

Value Adding



Enjoyable business partnerships

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Kate Ramsay and Des Ryan welcome you to their July-September edition of Value Adding.

In this edition **Learnable Moments** introduces the reader to Learning Conversations and the dilemma between predictability and chaos. This heavy going theory is brought alive with two examples. In **Value Adding in Industry** you can read how a factory manager adds value to his customers and in the **Did You Know?** column is information about a report on women in management published by DEET and on AnD's Asia-Pacific Learning Centres.

LEARNABLE MOMENTS

Learning Conversations are designed to empower us by enabling us to act appropriately in our chaotic world in which the unexpected can happen and frequently does!

In the predictable world there is certainty. There is a right way and a wrong way of doing things. The answers are known. People are trained by an authority to know the right answers and when they don't they are regarded as stupid and failed.

This leaves us with a dilemma. On the one hand we live and do business in a chaotic world in which the value added is customer satisfaction. On the other, we believe in a predictable world in which the value added is compliance to authority.

The resolution of this dilemma is the subject of complexity. Learning Conversations are a tool for managing in complexity. They take place as one-to-one conversations or in learning team interactions. They are held with leaders and their coaches, between leaders and with leaders and their teams.

Learning Conversations are essential for an organisation wanting to achieve world's best practice

in any of the following business strategies:

- ☞ Cost leadership
- ☞ Product leadership
- ☞ Customer 'intimacy' leadership

Two examples

(1) Jalan Legian, Bali-Indonesia - A study of chaos

Just crossing the road from Lalu Village to shop at the supermarket requires us to behave differently from the 'look to the left, look to the right, look to the left again' road crossing rules we were taught in primary school. The constant stream of cars, buses, bicycles and motor bikes that come from either direction, behind and on both sides of the road has changed the way we behave. We have learned that a rapid neck movement from left to right and to the rear and then making a dash for it while still looking in every direction is the best way to cross.

Crossing Jl. Legian is an example of us managing in complexity and we frequently use it in our Learning Conversations to explore how to act appropriately.

(2) Oz intersections - A study of predictability

Have you ever sat at an intersection at 3 o'clock in the morning with not another car in sight waiting for the traffic light to turn to green? Kate has, and one night she decided it was safe to cross on a red light. From the instant of the flash of the red light camera she regretted this. Accompanying the fine was a letter explaining her choices; she could pay the fine, send \$10 for the photograph and then pay the fine or go to court and pay the fine, plus costs. At 3 o'clock that morning Kate forgot that the predictable world of Australian intersections is not about making appropriate choices. It is about obeying the rules or paying the consequences.

Engaging the NSW Police Department in a Learning Conversation was not an option!

VALUE ADDING IN INDUSTRY

"I add value to my customers by providing them with team leadership and individual coaching," said our guest in this edition. As a Plant Manager at ICI Australia he told Value Adding that his customers are the team of 140 people in the factory he runs. "It's my job to make sure all members of the team have the skills and confidence to grow, do different things and add value to their customers - the people who pay money for what we make," he added.

He said he spends only a small amount of his time managing and the remainder leading. "This tends to get me into trouble," he said, "because the expectation is that factory managers spend most of their time managing." Yet he explained that his choice to focus on leading is worth any negative consequences because of the benefits it affords the organisation, the team and himself.

"The consensus within ICI is that the plant is running better than it's ever been run before. Our customers are getting a quality product on time in the quantities they want and we are running the plant more reliably, cheaper and more safely," he said, "and at a personal level, because of the environment we have created, it's worth it for the buzz I get from seeing people growing and doing things they never believed they could."

Our guest reflected on another outcome of an empowering environment, the regular loss of good people. "I said when I went to this factory that one sign we were doing things well would be when our best people got pinched, and that's happening. Really good people run out of learning opportunities and need to feel free to go and try their own things in their own spaces rather than being provided for."

We asked how he sustains the courage and energy to lead in a culture which expects factory managers to spend most of their time managing. "At times it's a scary place to be. So that I'm not an island all by myself I seek out other kindred spirits within the organisation to reaffirm that I am doing the right things." Then added, "Using Des as my leadership coach is a very big

part of reaffirming my worth. Because Des doesn't have an ICI allegiance, I can sound out new ideas, get excited about something and wonder if I could actually do it. I don't mind if I look a fool in front of Des. If you get too excited about something at ICI people tend to wonder what you're drinking. Excitement is not one of the core values."

To our compliment on his braveness our guest said, "I don't choose to be brave. You could go right back and say I'm too lazy to do things myself. The more empowered my team is to do the management tasks, the more leading I can do. I believe they do these tasks better than I do, it's about the right people doing the right things."

This seems confirmation of the view that humility is a quality of leaders too!

DID YOU KNOW?

i DEET Report

Barriers to Women Working in Corporate Management was written by Kate and a colleague, Patricia Bellamy. It describes their findings from a qualitative study of the reasons 30 women voluntarily left corporate management positions in NSW and Victoria between 1990 and 1993. The report lists the key issues which contributed to their decisions to resign and makes comparisons with the current literature on the 'glass ceiling' (the invisible barrier stopping women from reaching senior executive positions). Give Kate a ring in Syney if you would like further details.

ii And's Asia-Pacific Learning Centres

Des is now in residence and working at Tanah Umum (Bali) and joining with Kate at Elizabeth Bay (Sydney) to create AnD's Asia-Pacific Learning Centres. Des' phone/fax number at Tanah Umum is stated below.

Jan Roberts, our first resident learner at Tanah Umum will close with a summary of her experience: "A week of reflection in a beautiful environment away from the constraints of my 'normal' culture, with two different and complementary coaches to explore and ground my vision. I leave revitalised after my sabbatical."