

Life's Paradox

uncommon reflections of life matters

Creative Intelligence: How do you implement new ideas?

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It is the start of a new year as I pen this article. When we look back and wondered how come we started with so many bright ideas at the start of the past year ... and most of them fizzled to nothing. What is the difference between the ideas of the fertile imagination that germinated into physical manifestation and those that started as a great idea in the universe of our minds and remained so?

Have we all not returned from an exciting personal and/or professional development course all fired up and enthusiastic to implement new ideas, only to see them slowly erode away? I can almost hear the team echoing in the corridors: "Don't worry, let his/her passion ride for a week or two. By the third week everything will be back to the way they always were. Just humour him/her for a bit"..... Does that sound somewhat familiar?

Has there been great suggestions that come up from team meetings? So we minute it. Maybe it gets mentioned when the minutes get read the following meeting ... And that's about as far as it goes. Does that ring remotely true too?

How about the one about spending more time with the family? So we start the year with great intentions over the holiday season. When the reality of work sets in upon return to our pile of unopened emails, budget plans and target projections...our well-meaning thoughts of doing away with overtime starts to disintegrate.



2005 is here. What are your New Year's Resolutions? I'll bet that most of us have quite a few. Let's make a difference this year, says I. Look for the process that allowed those ideas to bud into implemented action plans that blossomed into intended change over the past year.

What is the definition of "intelligence"?

Intelligence has been defined as the ability to recognize finer and finer distinctions in a very specific area. It has been said that what we generally term "snow" can be categorised into more than 20 definitions by the Eskimo. For example, an oral microbiologist will have 1,000 times finer distinctions regarding the types of microorganisms existing in the ecosystem of the oral cavity compared to the general public who can only distinguish say bacteria that cause decay or perhaps viruses that instigate mouth ulcers or maybe yeast infections under dentures.

Creative intelligence

Walt Disney is universally accepted as a creative genius. His ability to connect his innovative creativity with successful business strategy and popular appeal allowed him to establish an empire in the field of entertainment that has survived decades after his death. Disney (1901 – 1966) embodies the ability to make a successful organization based on creativity. He represents the process of turning fantasies into concrete and tangible expressions – the ability to take something that exists only in the imagination and forge it into a physical existence that directly influences the experience of others in a positive way.

The Structure of Creativity

In the 1980's, Robert Dilts wrote a series of books entitled *Strategies of Genius* mapping the successful thinking strategies of people with special talents like Walt Disney. Dilts worked out that the distinctions by which Disney manifested his creative intelligence was a simple 3 step process which he termed the Three Phases of Creativity.

Creativity involves the coordination of three subprocesses: Dreamer, Realist & Critic. A Dreamer without a Realist cannot turn ideas into tangible expressions. A Critic and a Dreamer without a Realist just become stuck in a perpetual conflict. A Dreamer and a Realist may create things, but they might not achieve a high degree of quality without a Critic. The Critic helps to evaluate and refine the products of creativity.

There is a humorous example of a budding entrepreneur who prided himself in his innovative thinking abilities but lacked some of the Realist and Critic perspective. His team used to say, "He has an idea a minute ... and some of them are good". More is the pity that they never saw the ideas become "real" and concrete.

The point is that creativity itself involves the synthesis of different processes or phases. The Dreamer is necessary for creativity in order form new ideas and goals. The Realist is necessary for creativity as a means to transform ideas into concrete expressions. The Critic is necessary for creativity as a filter and as a stimulus for refinement.

Applying the Creativity Strategy

So what has Disney got to do with your business or your personal life, you might ask? Simply, we are contextualizing the process of his creative genius into implementing ideas for yourself, your business or within your family.

Everybody already has the Dreamer, Realist and Critic inside them. Unfortunately, what typically happens is that the Dreamer and Critic get into a fight. Imagine there is a business meeting happening inside your head. Rather than functioning in some organized strategy, the Dreamer says something and the Critic naturally argues against it. Then they both have a polarity reaction against each other, thus going in conflicting directions until finally the Realist says, “we’re out of time.” Hence, chaos ensues and nothing happens.

