



Forum Report: The Fourth Annual InThinking Network Forum

Canoga Park California, April 7-10

In Thinking Network Primer

The ambitions of the In Thinking Network are to promote study and awareness of individual and collective thinking about sub-systems, psychology, variation, knowledge, and their interactions - elements recognized as the basis of Dr. W. Edwards Deming's "System of Profound Knowledge" (SoPK).

The concept of "InThinking" derives from "thinking about thinking", where thinking is defined as "a way of reasoning." InThinking invites an individual to learn to perceive the patterns of interdependencies surrounding him or her and to reason and judge with this insight.

2005 Forum- Daring to Lead, Influencing Better Thinking for a Better Future

The forum was essentially a two-part conference. The first part, two days of pre-conference workshops were held at the Boeing Rocketdyne facility in Canoga Park, CA. The second part was held at the Woodland Hills Hilton and included 4 keynote speakers and 6 triple-track presentations. The pre-conference workshops, 15 3-hour sessions were open to Boeing employees, Boeing customers & suppliers as well as Boeing family members, students and others actively involved in work with their communities.

Read on for 3 workshop highlights followed by a few words on the keynote speakers. For more information on the In2 network go to <http://www.in2in.org/>. The organization puts out an excellent newsletter, which can be subscribed to via the website.

Workshop 1

Thursday April 7th, was devoted to Jon Bergstrom's 3-part, 8-hour workshop on Building the Capacity to Act: Practical Ways to Influence Organizations. The workshop focused on decision making, process improvement, managing transformation and personal mastery. We did exercises in preparing for decision making, separating the process of learning/information gathering prior to making a decision and the deliberate process of making a decision. Jon led a discussion and activity on the "Thinking Spiral", the 3 distinct brainwave activities that are engaged with different types of thinking characteristics.

Workshop 1 cont.

We moved on to a discussion of the application of 8 decision making models: total consensus, support consensus, majority plus, sub-team proxy, leader, subject matter expert(s), most affected and criteria matrix. We examined the tools of process improvement from a project and people management perspective. Does the organization you are engaged with have learning goals? What is the current thinking in your organization regarding the use and application of learning goals and processes?

During our discussion of managing transformation Jon delved into many themes including cultural concepts and realities, models for transformative change and the principles for creating psychological safety to insure success of change. Those key tenets, from Edgar Schein's book, *The Corporate Culture*, are worth listing:

1. A compelling positive vision
2. Formal training
3. Involvement of the learner
4. Informal training of relevant "family" groups teams
5. Practice fields, coaches and feedback
6. Positive role models
7. Support groups
8. Consistent systems and structures

We continued this segment with an in depth discussion of the team planning process. At this point in the day, a resounding consensus was building within the group. We felt as a whole that our organizations have an awareness of these various tools and how to use them but often times are not using them to our full advantage. The last segment covered personal mastery. We discussed the learning challenge which was summed up nicely by this anonymous quote, "It is easier to get older than it is to get wiser." If we look back to the idea of creating psychological safety for ourselves as a pathway to continuous learning the steps are there for the taking.

Workshop 1 Reference:

Jon Bergstrom jbergstrom@bak.rr.com

Bergstrom Learning Centers <http://www.websweare.com/bergstrom/>

Workshop 2

On Friday April 8th Dr. Ed Chaplin's presentation, Understanding the Human Brain, its Generative Capacities, its Limitations and Sources of Human Error, was a fascinating workshop. We participated in several experiments to support Dr. Chaplin's assertion that many of our organizational problems are derived from our common sense misconceptions about how our brains function and how they *actually function*. According to Dr. Chaplin, about 85% of the information the brain receives is through sight. He then showed us many examples of the how fallible that 85% can be. How the world appears to the eye and the beliefs that are generated limit our strategic capabilities. What we see and how we process that information is the rub. For instance, the belief in a flat earth; that belief was sustained because that is what we could see. He argued that the conceptual knowledge for almost all we want to accomplish already exists, however we humans tend to create many of our problems. One example he gave was the efforts of engineers designing a machine. Consideration is given to capacity, design, strength, tolerances, of its components. Yet in designing processes laden with people, the tolerances and limitations of the system's most important components - the humans who carry out its practices - are rarely evaluated rigorously.

