

CREATIVITY Under the Gun Accelerating INNOVATION

by Anthony J. Le Storti

This article is based on the keynote address given by Anthony Le Storti at the 2004 ACA Conference.

generate
creativity
accomplish
even the
impossible

Forms of Creative Thinking

With regard to time pressure, creativity can take two forms. Sometimes, creativity can be *planned* under moderate to low time pressure. On the other hand, under great time pressure, creativity often takes the form of *naturalistic decision making*, an on-the-spot decision to do whatever can be quickly, but effectively, accomplished. An example of the former was the case in the rescue by U.S. Army Rangers of 511 Allied prisoners of war in the Philippines in 1945. The wide-open area that surrounded the camp where the POWs were being held provided a special danger. In order to creep in close enough to fully take advantage of surprise, the Rangers utilized a planned diversion in the form of an Air Force plane that crazily buzzed the camp at low altitude distracting the guards. An example of the latter took place in the 1983 rescue mission by U.S. Army paratroopers of American and international citizens caught in the military upheaval on the Caribbean island of Grenada. Under heavy fire, without normal fire support and unable to connect with nearby Navy ships and planes, the paratroopers thought to use commercial calling cards and the local phone system to connect with their base in the United States. Communication from there brought the Navy's firepower to bear on the heavy resistance facing the paratroopers. In both of these rescue efforts, cre-

ative thinking made a crucial difference that contributed to their final success.

High-Stakes Teams

The above are two examples of high-stakes teams that are asked to take on the toughest, sometimes seemingly impossible, challenges. Generally speaking, these teams work on ill-defined problems that require substantial creativity in a limited time frame. The value of their work is high; so is the risk involved. These teams, which include emergency response task forces, hospital trauma staffs, firefighters and high-intensity new product development teams, must generate creativity literally or figuratively "under the gun." Here we will look at lessons from such teams that can serve to help us to accelerate the creativity and innovation process.

Forming the Team

The first thing that has to happen is the careful selection of team members. It is crucial to compose a team with a view to four clusters of skills and traits. The first of these is *domain skills*. Primarily, these are the skills required for the jobs involved, but they also include the niche skills and experiences that would add diversity to the team's repertoire. This is important because we cannot know in advance what

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FOCUS is Going Electronic

Beginning with the September/October issue, **FOCUS** will be provided in electronic form and will be sent to members via email. The quality and scope of **FOCUS** will not change. It will simply be delivered to your computer rather than your mailbox. Over the summer, we will be contacting members by email to verify that we have their current email address. If your email address is not on file or if you think we do not have your current email address, please send it to ACAcmdir@aol.com. For those members who, for whatever reason, would prefer to continue to receive **FOCUS** in printed form, please make that preference known by emailing a message to ACAcmdir@aol.com or by telephoning 888.837.1409. You do not have to notify us if you prefer the electronic version. It will automatically be sent to you beginning with the September/October issue.

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President

Tara G. Coste, University of So Maine, Lewiston, ME
tcoste@usm.maine.edu • 207.642.6864

President-elect, Treasurer

Darlene Boyd, University of California Irvine, Irvine, CA
dboyd@uci.edu • 949.824.8927

Secretary

Rosita Brennan, Brennan Associates, Abington, PA
hrhrosita@aol.com • 215.657.4916

Director of Public Relations

Russ Barnes, Director of Public Affairs, Bethesda, MD
rbarnes7@earthlink.net • 301.564.3741

Director of Education Program Development

Larry Busch, Southern Illinois Univ at Carbondale, Carbondale, IL
buschwl@aol.com • 618.453.7598

Director of Arts Program Development

Paul G. Caron, University of So Maine, Lewiston, ME
caron@usm.maine.edu • 207.753.6549

Director of Training Program Development

Marilyn Schoeman Dow,* ThinkLink, Seattle, WA
gogreenlight@mac.com • 206.200.7212

Director of Publications

Anthony J. Le Storti, IDEATECTS, Inc., Doylestown, PA
ajls@ideatects.com • 215.348.3720

Director of Marketing

Jamie O'Boyle, Cultural Studies & Analysis, Philadelphia, PA
cultureking@compuserve.com • 215.413.9041