It is important to structure the relationship between these stages of creativity so it creates a harmonious process. The key is to acknowledge there will be multiple perspectives of the same thing. The plan is to see all points of view – one at a time.

Let’s imagine you have returned from a personal development program with new ideas galore – it could be for your career, your business, your family, your self.

Dreamer –We know that Disney had a “vision space” for the Dreamer where he allowed his body to totally relax into the Dream State. In fact he had a specific room where the environment was set up to be totally conducive to the Dreamer – it had pictures and inspirational drawings and sayings all over the walls. Everything was chaotic and colourful in this room.

Create a space to permit the Dreamer in you to come through. It may well be a comfortable chair in a quiet room, or it can be just sitting on a park bench, or just closing your eyes and remembering a time when you were relaxed and able to creatively dream up or fantasize new ideas without any inhibitions.

Once you are comfortable, run through all the ideas you have gleaned from the course and pick an outcome you want to achieve. Visualize yourself accomplishing this goal as if you were a character in a movie. Imagine the changes in your life as if



they are in place already: zero outstanding accounts in your business, totally contented staff, clients that hang on your every word and who accept every service plan you propose, your most wanted job is happening to you, your family are ecstatic with the time you are able to balance between your work and them, you are in glowing health, playing golf in PGA style Do not censor anything at this stage. Whilst in this space, allow your creativity to really let loose. Embellish and expand with great flourish. Have an attitude that anything is possible.

In the Dreamer state: Think 'big picture'. Orientate into the longer term future.

Realist – Disney set up an entirely different space for the Realist to come through. Here, the animators had their own drawing tables, stocked with all kinds of modern equipment, tools and instruments that they will need to manifest the dreams. The tables were arranged in a large room in which all of the animators could see and talk to other animators.

Disney's process of 'realizing' his dreams took place through the physical association into characters of the dream and through the 'storyboarding' process of chunking the dream into pieces. The Realist acts as if the dream is possible and focuses on the formulation of a series of successive approximations of actions required to reach the dream.

Step into a location that is physically different from where you were as the Dreamer. Perhaps you may be sitting upright in a straight-backed chair with your feet firmly planted on the floor. Maybe it helps to identify with a time when you were able to think realistically and have a sense of what that feels like.

Now associate into the "dream" and feel yourself in the positions of all of the relevant characters: the business debt collector, the team members and business associates, the client, the boss, your significant other, your children, your golfing buddies, you..... Then see the process as a sequence of images, i.e. a 'storyboard'. Focus on 'how' to implement the plan or idea: that perfect financial management system, the ideal procedure to extraordinary interpersonal relationships, the 100% client convincer formula, the exceptional promotion, the uncompromising recreational and health plan, the synergistic co-created Family Strategic Plan

The Realist phase is more action with respect to the future, operating within a shorter time frame than the Dreamer.

Critic – For the Critic, Disney had a little room that was underneath the stairs where they would look at the prototype pencil sketches and evaluate them. The room always seemed cramped and hot, so it was called the 'sweatbox'.

Disney's process of critical evaluation involved separating himself from the project and taking a more distant 'second look' from the point of view of his audience or