Workshop 2 Reference

Ed Chaplin, M.D. echaplin@san.rr.com
<http://www.in2in.org/forums/index.html>

Workshop 3

Saturday April 9th, Mary Jenkins' Journey to the Center of Your People Systems was a dissection of the purpose and usefulness of performance appraisals. Ms. Jenkins proposed that performance appraisals that companies use have universal structures that make their effectiveness dismal. At the start of the session we did a survey ranking our individual performance in our current jobs. Our results roughly matched a much larger survey that concluded: 80% or people see themselves in the top quarter of all performers, 98% see themselves in the top half of all performers-- 59% disagree with any rating less than the highest possible rating for any category. This is why any time an organization rates people, a substantial percentage will always leave the process demoralized. A

Workshop 3 cont.

Society of Human Resources Management survey found that 90% of appraisal systems are **not** successful. Mary covered 11 universal structures of performance appraisals and why they do not work. (A few of which I emphasize below).

Performance appraisals are multi-purpose; they try to accomplish several functions simultaneously. Mary advocates separate strategies to tackle functions of coaching, feedback, development and fair pay. Everyone uses the same form and process; when individual tailoring would be better served to address variation in jobs, job codes, skill codes, etc. Supervisors drive the process; the formal leader largely initiates controls and brings closure to the process. Employees, to the extent practical, should initiate, control and bring closure to the process. Evaluate individual performance & tie pay to individual performance; the rating or ranking of each person's performance distinguishing excellent, good, satisfactory & poor. Instead assess individuals solely for essential functions and abandon illusion of accurate individual performance measurement. Grant increases based on market, growth in job, career ladder movement and competitive promotion.

Workshop 3 Reference

Mary Jenkins mgjenkins1@comcast.net
<http://www.in2in.org/forums/index.html>

Speaker Highlights

The conference had several strong keynote speakers starting with Karen Ayas on Friday evening. Ms. Ayas' theme was Daring to Lead with Authenticity and Finding Meaning at Work. Karen is a founding partner of the Ripples Group, a management consulting practice specializing in growth strategies and change management. Her talk centered on work she is doing with large management teams. She shared stories of taking management groups to far flung places around the globe for short but intense transformation activities. This year she took a group to Sri Lanka. The challenge she finds is how to affect change in a short but intense immersion program and to continue the change and growth once returned back to the office.

Speaker Highlights cont.

Saturday morning we heard from a former Whitehouse staffer for Bill Clinton and President Bush, Gerald Suarez. Mr. Suarez discussed, Leading and Learning in the Age of Systems.

From 1993 to 1998, Gerald directed the first Presidential Quality Management Office in the history of the White House Communications Agency. He spoke of the rapid change we are all experiencing and the struggles we have to meet and overcome at every level, even at the Whitehouse.

Saturday evening we were treated to an entertaining and participative musical event hosted by “On Ensemble”, a three person Taiko drumming group. Their set included pieces of traditional Taiko, modern fusion of Taiko and other popular musical genre and a group participation piece.

Sunday morning the closing speaker was our own Rick Stephen’s, Senior VP of Internal Services. Mr. Stephen’s talk was titled Daring to Lead with Systems Thinking. Rick focused on 4 points, 5 key questions and employing a systems perspective.

4 Points

- Create an environment where everyone feels part of the vision/direction
- Find the best people, rely on them and take care of them
- Ensure robust management systems are in place
- Provide resources and help balance shortfalls

5 Key Questions recognize these?

- Who is my customer?
- What are their expectations?
- How do they measure success?
- How are we doing against those measurements?
- What are we doing to improve?

Speaker Highlights cont.

Employ a Systems Perspective

How often do we make decisions without determining the affect on the entire system? Rick used the McKinsey 7-S Model, showing the interconnectivity between a shared vision and structure, system, styles, skills, staff and strategy. He gave great examples of how we have made important and needed business decisions but did not correctly address how the decision would affect the system. Rick's presentation was followed by an excellent question and answer session.

Speaker References

Karen Ayas

<http://www.ripplesgroup.com/team.html>

Gerald Suarez

<http://www.gerald-suarez.com/>

Rick Stephen's presentation

<http://www.in2in.org/forums/index.html>

On Ensemble Taiko Drummers

<http://www.onensemble.org/>

End of Report

Compiled by

Mark N. Turner LT&D

mark.n.turner@boeing.com