Director of Industry Program Development

Gene Quidort, The eni Institute, Vestal, NY
gquidort@eniweb.com • 607.754.1048

Director of Student Membership Program Development

Fredricka Reisman, Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA
freddie@drexel.edu • 215.895.6770

Director of Corporate Relations

Daniel D. Reuster, Outland Research, Hoboken, NJ
reuster@rrinyc.org • 917.572.9487

Director of Corporate Partnerships

Dean Schroeder, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN
dean.schroeder@valpo.edu • 219.464.5177

Director of International Connections

Kirpal Singh, Singapore Management University, Singapore
kirpals@smu.edu.sg • 65-68220207

Director of Technology Program Development

Mary Wallgren, James Hardie Building Products, Fontana, CA
wallgrenmk@aol.com • 909.356.6349

Director of Regional Chapter Development

William Wurtz Jr.,* Coaching for Creativity, College Station, TX
william.wurtz@tam.u.edu • 979.696.2091

Winston Brill, founder and CEO of Winston Brill Group, named one of *Business Week's* most innovative researchers

Daniel Burrus, President, Burrus Research Associates, Inc. & author, *Technotrends*

J. Michael Dady, Dady & Garner, P.A., nationally recognized franchisee trial lawyer

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Art Fry, former corporate scientist at 3M, innovator of Post-it® Notes

Doug Hall, founder and CEO of Eureka! Ranch & author of *Jump Start Your Business Brain*

Ann Herrmann-Nehdi, CEO, Herrmann International, leading expert on whole brain technology

David Horth, Senior Faculty, Center for Creative Leadership

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Michael Michalko, creativity expert & author of *Thinkertoys: A Handbook of Business Creativity*

Mary Murdock, Assoc. Prof., International Center for Studies in Creativity

William R. Nash, Prof. of Ed. Psychology, Texas A&M University, Chair of ACA Charter Board

Kobus Neethling of South Africa has published 70 books & produced four hit TV series including *Creativity*

Sidney J. Parnes, Prof. Emeritus of Creative Studies, Buffalo State College

Gifford Pinchot III, Author, *Intrapreneuring & The Intelligent Organization*

Anne Durram Robinson, Consultant, Creativity, Communication and Common Sense

Dorothy A. Sisk,* Director, Center for Creativity, Innovation & Leadership, Lamar University

Morris I. Stein, Professor Emeritus in Psychology, New York University

David Tanner,* Former Director, DuPont Center for Creativity & Innovation

Bob Thaves, Syndicated Cartoonist, *Frank & Ernest*

Jack P. Varsalona, Executive Vice Pres. & Provost, Wilmington College

* Former ACA president



President's Column

by Tara G. Coste

CREATIVITY ONLINE

As we look to the future from our 2004 annual gathering in Houston, many exciting projects are in the works. Much of this emphasis will be on enhancing value for our membership via the online resources we offer on our website—www.amcreativityassoc.org . . .

Publications

- Our Communications Director, Ann Anderson, will soon be converting the **FOCUS** to an online format, and articles from both current and past issues will be available on the ACA website.
- Gene Quidort, ACA's Director of Industry Program Development, is developing a listing of top picks for books in the field of creativity along with book reviews and information on how to purchase these publications.
- Thanks to the efforts of ACA's publications team, we are now offering a number of books in electronic format—available on a special members-only page.

Tools and Techniques

- Our Director of Education Program Development, Larry Busch, is developing a new section of hands-on projects and other tools for educators to use to enhance creativity in their classrooms.
- ACA's Conference Committee is collecting a selection of materials from ACA conference sessions to post online.

Special Interest Groups

- Reflecting the ongoing efforts of our Directors of International Connections, Robert Alan Black and Kirpal Singh, we are updating and expanding our international information pages.

- Freddie Reisman, Director of Student Program Development; Alan James, Director of Student Chapter Development; and a number of our graduate student members are working on the introduction of a special section on the website dedicated as a resource area for graduate and undergraduate students interested in creativity.

The Latest News

- ACA's web team will continue to build our virtual exhibit hall that annually details the creativity conferences and other events held around the world.
- Our Director of Public Relations, Russ Barnes, and Director of Marketing, Jamie O'Boyle, will be contributing to a new section of the website—*Creative Spotlight On...*—that profiles ACA award winners and will be developing a new page that celebrates other notable creative efforts.
- ACA's 2005 Local Conference Committee Chair, Barry Silverberg, has launched an ACA list serve so that we can facilitate our networking with ACA members.