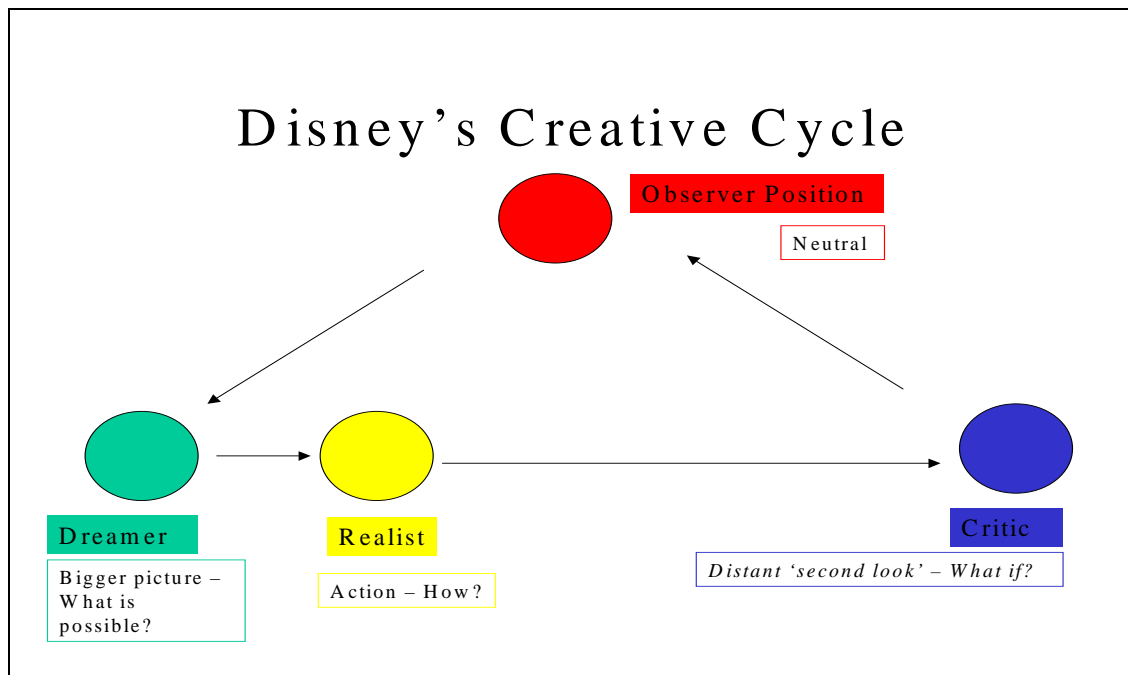
customers. Its primary level of focus is on the 'why' of the plan. The Critic seeks to avoid problems and ensure quality by logically applying different levels of criteria and checking how the idea or plan holds up under various 'what if' scenarios. The Critic phase involves the analysis of the plan in order to find out what could go wrong and what should be avoided. Consider both long and short-term issues, searching for potential sources of problems in both the past and the future.

Create another space to see the whole picture from a location far enough to prevent the Critic interfering with the Dreamer and the Realist. Now think of anything that may be missing or needed to realize the dream. Turn the criticisms into 'how' questions for the Dreamer: How do I get the resources to implement these steps? Read more books? Attend yet another professional or personal development course? Get professional advice or find a mentor? Retain a Life Coach/ Personal Trainer/Counsellor? Change jobs/industry???. Join a new business or support network? Reviewing relationships with spouse, children, significant family members and friends?.... Remember, the Critic is to criticize the plan, not the Realist or the Dreamer. It is often helpful to have the Critic initially acknowledge which elements of the plan are satisfactory before asking questions.

Step back into the Dreamer position to creatively come up with solutions, alternatives and additions to address questions posed by the Critic.

Observer

If the Critic's questions seem too harsh or it is difficult to think of the questions without accessing the Critic state, step into a neutral Observer position away from the Dreamer, Realist and Critic. You may even wish to rephrase the Critic's questions from this Observer position.



Managing Creativity in a Team

One powerful form of team learning and creativity arises out of the fact that people have different maps of the world. The way that somebody represents a particular individual's problem or idea can automatically provide a way of enriching and clarifying the idea or problem.

Applying Disney's strategies takes advantage of this natural process of team learning and co-creativity called 'inter-vision'. In 'supervision' there is an implied hierarchical relationship between people; the supervisor provides the 'right map' to the other person. In 'inter-vision' it is assumed that people are peers and that there is no one right map.

