

Value Adding #8



January - March 1996

Kate Ramsay and Des Ryan welcome you to the holiday edition of AnD Consulting's quick and easy-to-read newsletter.

In this edition **Learnable Moments** explores the role that conversation plays in a complex world. **The Did You Know?** column announces the winner of the 1995 Learning Sabbatical Scholarship and celebrates AnD Consulting's Second Birthday. In **Holiday Readings**, a special feature in this edition, we list our five most memorable reads for 1995. In **Value Adding in Industry** you can read how the Director of a Foreign Bank adds value to his customers.

LEARNABLE MOMENTS

In an orderly world, where there are black and white answers to every question, we tend to behave independently from those around us and act according to our own truth. In a complex world, where there are no answers, only change, we need to behave interdependently and learn to engage each other in conversation.

Conversation is a process in which we get support and insights. The purpose of conversation is to create new forms from these insights. These new forms help us solve the one-off problems we face each day in this complex world. The magic of conversation happens when we hear our own statements, and those of others, as opinions, not truths.

For example: In the middle of an Indonesian lesson in which we were behaving as if we were in an orderly world (Priyono, our teacher, was at the whiteboard, we were seated in front of him) a dead rat dropped from the rafters onto Kate's chair. Initially, we each went into instant problem solving. Priyono wanted to throw it away, Des

wanted to flee and Kate (ever a diligent student!) wanted to leave the rat where it was and continue the lesson somewhere else. Then instead, we agreed to engage in a conversation, and together we came up with an appropriate solution which none of us had previously thought of.

DID YOU KNOW?

(i) The Learning Sabbatical Scholarship
..... And the Winner of the 1995 Scholarship is Deborah McNamara, Consultant, The ICI Way, for her profile of herself as a learner. This entitles her to an all expenses paid Learning Sabbatical at Tanah Umum, AnD's conversation centre in Bali. Congratulations Deborah!

Submissions are now welcomed for the 1996 Scholarship. Write in 100 words or less a profile of yourself as a learner to be a contender for this year's award.

(ii) AnD Consulting's Birthday

Happy Birthday to us for January 4, when we turned Two! During our holiday Learning Sabbatical at Tanah Umum we reviewed the past two years with pride, revisited our vision and agreed that AnD's values for our third year are Strategic, Connection and Innovation. What are your business/personal values for 1996?

HOLIDAY READINGS

From our '95 reads we recommend the following:
Cairnes, Margot. Peaceful Chaos - The Art of Leadership in Time of Rapid Change
Hesse, Hermann Siddharta
Lord, Gabrielle Love and Alcohol
Mitchell, M. Waldrop. Complexity - The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos
Trompenaars, Fons. Riding the Waves of Culture - Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business

VALUE ADDING IN INDUSTRY

"Minds are like parachutes, they work best when they're open," is the operating philosophy of our guest in this edition of Value Adding. Currently he has two customer groups; his regular internal customers at the Bank's Australian Head Office in Sydney and, for the duration of a consulting assignment, a second customer group at the Bank's Regional Office in Singapore.

Our guest is adding value in Sydney and Singapore by introducing systems which give cost reductions and improved service to the Bank's external customers. His challenge is to encourage his direct customers, the internal teams, to 'buy in' to these changes.

"The hardest part is asking people to change before they can see the benefit in changing. This new system threatens empires," he explained. "So you can't hit the change head on because you'll end up with disaffected people, and disaffected people won't add value to their customers."

Our guest is using different approaches to get the necessary 'buy in' at the two locations.

"In Sydney I hid the system in the early stages until I could show some of the flow on benefits," he said. "Now that people are seeing quicker turnaround times and can detect problems sooner, they're becoming supportive and even asking when we're going to implement the second stage of the system."

He added that his ongoing tactic for adding value to his Sydney customers is to manage by walking around. He sees it as his job to listen to people, be a sympathetic ear and ask people how things are going and whether there are any issues that are worrying them.

In contrast, in Singapore he keeps a low profile. "It's obviously very difficult for an outsider to walk in and say you can do this better," he said.

"So I'm taking a political approach by finding things that don't need to be done, freeing up the people from these areas and transferring them to where they can improve the process."

Our guest explored a cultural difference he is facing. "The Singaporeans believe they are the best controllers of process, and they are good. If a process is put in place you'll know that 99 times out of 100 it will work; but getting them to say why they are doing something doesn't make sense to them," he explained. "So I see it as my job to ask why they're doing what they're doing and whether there might be a better way of doing it."

It has been estimated that it will take two years to implement the systems change in Singapore. "There's no real crisis, they're doing OK," our guest said. "They recognise they're not as efficient as they could be but, without an external shock, you've got to work within the bounds of what is palatable for people. If we pushed much harder, the net result would be a lot of dissatisfaction."

And how is he doing?

"In Sydney, now that people have got over the hurdle of fear, I am getting 'buy in' because people can see the benefits of the system," he said. "In Singapore some people are saying 'gee this is good, I'm really enjoying this' and that is helping, but it will take a long time for their enthusiasm to filter through. Up there, I believe I am only adding value in the sense that on each trip I might get one or two more people who put up their hand to join in."

Striving to keep all these parachutes open seems to be taking a toll on our guest. "The hardest part of this exercise is having two jobs in two different countries," he said. "My head feels like cotton wool because I'm so tired. I am looking forward to a good rest with my family during the holiday break, and a learning conversation with my coach on my return to work in the New Year will also be of value," he concluded with a smile.

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