

Value Adding #12



Enjoyable business partnerships

January - March 1997

Kate Ramsay and Des Ryan wish you a Happy New Year and welcome you to AnD Consulting's easy-to-read newsletter.

In this edition **Learnable Moments** explores how a process of reorganisation plus a change in beliefs/attitudes is needed to create a learning organisation. **Did You Know?** announces the winner of the 1997 Learning Sabbatical Scholarship, gives an update on the Australian Learning Team and outlines AnD's availability for Learning Sabbaticals during 1997. In **Value Adding in Business** you can read how an academic adds value to his customers.

LEARNABLE MOMENTS

"The quest for certainty" was what John Dewey named our search for universal truth. Our belief in certainty can dominate everything we do.

Living with an attitude of certainty/predictability precludes change and means we cannot expect managers to manage differently.

However, since the first oil shock in 1973, the Western World has been forced to confront uncertainty. It is time to change our beliefs/attitudes to ones which recognise that change is the norm.

In organisations this means it is time to focus on processes which will enable people to change their beliefs/attitudes rather than expecting that yet another organisational restructure will lead to economic prosperity.

To survive, prosper and work in an uncertain world we have to become learners and our workplaces must become learning workplaces/organisations.

An Example

Once upon a time in the S.A. Government there was an Industrial Democracy Unit and a Training and

Development Centre. The Industrial Democracy Unit concentrated on the structure of organisations. The Training and Development Centre focused on the attitudes/beliefs of the people in those organisations. Never the twain did meet, so the either/or belief of science prevailed and they were both shut down.

DID YOU KNOW?

i The Learning Sabbatical Scholarship

Congratulations to Alec O'Halloran, the winner of this year's Scholarship, for his submission on what having a vision means to him. Alec believes

that inspiration is the key to vision and he cited two examples where inspiration and a compelling picture of what he wanted meant he overcame all obstacles to achieve them. To quote Alec: "Yes, having a vision is a powerful experience. Making the vision a reality is an exhilarating challenge made possible with the magic ingredient of... *inspiration.*" Alec's Scholarship consists of three one-on-one sessions to further develop his vision using AnD's Visionary process as a tool.

ii The Australian Learning Team

The team continues to meet regularly with the purpose of supporting learners as they learn. If you are interested in joining the learning team please call Rob Guttentag on 0412 263 434.

iii 1997 Learning Sabbaticals

Does committing to some time out to do some learning and recreating in a beautiful environment sound like a good New Year resolution to you? If so, give Kate or Des a call to enquire about AnD Consulting's Learning Sabbaticals in either sub tropical northern NSW or tropical Bali. Bali Sabbaticals can be taken in either early April or September. At all other times, Sabbaticals can be taken in northern NSW.



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VALUE ADDING IN BUSINESS

"Customers only ever come back if they believe your previous services were of some value to them," Alan Davies, this edition's guest, said.

Alan, the Director of the College of Industry and Professional Education at Southern Cross University, has two customer sets. Externally he consults to organisations as diverse as Telstra, the ABC and regional and community groups. Internally, the Vice Chancellor accesses him as a sounding board and he is able to add value to his colleagues in the university community by sharing the market place intelligence which he gathers from his external customers.

So why do Alan's clients come back? "In terms of strategic planning, if they want a hard document about dollars and key result areas I recommend they go to someone else," Alan said. "I think my customers come back because I provide a forum in which they can learn about what's going on in their environment in ways which they can't do from the normal way they do business."

Alan said he uses the 'search conference' activity to create the circumstances in which participants can find a common language to talk amongst themselves and with other stakeholders. "In a futures exercise," he explained, "you get people to go outside their immediate environment, identify issues of relevance and look at the opportunities and threats which arise from these. Then, in heterogeneous groups, they are asked to reach agreement on the issues of most importance to them." The impact of this process is that, as people express their values, so their stereotypes about each other break down. Basic value differences remain but they become visible and focused. Alan stressed that at this stage of the search conference the process is more

important than the content. It is in the next stage, when the group does an internal scan of what's going on within the organisation, that the content for a strategic plan is identified.

"In terms of how I add value, it's all in this process of helping people find a common language," Alan said. "They can do the final piece, the strategic planning process, on their own. Sometimes they've been trying to do this last piece for years without success because they had not first been

through the process of finding each others' view of the world. This does not imply a consensual world view, rather that all are aware of where each other are coming from, stripped of stereotype."

A recent example of how Alan added value was in a series of negotiations between the greens, represented by the North East Forest Alliance, the loggers, represented by the Forest Products Association and the union. Through the search process these three disparate groups learned that they shared a common interest amongst each other in expanding the areas under forest production. The process resulted in the groups

challenging their previously held stereotypes about the other when the greens learned that loggers do support sustainability and the loggers learned that greens do support the management and exploitation of timber products. "Creating this shared understanding assisted the negotiation of an agreed way of jointly working through Regional 1 Forest Agreements - an outcome each group had believed impossible prior to this series of processes," Alan concluded with a wry smile.

So, with outcomes as satisfactory as this, why would Alan's customers ever need to come back? "In a stable world you would only need to do this process once, but we no longer live in a stable world," was Alan's simple response.

Value-Adding