The creative cycle of a team often involves the movement between 'big picture' and the establishment of micro objectives to reach the larger goal. A key part of managing the group's creativity involves the ability to break down the general roles of the team members into specific cognitive and interactive processes required to implement or fulfil that role.

The exercise is thus organized into the three phases of a Dreamer, a Realist and a Critic stage.

Dreamer – One of the group members, the ‘explorer’ describes a plan or idea to the other members. E.g. in business: it may be a new sales/marketing plan, ideas to improve communications in the team, a plan addressing the problems of a particular client, or a team social event. In a family meeting: it may involve planning a family annual vacation, it may be addressing a point of conflict amongst the members, setting joint goals/resolutions for the New Year, or co-creating a Family Vision.

The group members focus on widening, enriching and clarifying their mental perception of the idea by such questions as:

What do you want to do?
Why do you want to do it?
What is the purpose?
What are the payoffs?
How will you know when you have them?
When can you expect to get them?
Where do you want the idea to get you in the future?
Who do you want to be or be like in relationship to the idea?

Realist – Each group member (including the explorer) is to make a simple ‘story board’ of the plan or idea. Act as if the dream is achievable and consider how the idea or plan can be implemented. Emphasize specific actions and define short term steps. Put themselves into the shoes of the people involved in the plan and perceive it from several points of view: boss, team members and associates, clients, community, suppliers, business network, family members, spouse, children, friends....

The following Realist questions can be explored:

How specifically will the idea be implemented?
How will you know if the goal is achieved?
How will the performance criteria be tested?
Who will do it? (Assign responsibility and secure commitment from those carrying out the plan)
When will each phase be implemented?
When will the overall goal be completed?
Where will each phase be carried out?
Why is each step necessary?

Critic - The separate ‘storyboards’ are synthesized into a common storyboard. This is typically done by the explorer whilst restating the plan or idea.

The group is then to take a ‘second look’ at this new combined storyboard, preferably by physically changing location to get an effective distancing from the previous two stages. Their purpose is to help avoid problems by taking different perspectives and finding missing links by logically considering ‘what would happen if’ problems occur.

In order to be constructive, the group members can first acknowledge which criteria have been met, and formulate their criticisms into questions as much as possible such as:

Does this plan match the criteria and purpose for which it was intended?



Why might someone object to this new idea?

Who will this new idea affect and who will make or break the effectiveness of the idea and what are their needs and payoffs?

What positive things are derived from the current way(s) of doing things?

How can those things be kept when you implement the new plan or idea?

When and where would you not want to implement this new idea?

So the next time a new idea is begging to be manifested, remember to get into the Disney Creative Strategy of cycling from the Dreamer, the Realist and the Critic until the successive approximations of the plan is congruent with the outcome you desire to achieve. Sow the seeds of your desired outcome on prepared and fertilized soil. Allow them to germinate, grow and blossom. Weed and prune as necessary to help them thrive.

Trust now that you have what it takes to creatively implement new ideas and plans. So the next time you or your team come up with a new idea or problem, consider it an exciting new opportunity to further develop your Creative Intelligence.

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Transformational Leadership Challenge™ (TLC):

Unleashing your children's potential through you

The overall outcome of the TLC (Transformational Leadership Challenge) for actualizing parents is a simple one. This workshop (endearingly dubbed “*The Greatest Challenge on Earth*”) treats parents as leaders not only in their family, but more so as a leader in their own lives. By setting the example as a role model for the rest of the family, they become aware of how they can lead the best lives for themselves and hence be a credible mentor, effective manager, coach and leader of their families. For instance, a parent can sometimes call upon their child(ren) to do their utmost best in life to achieve their highest potential in their chosen contexts – eg. career, family, health, physical, intellectual, emotional, or spiritual. In the process, the

parent may place most of their family resources in the endeavour. However, the parent themselves short change themselves on opportunities to personally develop themselves. For instance, the parent may not pursue their own love of a talent or a gift – and hence, do not maximize the potential themselves. They do not walk their talk, so to speak. As we know, children are by far the best role modelers. As is commonly said: “Monkey see monkey do!” So what message are we truly conveying to our children when we do not “go for gold” ourselves – at the expense of letting the children savour all the opportunities? TLC truly brings that home. Live your dreams and values, and your children will follow suit – with unsolicited respect.