Thanks to all who are working on these initiatives and to all who offered ideas for how ACA can serve you even better in the future. We hope you keep those suggestions coming!

Focus is published by American Creativity Association™...promoting a creative society

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Executive Director

Lynne Krause ACaexdir@aol.com • 888.837.1409

Director of Communications & Editor of FOCUS

Ann Anderson ACAcomdir@aol.com • 502.254.5746

Director of International Connections

Alan Black alan@cre8ng.com • 706.353.3387

Director of Technology

Chris Randolph randolph_19147@yahoo.com

Legal Counsel

J. Michael Dady Dady & Garner, P.A.

—staff—

All materials and advertising should be sent to the **FOCUS** editor: **Ann Anderson**

14404 Brook Forest Place

Louisville, KY 40245

Phone/Fax: 502.254.5746 • Email: ACAcomdir@aol.com

Publication deadline for the FOCUS is two months preceding the issue.

Example: May/June issue copy deadline is March 1

All address changes should be sent to the national office:

ACA, P.O. Box 5856, Philadelphia, PA 19128

Fax: 888.837.1409 • Email: ACAinformation@aol.com

2005 ACA Election board of directors

William "Bud" Wurtz, chair
of the Elections Committee,
requests nominees for
the ACA Board of Directors
from our ACA membership.

due by
August 26, 2004

mail to: ACA Elections
PO Box 5856
Philadelphia, PA 19128
fax to: 888.837.1409
email to: ACAexdir@aol.com

Creativity Under the Gun...continued from page 1

these teams will face, and diversity is a great source of strength when facing uncertainty. In addition to domain skills, team members must possess powerful *process skills*. These are largely thinking skills: good creative problem solving complemented by strong critical thinking ability in terms of decision making, planning and so forth. As our focus is the formation of teams, we need also to look for individuals with strong *interpersonal skills*. These teams require individuals who are emotionally intelligent, who take direction well, and who can be expected to take on leadership roles as required. Finally, individuals who face tough challenges must be unusually high in motivation. It is important to note that there are two kinds of motivation, and we generally have both at the same time. *Intrinsic motivation* occurs when the work itself has great value for us. *Extrinsic motivation* moves us to do—the same—work, but our focus is on things outside of the work itself, e.g., a possible promotion or pay raise. The research is clear: if we want high levels of creativity, we want people who have intrinsic motivation as their dominant motivation.

Having formed a team, we need a leader. We could choose a *creative leader*,

INFORMATION on applying to be a candidate for a
January 2005-December 2006 two-year board term . . .

Board expectations:

- participate in monthly board of directors conference calls
- attend annual ACA conference
- recruit new members to the association
- contribute articles to **FOCUS** and/or encourage others to contribute
- be actively involved in association initiatives

Two ways to nominate:

1. Nominate a colleague/friend by mailing, faxing, or e-mailing the ACA office with name and contact information.
2. Nominate yourself by sending the information requested.

To be considered as a candidate for the board of directors, please send the following:

- a letter stating your willingness to be considered as a candidate
- brief background information to be used in the ballot for selected candidates (100 words or less)
- the talents and expertise that you are willing to share to make ACA a stronger organization

Excerpts from ACA Bylaws . . .

Candidates for the ACA Board of Directors will be elected by the membership in the fall/winter to serve a two-year term. Members of the board oversee the organization, set policy, and give necessary direction to ensure that recommendations from committees and member input are carried out. The board meets annually at the conference. There is no compensation for the members of the board of directors.

someone who is personally very productive in generating potential solutions. We could, however, choose a *leader of creativity*. Such a person would generate ideas as an individual, but their primary focus would be on encouraging and supporting the creativity of all team members. If higher levels of creativity are required, the latter may be the preferable type of leader.

Leaders, however, must also be people of character. Character is itself a cluster of traits. It includes confidence, not in the form of bravado, but confidence born from being tested and having learned how to succeed. Persistence is a key trait for creative people. Courage is required; there will be risks, including career risks, involved in high-stakes situations. An orientation to excellence, a willingness to go beyond what others would expect, is also important. Self-discipline is needed. When the going gets tough, these leaders need to be self-possessed; they need to keep themselves under control and help others to stay in control. Finally, integrity brings all these traits together.

