

# Value Adding #18



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Des Ryan and Kate Ramsay welcome you to AnD Consulting's newsletter.

In this edition, **Learnable Moments** explores how outsiders influence innovation. In **Did You Know?** we recommend a text which takes an innovative look at leadership and in **Value Adding in Business** you can read how a manager in a health care organisation adds value to her customers.

## LEARNABLE MOMENTS

In the last edition of Value Adding we looked at the concept of innovation. We want to continue exploring this phenomenon by looking at how outsiders can influence innovation.

For innovation (doing different things) to occur we need to create structural change. Reform leaves the structure intact and only results in things being done differently within the current structure. (The Australian Democrats are an example of reform.)

The outsider, a term used by Albert Camus in his book by the same name written in 1942, is someone who understands that everything we do is a game and that the only escape from the boredom of the traditional game is the total commitment to a personal vision.

All games can be seen like the game of chess. They are built on a set of organising principles, rules, structures and assumptions. The behaviours explicit in games vary but the underlying organising principles remain the same. Outsiders recognise this and choose to play a different game which is consistent with their personal vision.

It is our belief that only outsiders can influence us to sustain our innovations because the pull of the traditional is so strong and so seductive.

Margot Cairnes in *Approaching the Corporate*

*Heart* (Simon & Schuster, 1998) calls outsiders 'safe people' and describes the support from a safe person as an enriching and valuable experience. Cairnes: "If .. you have decided to have a healthy, soulful life and to follow your heart's desire, a safe person is exactly the person you need to help you. .. Being in the presence of a safe person .. makes it very hard to escape being present with your own life force."

It is time to come clean and say that I, Desmond Ryan, am an outsider. Since my 35th birthday when I awoke from my culturally induced sleep about a world made real to me by my agents of

socialisation (parents, church, politicians, teachers and peers) in which I believed that 'white was right' and that as a white man I was even 'righter', I have

been having a go at being an outsider. I have made the choice to play a different game consistent with my personal vision.

My vision is, "To enjoy the wonder of living for a long time and to be involved in changing the thinking of the western world from either / or to and". Hence the passion I have for my work as a Leadership Coach (safe person) in adding value to my clients by supporting them as they create their vision and sustain their innovations.

## DID YOU KNOW?

### A Good read:

In *Doing Leadership Differently* (Melbourne University Press, 1998) Amanda Sinclair argues that Australian organisations are clinging to an outdated model of leaders as tough, heterosexual males. Sinclair shows why this leadership style is failing and proposes ways of widening the pool of leadership talent to access the cleverness and creativity of our diverse Australian workforce by innovating leadership, as defined, and as enacted.



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## VALUE ADDING IN BUSINESS

Claire Pierce, our guest in this edition of Value Adding in Business, is customer driven right down to the range of titles she uses. Claire is Manager of the Executive Office at a health care organisation in Melbourne. "But that title doesn't help people, so I choose my title according to individual customer need to enable them to understand how I can be of service," Claire explained. For example, in the corporate area she is the Company Secretary and if she is dealing with an insurance matter she is the Insurance Manager.

Claire's customers are the Executive, the Board and all the staff of the organisation. "A big part of what I do is navigate the organisation for people," Claire said. "If someone doesn't know how to do something or where to get some information they'll ring the Corporate Office and if the secretaries can't answer their query they are referred to me."

Often Claire's customers make an initial request which she has learned may not be the best solution to their core problem; so one way she adds value is by helping her customers clarify their specific needs. "I'm willing to look silly by asking, 'what do you mean by that?' for the sake of making sure they are clear about what they want," Claire explained. For example, if someone asks for legal advice, she first asks them what they want it for and then encourages them to explore whether this is actually what they need.

"People sometimes ask for legal advice when they are not confident to make a decision on an issue," Claire said. "And by talking it through with them they often find they already have the answer themselves." The outcome of this clarification process is an empowered customer and a cost saving in legal expenses.

A fascinating example of Claire adding value to her customers concerns a current client of the organisation who wants a sex change operation. This person is married and wants to remain married after the procedure. Claire was initially asked for legal advice because the panel which reviews applications for sex changes believed they could not proceed because it would be in breach of a policy preventing sex changes on married people.

Legal advice confirmed that the policy outlawing sex changes on married people is now outdated and further, to refuse for this reason would be

conflicting with the Equal Opportunity Act because it would be discrimination on the ground of marital status.

So what the Medical Director now needs from Claire is help in supporting the clinicians involved to understand the legal ramifications to both themselves and the organisation if they refuse to proceed on these grounds.

"We're going to work with the clinicians in exploring the legal and ethical issues which this case has brought up for them with the goal of reaching an outcome satisfactory to all parties which does not prejudice the organisation," Claire said.

Helping with issues as complex as this suggests that Claire's customers have come to expect a very sophisticated level of service from her. So what new value can she provide?

"With my customers it's always a shared learning journey we take," Claire said. "Having worked our way through an issue together as in the above example, these days, rather than me doing things for them, I encourage them to take responsibility for the implementation stage themselves."

The win/win outcome of this new value is that Claire's customers are getting their needs met in an empowering way while she is freed up to deal with the next query.

### Value Adding

