

## Ongoing Discussion “Thought Piece”

From My Seat in the Stadium Continued.....

Prepared and Presented by Julie Goodfellow and Hugh McAllister

[julie@internetforyou.co.uk](mailto:julie@internetforyou.co.uk)

[hrmcallister@aol.com](mailto:hrmcallister@aol.com)

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Ongoing Discussion Host: Bill Bellows

[william.bellows@rocket.com](mailto:william.bellows@rocket.com)

for

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InThinking Network

For those who were not at the In2:InThinking Network's 2013 Forum or able to attend our session, we would like to briefly give you an outline to give context to our discussions.

### **Last Year's Workshop:**

Go to a conference on creativity; attend a symposium on personal growth, on organizational effectiveness or any other topic of interest around the goal of getting better. What is the common thread? What elements converge to make the dream possible? For us, it is the ability to think differently; to embrace different perspectives and to understand from those perspectives and the enhanced context they provide. In short, to see the playing field of life from different seats in the stadium unlocks a doorway to creativity and to enhanced living.

We will draw on shared experiences from previous In2:InThinking Fora and from each person's individual life's path. Perspective is the key. With an enhanced ability to see life as a kaleidoscope of perspectives, patterns will emerge where we have seen none; creativity will flourish where we once saw limited solutions; and personal and professional relationships will flourish in the light of new understanding.

### **Changing assumptions: For those willing to dare!**

- Can't force change
- Roles & context are key
- Keep eyes open...no Pollyanna
- Be patient
- Don't worry
- Engaging teams brings results!

Demonstrating the work can change the discussion especially when it is purely customer/patient focused, how can we get our teams to amongst completing the stressful, busy day jobs get the teams to demonstrate the customer issues? Helping people see the vision, how many views of the field can you capture and demonstrate?

### **Dealing with crossed paradigms**

Your presumptions don't always match others'. This is, perhaps, the most difficult hurdle to overcome. People see the world as a result of the world they have seen and have difficulty seeing issues from any other vantage point. Thomas Kuhn referred to this as "paradigm paralysis" and there are many examples of it cited in the video "The Paradigm Effect" by Joel Barker. For our discussions, the important idea is that we have to recognize that each of us has strongly held beliefs and the ability to step outside of the boundaries they impose, to see important issues from other perspectives and to move forward with new, possibly unimagined perspectives, is an imperative if we are to think and, as a result, act differently.

### **Resolving the differences**

In practice, we face crossed paradigms and the paradigm effect across levels and functions in organizations of every kind. This is not the purview of the private sector alone. Public organisations experience it as well. There is no industry that shoulders the burden by itself. Each, in its own context faces the challenge. Our interest in these conversations is on resolving crossed paradigms in the context of teams.

Our initial discussions at last year's forum focused on sharing our experiences of supporting teams to 'think' and look at their work differently. Stepping back and looking into the work, outside in rather than from within the work, to help us see that broader view and to engage with people, colleagues, customers and patients, whatever our industry, sector or specific area of expertise; to help us see a bigger picture of the game and understand it better....

We suggest that in order to really help teams, we need to have strategies and tactics that support, even nurture the understanding (among all of the stakeholders) of the many different perspectives; what we call the "seats in the stadium." Here are some thoughts to consider:

### **From the seats closest to the field...**

Intuitively, people know that doing the right thing for customers, known also as clients/patients/constituents depending on the organization, brings the best results yet, so

often, this perspective is lost. The bigger the organization, the more complex the operations, the greater is the challenge. There are often structural impediments that drive behaviours inconsistent with excellence (from the customer point of view). Additionally, colleagues are sceptical and disillusioned by the change programs they have watched come and go over the years and although they are motivated, intrinsically, they won't easily believe the program du jour is anything more than the latest in a long procession of fads. Their view of the game on the field is blocked by pillars of scepticism due to the number of times they have had their hopes raised and dashed in the past. Have you ever heard anyone say this is just the latest fad that will pass?

If we are serious about engaging people closest to the work, who participate daily in the GEMBA (understanding and knowing the work), we need to provide a method through which they can share their view of the playing field and through which others, whose seats give them different perspectives, can share theirs as well.

Perhaps the most critical point is that only if we are advocating for sharing perspectives only with a plan for sustained action toward these objectives, can the goal of continuing "betterness" (maybe this isn't a word but you probably understand it) be attained.