Respect is not automatically deserving just because you are a parent these days. That more traditional Confucian ethic is not alive and well! Respect is earned. You show children respect, and it is more likely to be reciprocated. One way to show respect is to be consistent with word and deed. In the “old days” – the boundaries were clear about what is expected of parent roles, and that of the kids. It tended to be set by social norms. Behaviour considered as “right” was more black and white then. Today, it seems it runs mostly into the grey area. Hence, each family has to clearly define what their values, goals and boundaries are, and to run their unit accordingly. There is no hard and fast rules.

As leaders of corporate organizations spend time and money planning their goals, vision, values and purpose so everybody within it understands the culture and expectations. Do we as leaders of our family unit do the same? Have we even thought about what it is we are about? What are our individual dreams? Are all members aligned in values? Do we have useful methods to communicate amongst each other about how we envision our family unit striving synergistically towards individual goals whilst respecting each other’s values? Can we all contribute towards each other’s goals whilst satisfying each other’s needs? What are our beliefs about our children – do these hold them back or drive them forward? The TLC program strives

to constructively take these issues and put them into realistic Life Plans for individuals whilst being aligned to a greater Family Vision.

Review of NLP, NS as models that drive TLC

Neuro Linguistic Programming (or NLP for short) and Neuro Semantics (or NS for short) describe programs by which we naturally (and mostly unconsciously) run our brains by default – out of habitual use of those patterns. Many of these patterns serve us – and we take them for granted. The awareness will allow the parents participating to utilize these patterns more consciously and consistently. Some of these patterns however may not always be useful. The TLC parenting workshop instils processes that will create awareness of these patterns in ourselves and provide an opportunity for the parents to discover new ways to replace or override these unresourceful patterns whenever we choose to obtain new results. For example, there may be an emotional outburst from the parent every time a teenager comes home later than expected from an evening excursion leading to further shutting down of already poor communications between parent and child. It may be useful to attempt to generate a new response to that trigger. NLP and NS can provide a variety of ways to override the habitual pattern above with a new one that may get a more appropriate result.

Another example: a parent may have a belief that there is a need to shelter their child(ren) from the world for there are too many hazards out there. The more protective they are, the paradox is – they are preventing the child(ren) from learning life skills that continue to hamper their independence and self-sufficiency. NLP and NS can intervene through one of their many belief change patterns to give the concerned parent new choices of how to protect the child from the dangers of our world by giving the children opportunities to learn self-initiated life skills of managing when their parents are not there.

The TLC program offers opportunities for individuals in each family to maximize satisfaction of each other's needs through awareness of the issues that drive each of

us. Another outcome of the program is to create a Family Vision that continually develops over time through a mutual understanding of the ever-changing boundaries that affect each family unit. Hence, it is a program by which you can truly unleash your children's potential through you.

About the Author: **Dr Yvonne Sum** is a pioneer in Parent Leadership coaching. She is on a quest to co-create joyful learning partnerships between parents and children to simultaneously bring out each other's authentic best. She inspires parents to learn from our children mirroring to us what we most need to learn about ourselves and vice-versa. Through her series of **Transformational Leadership Challenge™ (TLC)** programs, Dr Sum is committed to transform leaders of tomorrow today by highlighting family values and celebrating parents as role models and heroes in life who proactively unleash our children's potential through self actualization, intentional living and powerful leadership centred on love and high purpose. She expresses this passion to bring out our authentic best through her roles as an international speaker, writer, transformational corporate facilitator, executive and parent Meta-Coach, Neuro Linguistic Programming trainer, business woman, wife and mother. Please visit www.dryvonesum.com for more information.