

**Title:** Forget Leaders, We Need Inspiration  
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**Date:** 18 January 2005

Once upon a time big organisations used brand and advertising to present a trusted face to consumers as they replaced local businesses. Today, we have relationship marketing and corporate social responsibility to do the same job. But if these ideas are to transform the heart of our businesses we are going to have to change the way we think – not an easy task.

### **Don't leave it to the academics**

Now, thinking is a serious business; not just for academics whilst the practitioners get on with the real work of doing. If you don't believe me, just count how many times in the next week you hear something akin to 'marketing need to think differently', 'the trouble with IT is that they're very traditional in their thinking', or 'our problem is we cannot change the way people think'. Annoyance at the way others are perceived to think lurks at the root of many CRM problems.

### **The challenge of thought leaders**

Our 'business mind sets' are also being increasingly challenged by influential 'thought leaders':

- "How could you make business kinder?" posits Anita Roddick of The Body Shop.
- "You hope that business might do the odd thing to be friendly to you... the term for this thinking is corporate responsibility" says David Cameron, the new leader of the UK's Conservative party.
- "Throw out all notions that 'this is how things get done' and start again; only bring back the things you know work" advised Clive Woodward, manager of the winning England Rugby Team.

Anita, David and Clive and others like them are throwing business a challenge; are we geared up to meet it? Do we take the time to think, or are we so absorbed by benchmarks and best practice that we are copying ourselves to extinction.

### **The time to think**

It's strange, but if you sit at your desk to think – people will feel quite at liberty to interrupt you; after all you are not 'doing' anything. Run around being busy, and they'll leave you alone. Yet, as our organisations hit the white water of environmental

change, we need more than ever to think about options, rather than wallow around in a mire of compromise and muddle. The rapids are a dangerous but necessary place to be, for its where innovation happens.

### **Thinking is at the heart of change management**

Holgar Nauhermer, of *The Change Management Toolbook* agrees. Last year he completed a large study in the practices and realities of change management. The research concludes that business transformation is the result of organisational learning. Organisational learning, in turn, is the result of individuals thinking through the disadvantages and opportunities of options: frequently based on trial and error. Courting failure is better than adopting best practice. (See our **interview with Ajay Kelkar** of HDFC Bank <http://www.insightexec.com/item/131905>)

More interestingly he has found that giving people the time and facilities to think creates the motivation to get rid of the 'we don't do things like that around here' mentality.' Why? Because people improve their own personal mastery, and feel they are gaining something valuable from the change. (see **Change Management – Jennifer Kirkby** <http://www.insightexec.com/item/131378>)

### **Co-creation is the condition**

There is only one condition for this to work-co-creation. People should work together to enhance each others thinking. They need to appreciate different thinking styles e.g. creative, analytical, intellectual and what each brings to the party. Sometimes you need systems thinking for the big picture and sometimes scientific thinking for analysis; meditation is recommended for insight. If your organisation lacks some thinking styles you may be missing out; I'm frequently told of the dearth of big picture specialists.

### **Conflict is Greek**

Edward De Bono, a great exponent of the disciplines of thinking, criticises the habit of Western thinking for having its roots in conflict. This, he says, goes back to the Greek Gang of Three - Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Conflict has its place, but there is more to be gained in organisational learning by parallel thinking.

Parallel thinking is where everyone looks at a problem from different views at the same time. It's akin to a group walking around a house to look at each view together, rather than all looking at different views at the same time and arguing about which is correct. Thus a problem is put on the table and everyone must, at the same time, look at it in the same light. This is his 'Six Thinking Hats' method used to advantage by a number of organisations including Geoff Young at Sanity Group, who uses it for strategic planning (see our **interview with Geoff Young** at: <http://www.insightexec.com/item/1317516>)

### **Conflict resolution**

Companies who have not put staff through Myers-Briggs ([www.myersbriggs.org](http://www.myersbriggs.org)) or TMS Team Learning ([www.tms.com.au](http://www.tms.com.au)) training to understand different thinking and learning styles should consider doing so. It can be most revealing to find out why some people are rooted in detail, whilst others seem to annoyingly know the answers off the top of their heads, without any substance. Why do some people weep and

wail over the way policy will affect staff, whilst others have tunnel vision on the goal in hand. Understanding and appreciating the differences, puts people on the same course and overcomes the need for conflict resolution.

### **Encourage open source thinking**

Linux is a wonderful case of team thinking. A Delphi study is another extremely useful way to look at the whole scope of an issue, and get agreement on definitions and the way forward. Open source thinking is a skill many organisations should encourage, using 'collaboration software', positive encouragement and mutual goals. And not only with staff, companies like Apple harness customer thinking too. Today it's not knowledge that is power but team thinking and application. Something found by Vineet Kalucha of Q.Know Technologies (see our **interview with Vineet Kalucha**: <http://www.insightexec.com/item/131909>)

### **Perhaps leaders are not so necessary!**

In his 2004 book *The Wisdom of Crowds*, James Surowiecki argues that a diverse opinion group of independently minded individuals can reach better decisions than a 'think tank' of like minded experts; especially when there is a common 'cultural' understanding. Maybe our current received wisdom of success through strong leadership should be questioned. Maybe there is another way, if diversity in thinking styles and the constructs of thinking disciplines are put in place alongside organisational legends (see our **interview with Anthony Impey** of Optimity <http://www.insightexec.com/item/131862>).