The barriers that beset the people closest to the field are significant. There are other seats in the stadium, however, whose positions provide additional points of view and, as we noted earlier, often result in different paradigms with respect to what needs to be done and how it ought to be accomplished. These are the perspectives of middle management and senior management. There is also the perspective of spectators who sit at home and second guess the people who are involved directly in the action at the stadium. We'll call them the "Spectators", whose participation will take time to nourish.

### **The Middle...**

There are inevitably the folks in the middle, the squeezed middle. Here is their mission, their dilemma:

- Try to achieve the targets and measures in which they have had no involvement and the reasoning behind, which is a mystery.
- These goals and measures must sound plausible to someone but to the middle, no-one seems to have bothered to ask by what method they would be achieved.
- They may also be sufficiently removed from the field that they are not a credible resource to the first group...hence that group's scepticism and feeling of abandonment.

### **The Seniors...**

Senior managers have a clear vision to be customer centric and to be focused on doing the best for the customers. Yet the assumptions they make, in the absence of a clearer understanding of the other seating arrangements and based on the view they have of the field (often a very different angle from those who are acting on the work and coordinating it (the ones closest to the field and the middle) In fact, the seniors may be at the mercy of the "Spectators" we mentioned earlier. It's part of their seating arrangement, in a way. Their targets and measures often relate to the following: –

- How many people turned up for the game?
- How much money did they spend?
- How much food did they consume?
- How many employees were needed any how much they were paid to work on the day?
- How much did it cost to pay for the teams?
- Which team won?
- How much did it cost to clean up afterwards?
- What profit did we make?

These in the right context would be helpful to give us several views of the game but no more. From the perspectives of the others, however, these tell us little of how well we did on the field. What was the experience (players and spectators), how we could make it better; not necessarily faster or effective or efficient..... Just good old 'better'! No doubt there will be

measure and targets around these questions that are driving behaviours which are not customer focused or driving wrong behaviours

We have another premise to reinforce. The idea of “betterness” is dependent on a whole-systems perspective on the stadium that is our organization, whatever it may be. We can even extend the metaphor to include systems outside the stadium such as vendors, but that may be outside our scope. What is within our scope, however, is to reinforce that sharing perspectives among the various seats in the stadium and building a method for integrating these perspectives into our management, a method founded in understanding the whole system, its sub-systems and processes, their interactions and results, is of paramount importance. Some of the pivotal questions, when we've asked ourselves to think about the metaphor of the seats in the stadium are these:

- How do we support that squeezed middle caught between the cries from the front seats of ‘it is not working’ and we are frustrating our customers, and senior managers who only see the end results as their seats in the stadium are behind the pillars holding up the stadium?
- How do we enable them to support their staff to discover the ‘what matters’ and to constantly challenge the work and to ensure we always strive to understand what matters and not take a snapshot, tick a box its now good work and move on.
- How do we enable the people closest to the field to have sufficiently robust perspectives that they can move things forward?

If any of this were easy we would all be doing it already! Here is an old quote that frames the idea:

“It isn't common sense, it is good sense... but it isn't common!”

For all of us who want to move forward, though we are in different roles and in different organizations, here is a suggestion: Act when you think you can do something. Don't wait for the next change program coming along. Work to build methods that will move perspectives across and throughout the stadium seating. Dr. Deming's saying, “there is no substitute for knowledge” is a powerful quote to be shared.

It isn't easy to move the inertia of organizations. It isn't easy to change paradigms (our own included) and no effort to bring change is guaranteed to bring success. Our message is that sharing perspectives, being mindful and using the resulting knowledge to enhance systems is vital. We challenge all of us to go forth and to be unreasonable in these pursuits, no in advocacy of fads, but in advocacy for thinking, for learning and for being champions of 'betterness.'

"The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable man persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man."

George Bernard Shaw

### **Julie's example**

I worked recently with a National Health Service Trust (free at point of contact healthcare) who was building a new hospital and closing 2 older Hospitals and combining them. Bringing together 5 decontamination facilities into 1! A variety of flexible scopes for use in clinics and theatres for a number of departments, Urology, Endoscopy, Theatres as well as a number of smaller users. The question being asked was "Do we have enough machines to do the decontamination work?" "Is there enough capacity to cope with the need as services have changed in the 5 years it has taken to design and build the hospital?" "What workforce will be required to meet the demands?" "How can we get different teams to work together?"