Beyond the character cluster, we need leaders who are committed. First, they must be committed to the mission and vision of the organization. They must also

be committed to uplifting organizational and team values. To sustain themselves during tough times, teams require strong values, and leaders must be the best examples of those values. If a leader's credibility is shaky, the team will be in considerable danger of failing in its mission. Finally, the leader must be committed to the team. She/he must be an advocate, a protector, a facilitator and an enabler of the team.

Learning and Shared Processes

There has always been a great symbiotic relationship between creativity and learning. But in the challenging circumstances of high-stakes teams, there is an extraordinary need for an abundant, free flow of up-to-the-minute information. With new product development teams, for example, hours or days may make a difference; with emergency response teams, it may be down to a matter of minutes. In response to this need, some teams have enjoyed having information specialists as dedicated full-time members. Other teams have been given priority access to information services. In any case, to accelerate innovation, critical information must be available when it is needed.

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High-stakes teams also benefit from having clear, shared processes for their operations. Through good standard operating procedures, they can institutionalize the best practices available. With shared models for creative problem solving and critical decision-making, teams can streamline their thinking. When everyone understands not only what must be done, but also how and why it can best be accomplished, they can lessen their cognitive load and put their minds on what is most important.

Preparing the Team

To build and prepare teams with these characteristics takes considerable time and preparation. Initially, the competencies required will have to be established and refined. But there is an important point here: the competencies to be developed must be those of the future, not the present. Leaders need to ask, what skills will my team(s) need two (or five) years from now? And then they must provide the professional development to establish those competencies. Also, team building must begin as soon as possible. For a new product development team, that may mean well before the first work session. For more virtual or just-in-time teams such as emergency management teams that come together at the time of a crisis, team members should get together frequently and considerably in advance of any emergency in order to rehearse operations and to get to know one another. For individuals who form the pool of prospective team members and who may be called together sometime in the future to form special task forces, a good foundational program fo-

cused on team building and constructive team behaviors would be very appropriate.

In addition to confidence in their own skills, teams need to know that they have the trust of the upper management teams that provided their mandate. High-stakes teams need to be creative under great pressure; they need to make timely decisions on the spot. Therefore, the trust of the next higher level is crucially important. As an example of such trust, we may consider Nordstrom, the upscale department store chain. Although known for its world-class customer service, Nordstrom's "policy manual" consists of one page; and the key directive on that page is, "Always use your best judgment." That level of trust, combined with good hiring procedures and training, translates into world renown for quality of service.

We can see, then, that preparation of high-stakes teams demands visionary leadership. Higher-level leaders must look well into the future to project needs and then must invest the resources required to develop highly competent team members and team leaders. And when the time comes, those higher-level leaders must give their special teams clear, worthy challenges and tactical freedom. The edge of chaos is fertile ground for creativity. When highly competent, well prepared, well-led teams are challenged beyond normal expectations, and when they are shown trust and given great latitude as to how to operate, we can expect them to dig deeper into themselves, to generate creativity under the gun, and to accomplish even the impossible.



Anthony J. Le Storti is executive consultant for IDEATECTS Inc., a firm specializing in creativity, leadership, and the dynamics of human systems. He is on the board of directors for the American Creativity Association.

ACA SALUTES Creativity

ACA is pleased to announce the award recipients honored at the April 2004 Conference in Houston. On Thursday, Friday and Saturday awards were presented and an awards reception was held on Saturday evening. Bud Wurtz, past-president of ACA was the emcee for these events.

2004 Award's Committee:
Fredricka Reisman, Darlene Boyd, and
Marilyn Schoeman Dow

**We are privileged to recognize these outstanding contributors
to the field of applied creativity.**

Introduced by Tara Coste, University of Southern Maine and ACA president

ACA Creativity Hall of Fame

The Creativity Hall of Fame recognizes people who have substantially contributed to and enhanced the field of creativity. Joyce Juntune, Director of Educational Partnerships, Institute for Applied Creativity shared some opening remarks. The Hall of Fame will be housed at the new Institute for Applied Creativity on the campus of Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

Inductee E. Paul Torrance (awarded posthumously)

Accepted by Dr. Bonnie Cramond, Interim Director of the Torrance Center, University of Georgia
Dr. E. Paul Torrance was Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Educational Psychology at the University of Georgia. He devoted his career to research of creativity and produced many professional articles, books, and tests. He is world-renowned for his work in assessing and enhancing creativeness. He championed ACA from the outset and was dearly loved for his gentle and generous spirit and his remarkable mentoring of countless students of creativity of all ages and in many countries. His creative soul lives on in the work of thousands who grew through his contribution.

