



CREATIVE FUTURES

CREATING UNDER CONSTRAINT

Samantha Jones:

Creative leadership and thinking for me is about empowering and unleashing the passion and the ability of the staff that work in the hospital. Being creative is asking them the question: What can we do differently to the delivery of patient care and then going to do it. And that's what we've done through something called 'Onion' here at West Hertfordshire, which is peeling back the layers, asking the question: What can we do today to make a difference for our patients and then going ahead and doing it.

'Onion' is something that came about, I'd been in post probably four or five weeks, and I came back from a very difficult weekend. Difficult because we'd had to close A & E for a couple of hours because we were full. That was serious enough, but it wasn't that that worried me the most, it was the fact that the staff had got into accepting the situation and felt they couldn't do anything about it. So that was on the Tuesday. Called a summit on the Friday and said what do we need to do to make a difference to the patients that we serve today?

And Onion is about allowing people to raise their concerns directly to the Chief Executive, other members of the executive team, but more importantly, take responsibility for changing the system. Ensuring that staff within the organisation know they have a voice is one of the most important things that we should and could be doing as leaders. So for example is a junior doctor coming to Onion and saying: Could I have a blood gas machine that works? A really really important piece of kit.

And when we asked the question: Why haven't you got it? Well, there is no money. This organisation has £290million there or there thereabout. It has a lot of money. It's how we choose to spend it and how we prioritise that. And so as a result of him coming to Onion, raising his concerns, of course it was a basic piece of kit that he needs to do his job as a junior doctor to provide high quality patient care. It's not strategy. It's not sexy. But it makes a big, big difference.

Monica Parker:

I think there's some great examples of the public sector in the way that they really intimately care about the people they're serving. And I think that that sort of level of customer intimacy could really be a great lesson to be learned in the corporate environment. But I also think that sometimes that level of customer intimacy that the public sector may be experiencing is, I guess they sometimes run into a level of bureaucracy that is a barrier to

accomplishing the maximum they could. And I think you find that in corporate environments as well. So I think that there are more similarities probably than not.

Samantha Jones:

An organisation with four and a half thousand people is a bureaucratic organisation, like any big company - if it's slow for us, it will be even slower for our patients. We have to recognise that we can't just change things immediately. But we start with the premise of: Why can't it be done?

Dave Coplin:

The most innovative sector I come across is public sector. And you would ... that's counterintuitive, good God, you know. And you think about the culture of the Civil Service and all that sort of sort of stuff. But the entire public sector is united by a common outcome, they want great public service. And second, God, there's all this pressure to save money, and that creates the most incredible innovation. And I think that the private sector could learn a lot from what's going on in public sectors today. And I'm not talking about leaders in public sector innovating, they're doing that, but this is actually about the grassroots stuff, people who care so much about the service that they deliver, they want to do better and they want to do it within the constraints of what they have to do.

You need a catalyst to make it happen, but it is then having the organisation that can back it up against a common outcome against an environment that wants to listen to innovation.

Samantha Jones:

I definitely think empowering the staff is one of the most important things you can do. But that in itself wouldn't bring about the change that's needed or the creativity that's needed. I think it's a piece of a jigsaw, a very very big ... or probably two pieces of the jigsaw, but it needs to be supported with the right structures and the right processes and the right governance and assurance systems, so that there will always be mavericks and we welcome the maverick thinking, but they need to be supported and creative thinking needs to be supported to make things happen. Cos there's no point in somebody having a fantastic idea and really getting excited about implementing it and then not being able to do it because the systems or the bureaucratic systems in the organisation don't work. So it's not about following orders, but it is about creating the right environment from a structural perspective to enable the creative thinking and the empowerment to really happen.