

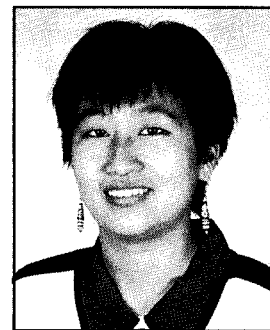
PEOPLE AND PROCESSES

by Judy Tso, MAA, Principal, Aha Solutions Unlimited™ (judytso@ahasolutions.org)

Three presentations are reviewed in this article: Robert Rosenfeld, Idea Connections: Making the Invisible Visible: People Principles of Innovation; Richard Holman General Motors Discovery Center, Teaching an Old Dog New Tricks; Stanley Gryskiewicz, Center for Creative Leadership: Positive Turbulence: A Process for Innovation and On Going Renewal in Organizations.

- Passionate people are seen as a threat. They disrupt culture and do not maintain norms. As a result managers need to protect the person with passion.
- Manage the passion and not the person. Because passion is fragile and not available on command, the manager must help the passionate person direct and focus their efforts without hindering the individual's autonomy and

- Find a place in the organization for passionate people
- Provide encouragement to the passionate person



Judy Tso, MAA

DISCOVERY CENTER AT GM

Richard Holman of General Motors' Discovery Center presents a particular Discovery Center project. GM sent a cross-functional team to India to understand the mini-car market in India. The project has dual objectives, to develop and groom people for leadership roles within GM and to expose them to a transformative learning experience, one that helps individuals change and flex their innovation muscles. It is essentially an experiment in action learning.

Holman begins by citing Russell

... you must look at the periphery to find innovation.

All three presentations address the human side of innovation and product development, which is a good focus for PDMA, an organization that has tended to be process and stage gate focused. The premise of this track is that innovation originates from the human dynamics so we must have knowledge and wisdom about the human principles that drive the innovative act.

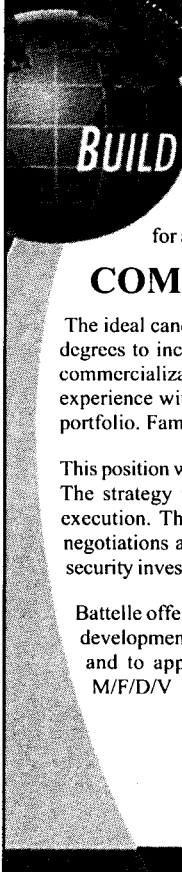
crushing the person's energy. This can be difficult because managers are fearful that they will not be able to control the passionate individual. Alter your perspective. Move away from the idea of control to the idea of helping the person stay focused and directed.

PRINCIPLES OF INNOVATION

Idea Connections CEO Robert Rosenfeld reviews the principles of innovation, the fundamental truths about people. He makes the distinction between principles and methods and actions, and especially focuses on principles since we tend to focus on the methods and actions and forget about the principles.

Rosenfeld introduces the essences of innovation but focuses in particular on passion and pain. His point is that passion and pain motivate people to change, to innovate. He shares the story of George, a technician who learns that his cousins have been murdered, cruelly stabbed in their own home. As a result he spends his whole career inventing technology in the area of security and safety. He designs a sensor for perimeter control and sells this technology to Westinghouse. He goes on to develop a technology for guns in which firing of the weapon is restricted to the owner.