### **Jargon or politically correct?**

Another method to help change thinking might be to encourage the use of different language. But, I hesitate in recommending this, as I have seen it abused and become a weapon with which to politically castigate those who will not toe the line. But the use of management speak and jargon is a death knell to thinking (see **Winning friends and influencing people** <http://www.insightexec.com/item/131253>). It is also unintelligible to customers when it leaks into their conversations - "I need to transfer you to the retention unit," said an O2 staff member recently when I simply enquired about having my pack number. Fortunately, I knew what that meant but there are many who wouldn't.

### **Bingo**

But try a game I recently played with a colleague who wants to change his company's mindset from inside-out corporate thinking to outside-in customer thinking. We wrote down on a bingo card all the inside-out words and terms people used like, customer centric, customer experience and loyalty. We then tried to have a conversation without using them and think of alternative outside-in words. Try it yourself, it's not easy.

However, Anita Roddick in her book *A Revolution in Kindness* says that she found that once she had changed the "language of business from one which is purely economic, to one of reflection, care and dedication to social justice, that people felt they could bring their heart to the workplace. Then and only then did the workplace shift from a Monday-to Friday death to a Monday- to Friday sense of feeling alive."

So it can work. Maybe the answer is not to be prescriptive about words, but encourage creativity in language.

## The Renaissance

Kindness and business, now there are two concepts to laterally spark off each other to find the heart of relationship marketing/corporate social responsibility. To get there I advocate that we need a **revolution in thinking**. Something akin to the stir that was caused when Botticelli launched his La Primavera on the Italian scene. That helped change the mindset of the western world from a focus on the afterlife to a focus on individual life, and gave rise to a Renaissance in thinking.



*Sandro Botticelli: Primavera c. 1482*

My thanks to Paul Crick, of Inforte and Alison Zakers of Pinfold Consulting for their help in the research for this article.

## Further Reading

- **A Revolution in Kindness - Anita Roddick**  
[http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/0954395913/qid=1137576938/sr=1-6/ref=sr\\_1\\_3\\_6/202-0635897-3099827](http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/0954395913/qid=1137576938/sr=1-6/ref=sr_1_3_6/202-0635897-3099827)
- **The Wisdom of Crowds - James Surowiecki**  
[http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/0349116059/qid=1137576991/sr=1-1/ref=sr\\_1\\_3\\_1/202-0635897-3099827](http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/0349116059/qid=1137576991/sr=1-1/ref=sr_1_3_1/202-0635897-3099827)
- **Taking Stock (A survey on the practices and future of change management) – The Change Management Toolbook**  
<http://www.change-management-toolbook.com/res/reports.html>
- **Six Thinking Hats – Edward de Bono**  
[http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/0140296662/qid=1137577053/sr=1-1/ref=sr\\_1\\_3\\_1/202-0635897-3099827](http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/0140296662/qid=1137577053/sr=1-1/ref=sr_1_3_1/202-0635897-3099827)

- **Seven Secrets of Inspired Leasers – Phil Dourado and Phil Blackburn**  
[http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/1841126500/qid=1137577077/sr=1-1/ref=sr\\_1\\_16\\_1/202-0635897-3099827](http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/1841126500/qid=1137577077/sr=1-1/ref=sr_1_16_1/202-0635897-3099827)
- **The Next Hot Topic in CRM – Jennifer Kirkby**  
<http://www.insightexec.com/item/130745>
- **Change Management – Jennifer Kirkby**  
<http://www.insightexec.com/item/131378>
- **Winning friends and influencing people - Jennifer Kirkby**  
<http://www.insightexec.com/item/131253>
- **Interview with Geoff Young, Sanity Group**  
<http://www.insightexec.com/item/1317516>
- **Interview with Vineet Kalucha of Q.Know Technologies**  
<http://www.insightexec.com/item/131909>

#### About the author:



Jennifer Kirkby is an independent analyst and practitioner in 'state of the art' marketing and customer management practices. She is a professional presenter, post graduate lecturer and author, described by peers as one of the leading independent CRM consultants and writers in EMEA.

Currently Director of White Waves Ltd, she was formerly CRM Research Director for Gartner, where she was a primary architect of the Classic Gartner Model - The Eight Building Blocks of CRM. She has advised many Fortune 500 companies across Europe and Asia on how to improve their customer management over the last 5 years.

Prior to that Jennifer was with the UK's Modernizing Government programme demonstrating how CRM techniques were applicable to Public Services. This followed 15 years of marketing practice in financial services and manufacturing, where she had roles in CRM programme management, marketing research, brand and product management, business development and strategic marketing. She has a degree in Economics from Leeds University and professional qualifications in Marketing, Market Research and Programme Management.