By working with the various senior nurses and managers, we collected data for each area based on statistical analysis, developing control charts which evidenced out reliably and predictably the numbers of scopes used on a daily basis within each of the 5 machines, worked with the manufacturers on workloads and wash cycle times then calculated workforce required to deliver the service.

### **Key Issues:**

Lack of data in the first place on usage, it had never been needed before; it was spread out and had more capacity than was needed.

Departments unwilling to relinquish budgets to re-assign them to the new department in charge of decontamination: evidence of the new requirement was required.

A complete new way of collaborating in order to make sure the decontamination process was not overburdened at peak usage times. Otherwise there would be cancellations in clinics. This also meant reviewing clinic planning.

**The outcome:** Agreement across the board on budgets and an acceptance based on data that they were able to meet the requirements for patients and recognition that collaborative working is essential for the way forward.

**Unknown:** The move in not until May, it is unknown what testing and reviewing will be required post move and stabilizing a new system.....

### **Hugh's example**

I once worked with a survey department in a national engineering firm. One of my jobs was to assess how well the operating groups performed in terms of conformance to the quality procedures. This was just an audit for compliance to procedures. It was not a technical audit. The survey operation's manager told me his team historically and consistently scored low because the procedures were designed for structural engineering, not surveying. I was at a crossroad in that discussion. As the senior quality manager I was somewhere between the middle and senior levels we've described. Nothing is ever as clearly delineated as the three tiers we described, but the basics are applicable. I took the position of senior management representative and proposed the following to the survey manager:

- Create a documented procedure that is applicable to your discipline's work.
- Make sure everyone within the group has input and is committed to the process.
- Get a sign-off from the entire management team (upward).
- Based on an approved and agreed process, I'll audit to that set of standards.



He agreed and I went away happy. The discussion was entered into my report to senior management (really senior – not me) management for the current audit period. I submitted no rating.

**The outcome:** During the next audit cycle I found the survey team performed exceptionally well. Nearly a decade later, long after I had left the organization, my contacts within the survey team told me they still maintain exceptional performance in their conformance to their procedures.

**The debrief:** When management listens and people feel involved, “betterness” is possible!

To take this forward, we would like you to help us with your ideas and discussions on experiences where successfully and unsuccessfully you have tried to change work.

### **Reflections on creating this piece.**

There are 2 versions UK and US paper sizes, something not considered until we began sending versions back to each other....

Spelling: There are dotted about both English and American spellings..... Deliberately left to reinforce how even writing a paper needs various views and awareness!

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

Julie Goodfellow was born in Northumberland, North East England. She has a varied background; working on a Port in Northumberland in Finance then Warehousing/Transport. In 1997 she moved to South Wales, United Kingdom with her husband and 3 children. She then worked in the National Health Service for over a decade before she and her husband set up a Valve Company. She has an interest in problem solving, quality management and organizational development, she now supports organisations in developing Lean & Thinking In Systems. Julie has a Master's Degree in Lean Operations from Cardiff University in Wales, where she was given the opportunity to visit the In2:InThinking Network's 2010 Forum, was delayed with the Icelandic Volcano and had an additional adventure in Las Vegas where she managed to get a flight home 6 days later than intended. She returned in 2012 and volunteered to help with the Forum, supporting links to the current years University students in Cardiff and Austin, Texas via the Forum's first-ever webcast. Julie is currently working as a Service Excellence Consultant with Lloyds Banking Group.

**CONTACT** - Julie can be reached by e-mail at [julie@internetforyou.co.uk](mailto:julie@internetforyou.co.uk) for additional information about this Ongoing Discussion.

**LINKEDIN** - <http://www.linkedin.com/in/juliegoodfellow>

Hugh McAllister has a passion for the integration of learning systems, quality management systems and client (customer) satisfaction systems. He works with organizations to address the aims of these organizational sub-systems and to bring data to the table for the synthesis of knowledge from the data each sub-system provides.

Hugh is a graduate of Siena College. He went to Harvard, but that was just a drive through one spring day, so we told him it doesn't count. His greatest contribution to organizations is his ability to think outside the quadrilateral parallelogram. His teenage daughter, Meghan, gave him that term and he is running with it. Ask him if he knows what it means? Hugh is known for creativity and humor in his work and he brings these characteristics to the way he looks at and works within systems.

**CONTACT** - Hugh can be reached by e-mail at [hrcallister@aol.com](mailto:hrcallister@aol.com) for additional information about this Ongoing Discussion.

**LINKEDIN** - <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/hugh-mcallister/1/24/220>