Regarding managing passion and pain in the workplace, Rosenfeld gives the following suggestions:



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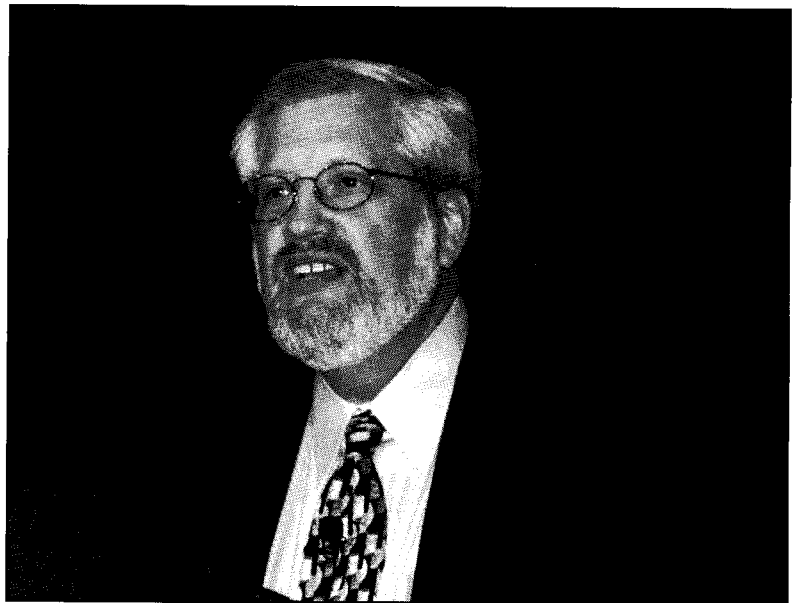
Ackoff's Learning and Adaptation model. He emphasizes Ackoff's idea that people learn from making mistakes. In this project, team members have the opportunity to make mistakes and learn from them.

As a result of being on the ground in India, participants begin to question the assumptions they have about car customers. Because the team experiences India together in real time, a shared understanding naturally emerges of the circumstances and context in India and why customers have particular requirements suitable to their environment and culture.

This learning experience allows participants to unlearn the GM orthodoxy. Team members can create a new business model suitable for India, one that is different from the US model. As a result of their experiences, the team came back with an in-depth understanding of the mini-car market and actually reframed the question. Mini-car was transformed into "urban mobility solutions."

The following key points can be drawn from Holman's presentation:

- Start with a hypothesis the team can prove or disprove
- Make sure people develop interviewing and observation skills
- A shared understanding is created dur-



Robert Rosenfeld

we live in a climate that "upsets the status quo and impels people and organizations toward renewal."

Gryskiewicz makes the point that you must look at the periphery to find innovation. The individual and the organization must walk at the periphery. You cannot be embedded in the mainstream and be able to anticipate change. Instead, be at the periphery or perimeter where there is chaos, volatility, ambiguity and uncertainty. We must look for the patterns out at the periphery to

Another key point is that the organization must develop the skill of reframing. Reframing involves looking from a new perspective or a number of new perspectives. You must be able to reframe the way you look at markets and your competition. When organizations cannot reframe, there is a denial of change. It is likely that the organization does not want to see the perspective and does not have the mechanism to force members to see it. For GM, changing mini-car to urban mobility solutions is an example of reframing. Finally, look at the negative space. Ask the question what is missing or what is not there?

Structure ways to bring innovation into the company:

- Bring in people who have no experience in your industry
- Send people to conferences held by unrelated industries
- Read fringe magazines such as The Baffler, Strategy and Leadership, Red Herring.

The bottom line of all these presentations is: if you wish to support innovation within your organization, you must nurture and focus on the human individual. These individuals are passionate, able to exist on the periphery, able to reframe the question, able to undertake a learning journey — managers must be able to protect and encourage these people.

“... to support innovation within your organization, you must nurture and focus on the human individual.”

ing the team's learning journey. This shared view does not already exist prior to starting the project.

- Be prepared to have your assumptions and your hypothesis overturned
- Be prepared to completely change or reframe your beginning question

POSITIVE TURBULENCE

Stanley Gryskiewicz presents his concept of Positive Turbulence, the idea that

sense the future coming.

He likens innovation to jazz; you improvise and improve with practice. To support innovation, organizations must possess the ability to improvise. This means developing the ability to:

- Absorb new information
- Bring in information from the outside
- Learn, remember and process information
- Engage in novel interpretations