Introduced by Robert Alan Black, RAB, Inc.

Inductee Sidney J. Parnes

Dr. Sidney Parnes is Professor Emeritus of Creative Studies and Founding Director of the Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State University where he established the International Center for Studies in Creativity, initiated the first Master's Degree Program in Creative Studies, and served as President of the Creative Education Foundation. Dr. Parnes worked with Alex Osborn to develop the "Osborn-Parnes" process.

ACA Special Achievement Award

This award is presented to an individual who has made an outstanding creative contribution to the field of creativity or to society in the form of an invention, discovery, work or performance of art, research study, educational program, or special service to the community.

Introduced by Freddie Reisman, Director of the Drexel Torrance Center for Creative Studies, Drexel University

Awardee Martin E. Kenney, Jr.

As Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Kenney was instrumental in establishing WRC Media Inc. Dr. Kenney has held several executive positions at Simon & Schuster, including President of the company's Education Technology Group and Executive Vice President of its Education Group, President of Business, Training & Healthcare Group, and as Senior Vice President for Marketing. Mr. Kenney also launched two Internet-based businesses that provided a wide range of problem-solving methods, from simple idea-capture techniques to complex problem-solving methodologies. WRC Media Inc. provides supplementary educational materials through subsidiaries: Weekly Reader periodicals serving over 7 million school children, the World Almanac, CompassLearning, and American Guidance Service.

Introduced by Rolf Smith, The School for Innovators and ACA conference chair for 2004

Awardee John Lienhard

Dr. John Lienhard, professor of engineering and history at University of Houston, writes and hosts the series entitled *Engines of Our Ingenuity* on KUHF radio delivering 1,824 episodes since 1988. The series highlights creative inventions, processes, and events and tells the story of how our culture has been formed by human creativity from cable cars to Civil War submarines, from the connection between Romantic poets and Victorian science to the invention of the bar code using history to reveal the way art, technology, and ideas have shaped us.

Introduced by Marilyn Schoeman Dow, ThinkLink and past-president of ACA

Awardee Pixar Animation Studios

Randy Nelson, Dean of the Pixar University, accepted for Pixar Animation Studios which combines creative and technical artistry to create original stories in the medium of computer animation including the Academy Award winning *Toy Story*, *A Bug's Life*, *Toy Story 2*, *Monsters, Inc.*, and *Finding Nemo*. This year, *Finding Nemo* earned an Academy Award as the year's best animated film. Since its incorporation, Pixar has been responsible for many important breakthroughs in the application of computer graphics to filmmaking. Pixar's talented creative teams have collaborated to develop three core proprietary software systems: Mari- onette, an animation software system for modeling, animating, and lighting; Ringmaster, a production management system; and Render Man II, a software system for high quality, photorealistic image synthesis.

ACA David Tanner Champion of Creativity Award

This award is presented to an individual who has been an outstanding proponent of creativity and has put forth extraordinary effort in the service of creativity and innovations as evidenced by his or her vigorous advocacy for the development and support of programs or environments that support and encourage creativity and/or courage and persistence as an advocate or sponsor of a valuable concept, service, or product.

Introduced by William R. Nash, Professor of Educational Psychology, Texas A&M University and ACA founding board chair.

Awardee Marilyn Schoeman Dow

Marilyn Schoeman Dow creates products to foster creativity and promotes innovation internationally through her speaking, writing, and consulting. She heads ThinkLink in Seattle, Washington, is an ACA past-president and has been honored for her work with gifted children. Her most recent products include *BOFF-O!*® (*Brain On Fast Forward*) problem solving card deck/game. Her system, *Green Light*®: How to Think, Speak, and ACT to Make the Best of Every Situation embodies the fostering of creativity.

E. Paul Torrance Student Scholarship Award

The E. Paul Torrance Student Scholarship Award honors Dr. Torrance's lifetime commitment to supporting graduate student studies. This new award recognizes a graduate student whose study shows promise that he or she will become a leader in the field of applied creativity.

