



Creative Management

Tacit Knowledge and changing the management culture

Jane Henry.

Managers now are beginning to appreciate the importance of tacit knowledge, so they're looking for ways of incorporating this neglected aspect of our culture back into organisations. I'm wondering if you've got any suggestions as that might help them.

Guy Claxton.

The nature of the culture influences enormously the kinds of thinking which people are willing to do. So one of the most important things to do is to begin to create cultures and leadership is very important here both modelling and climate setting in business organisations, create cultures within which it's more okay to be tentative, to express that side of our thinking which is more hesitant which is more delicate, which requires a little bit of time.

Unfortunately in many corporate cultures there is this absurd idea that being decisive means being quick, and in fact slow is often used as a synonym for stupid. So to create a culture within which it's okay to take some time, to balance the necessity for a decision of course the that has to come, but to balance that with a more playful, a more relaxed a more gentle a more humorous way of thinking, is very valuable, but it's absolutely crucial to create a culture within which you're not pounced upon, you're not laughed at for being seen to be hesitant or to be taking your time to feel your way around a situation rather than jumping in with this silly notion that you know intelligence is decisive it's quick it's clear it's always like that.

Jane Henry.

But of course it would be very hard to allow space for that kind of dreamy thinking in a business meeting?

Guy Claxton.

Well would it. I mean we often try and run business meetings as we try and run the inside of our own minds as if there has to be somebody in control someone pulling the strings and someone managing the whole thing, and yet again there's evidence I mean there are some interesting experiments which were carried out by the late David Bome a great physicist on developing a process that he referred to as dialogue, which is precisely the creation of a collected group of minds or brains we might say, who are taking themselves as a group into

this more dare I say meditative or reflective frame of mind and one of the essential ingredients for that is that one doesn't respond immediately to what another person has said.

Neither from a chairpersons point of view nor from you know jumping in quick, someone says something and you cultivate a sense of pausing or allowing, allowing something to sink in, allowing yourself to take your time, just creating those little pauses can shift enormously the mood of a meeting from one which is everybody trying to get their two pennyworth in, to one where there is a genuine sense of corporate exploration, of people actually taking an idea seriously and taking time to chew over what each other has said and the quality of such a discussion is absolutely different, and frequently much more creative.

This tortoise brain mind it's very it can actually be quite scary or quite threatening for them to feel that they're releasing the sense of control they're so invested in the idea that they are the thinker they are the controller, that giving that up can really feel quite scary and it takes a little bit of practise little bit of courage to allow your mind to as it were go walkabout on its own.

Now that's not dissimilar from the notions in complexity that the situations out there themselves are changing so fast or are so subtle or are so intricate that actually it is in principle impossible to manage them in the old fashioned sense of create a plan and retain control.

So there's a nice mirroring between the kinds of understandings which are emerging from physical and biological forms of complexity theory, about the uncontrollable-ness of situations, and the understandings which are emerging from recent research on the brain and mind, which tell us that actually one of our most productive forms of thinking are those forms of thinking are where we ourselves seem to relinquish mental control.