO, don’t send others to defend your organization’s programs (in

face of a hostile public). Go yourself.

29. Look beyond the confines of your own expertise. Acknowledge staff who produce

ideas rather than take the credit for all reform proposals.

30. Don’t be afraid to test ideas. A simple an effective way is to conduct a

pilot.

31. Think positive.

32. Recognize fools and be civil to them. We all make foolish mistakes at times.

33. Apply “questioning insight” to any strategy, program or problem. With

respect to reforming a work unit or an organization, remember

sometimes there can be greater cost savings through the design of an

innovative new policy / strategy than in changes to existing work practices.

34. Be mentally tough and resist unwarranted resistance.

35. There is no one model for a perfect manager.

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Dr. .

Email – .

Mobile – .