Awardees introduced by Moe Stein, Professor Emeritus in Psychology, New York University

Awardee Denise Tabasco

Denise Tabasco is the first to investigate the relationship between Teacher Immediacy (degree of perceived physical and/or psychological closeness between people) and Teacher Creativity as assessed by the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking, and its impact on high school students' mathematics and/or science achievement. Denise teaches high school mathematics in New Jersey and is pursuing a Ph.D.

Awardee Louise Whitelaw

Louise Whitelaw is investigating the impact of teachers using a "heuristic diagnostic pedagogy" as a function of their creativity and knowledge of generic (core) influences on learning on elementary grade students' achievement. Louise is a 4th grade teacher in Pennsylvania and is pursuing a Ph.D.

ACA Special Service Award

The ACA Special Service Award is presented to an individual who has given generously of their time, energy, or resources in support of the mission and values of the American Creativity Association.

Introduced by David Tanner, founding director, DuPont Center for Creativity and Innovation and past-president of ACA

Awardee Lorraine Le Storti

Lorraine Le Storti has shared her remarkable and wide-ranging artistic talents with ACA for many years. A professional graphic artist with IDEATECTS, Inc., she has created numerous logos and other graphic designs for ACA. She has also done notable work on the design and handling of the ACA awards. We honor Lorraine for generously volunteering countless hours of her time and sharing her highly creative spirit with ACA in so many ways.

Pixar Animates Creativity in People and Products

by Marilyn Schoeman Dow

*Exemplifying creativity
in its culture, its people and
its products, it inhales and
infuses innovation and
invention across the board.
View their website and you
learn Pixar Animation Studios
combines creative and
technical artistry to create
original stories in the medium
of computer animation.*

You can learn a lot by noticing. A Yogi Berra viewpoint, it summarizes what happened along the way to honoring the creativity of Pixar Animation Studios. The American Creativity Association noticed *Finding Nemo*, an animated film delighting people of all ages and most attitudes. It voted to honor Pixar for Special Achievement, becoming the first corporation to receive an ACA award.

As the board member following up on the award nomination, over the course of several months I made numerous contacts with various departments. I was continually surprised and delighted by how pleasant, helpful and creative each person was. All calls and e-mails were responded to quickly and supported the ACA efforts directed to presenting the award to Pixar at the 2004 Houston Think Tank event.

Obviously, everyone was busy with their regular work and this was not on their to-do list, yet each graciously and efficiently assisted. I noticed how much they actually operated on the principle that they are a team and truly value each person's contribution. It's not a nicety written on a dusty and distant Values statement but a living, breathing way of operating—a core belief that drives the operation. Rather than saluting a few stars, the organization sees itself as an All-Star team.

Exemplifying creativity in its culture, its people and its products, it inhales and infuses innovation and invention across the board. View their website and you learn Pixar Animation Studios combines creative and technical artistry to create original stories in the medium of computer animation. Pixar created a number of the most successful and beloved animated films of all time: Academy Award winning *Toy Story*, *A Bug's Life*, *Toy Story 2*, *Monsters, Inc.* and *Finding Nemo*. This year, Oscar found Nemo; the Academy honored it as best animated film. It also ranks as the highest grossing one in history. Since its incorporation, Pixar has been responsible for many important breakthroughs in the application of computer graphics for filmmaking. The company has attracted some of the world's finest talent. Pixar's creative teams have collaborated to develop three core proprietary software systems: Marionette—an animation software system for modeling, animating and lighting; Ringmaster—a production management system; and Render Man II—a software system for high quality,

photorealistic image synthesis.

Several people I talked with about creativity in the organization spoke of Pixar University as one of their best employee benefits. Not only do they get to take a wide range of courses, even beyond filmmaking per se—they can take four hours of training every week—without an approval process! You can imagine my delight when Pixar designated Randy Nelson, Dean of Pixar University, to accept the award.

“We provide education and training for all of Pixar's employees. When you realize that your enterprise is people-centered, you quickly understand that their growth and maintenance are not optional and may in fact be strategic,” Randy stressed. “PU provides not only the specialized training you would expect a corporation to provide, but also broad education you might not: drawing, painting, sculpture, acting, improvisation, live-action filmmaking, and so on, offered to everyone in the Studio as a regular part of their job.

“Understanding that creative collaboration is critical in innovation, PU works to provide all of Pixar's employees with core literacy in art and film, developed in routine practical experiences with their co-workers. The growth of a broad range of communication skills is the goal of the program. If you intend to listen to everyone in your enterprise, you must also commit to help them grow their insight, experience and ability to communicate.

“In its simplest form, PU helps the filmmakers of Pixar approach the dizzying problem of how to do art as a team sport.” The goal Randy gave seems worth emulating. Whatever your group's project, viewing it as a team sport should shift some attitudes in a very positive, fun, appealing and productive direction.

With his light-hearted manner of conveying rock-solid people principles, Randy emphasized that hierarchy can serve an important role in an organization but that it must not be a communication inhibitor. Communication should be person to person, not position to



*Imagine finding Nemo
principles animating
your organization!*

Marilyn Schoeman Dow, ThinkLink,
is a creative strategist and international
speaker. She is on the board of directors
for the American Creativity Association
and past-president.

position. Also, in highlighting the need for everyone to be part of a team with the same, singular mission, he indicated how that works at Pixar.

An employee, asked what their role at the company is, might respond with, "I'm a filmmaker and I work in the kitchen," or "I'm a filmmaker and I provide custodial help." The key point is everyone knows the company's business is filmmaking—AND that each person supports that business—in whatever capacity they currently fill. Talk about focus! This approach supports it profoundly. It also helps unify efforts and causes people to coalesce into a single dynamic unit. They aim at a common, clearly understood and highly desired goal, as essential parts in the jigsaw puzzles of Pixar productions.

In reading Randy's background, I learned he has a Bachelor's degree in Fine Art from the University of Santa Clara. As a teenager, a passion for animation led him to computer programming. He has taught software development for the last 30 years.

Randy was one of the founders of the juggling group the Flying Karamazov Brothers, and worked in live theater, film and television for more than a decade. His credits include co-writer, co-director and performer of three Broadway shows, performances in the White House and for the President at the Kennedy Center, a role in the feature film *Jewel of the Nile*, and the opportunity to represent the United States at two Olympic Arts

Festivals.

Randy worked as a computer animator and producer for Pizza Time Theater, led developer training for NeXT Computer, created the developer program for the Apple and IBM multimedia joint venture Kaleida Labs, published the entry-level training book on Java at Sun, and was a senior instructional designer for Apple Computer. He uses his art, film, theater, animation, software, training and juggling experience daily as the Dean of Pixar University.

He provided an extra treat/demonstration of those widely varied yet connected skill areas as he led a presentation in "air juggling," inserting management mandates into the imaginative actions.

In conversations and actions, Randy consistently demonstrated a key underlying principle that guides his work and Pixar Animation

Points from Pixar University's Dean

- Education is lubrication.
- Honor failure as part of the process.
- Error recovery is a crucial skill.
- Practice the art of "plussing"—rather than criticizing an idea, improve it.

Studios: *Amplify humanity.* How might your life, your organization, your community—and society—change by applying that goal?! Notice—create—opportunities to put this and others into practice. Imagine finding Nemo principles animating your organization!

Think Tank 2004: Recreating Creativity



was truly a memorable experience that stimulated creativity and networking with participants from throughout the U.S. and nine countries.

Kudos to the Houston Local Committee which planned and hosted this conference. A **SPECIAL** thanks to Rolf Smith, chair of the committee and his colleague Durwin Sharp.

THANKS to 2004 conference sponsors, partners, and patrons



ACA mission

The American Creativity Association (ACA) is the national organization of professionals in the field of creativity. Through its programs and services, it offers individuals and organizations opportunities for learning, professional development and networking. It is dedicated to enhancing the use of creativity throughout our society for the betterment of the human condition.

ACA vision

ACA is the virtual academy that leaders and professionals in the field of creativity turn to as the primary source of ideas and information dealing with creativity and where initiates to the field can begin their journey of discovery. To achieve its vision, the ACA provides: 1) forums to present, test and exchange ideas; 2) opportunities for networking and fellowship; 3) clearing-house services for information on the state of the art in creativity research and practice; and 4) means to link theorists and practitioners.

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