

## Chapter Ten: model answers

### Mini case 10(i): Fast track innovation at the Nordstrom Innovation Lab

#### Discussion point

#### **Are Japanese working methods, such as genchi gembutsu, easily transferred to organizations in the west?**

Many western organizations have successfully integrated Japanese working methods into their work environment. Lean production, just-in-time, and total quality management have been prevalent in productive industry such as in car manufacturing and computer hardware. In some cases, the transfer of Japanese methods has taken some time to be accepted by workers and has required some intensive training programmes. In many ways, it is a change of culture that is required and this is typically a long term prospect. Workers need to undergo a transformational change from traditional working practices to new and unfamiliar ones. Inevitably this meets with some level of resistance so it is incumbent on managers to explain how Japanese methods work, how workers can benefit from it, and the types of rewards they can expect from successful implementation.

#### Questions and task

#### **What are the key characteristics of the Nordstrom Innovation Lab?**

The main characteristics of the Nordstrom Lab include innovation, speed, and added value to customers. The organizational culture of the Lab is geared towards supporting innovation. The workforce have a keen interest in experimenting with new ideas and generating novel ways of developing new products and services, communicating with customers, and supporting front line staff. Innovation is the life blood of the Lab and much of their activity is designed to support it. The other key characteristic is the fact that the

innovators have only a week to turn a concept or idea into a commercially viable output. Speed is the essence of the Lab concept, whereby competitive advantage is gained through quick, agile, and flexible working practices. Both innovation and speed are attributes that help the company deliver new added-value products and services to customers. This brings brand loyalty as customers express an on-going interest in the innovations delivered by the company.

**What is the *modus operandi* (method of working) of the Nordstrom Innovation Lab team?**

The Nordstrom Innovation Lab team work as a small collaborative group. The team has regular sessions where new ideas can be communicated, discussed, adapted or linked to other ideas. These sessions flesh out what ideas can be taken forward after considering the technical demands and the commercial viability. Once the idea has been adopted, the team develops a prototype for testing. Here, the team members look for ways to improve the original concept, troubleshoot problems, and make it work. Interfacing with customers forms another important method of developing the idea, and the feedback gained provides a valuable insight into how it will be received by users. Further design alterations are built in before it is applied as a test by front line sales staff and customer support staff. Their feedback is also important as they have to be confident when using the innovation to support sales or selling the innovation to customers. Finally, within the one week deadline, the innovation is ready to roll out and the team monitors the reaction to the output by customers and staff.

**Access You Tube and identify the main activities in the development of the iPad app for sunglasses.**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=szr0ezLyQHY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szr0ezLyQHY)

**Alternatively, search Google: 'Nordstrom Innovation Lab: Sunglasses iPad App Case Study – You Tube'**

The iPad app for sunglasses has a simple but effective concept. It is designed to help customers make informed choices about what style of sunglasses suits them. Using an iPad, the app allows customers to take a photograph of themselves wearing numerous different styles. The customer can build up a portfolio of pictures, compare and contrast them and then make their choice. The innovation was developed by the Nordstrom Innovation Lab team and went through a number of developmental phases. These included:

1. Creating a card map of ideas;
2. Creating a paper-based graphic prototype;
3. Developing a flash build of pictures of different sunglasses at different angles, lighting and size;
4. Building a prototype;
5. Using the prototype to solicit customer and staff feedback on the concept;
6. Using the feedback to inform the planner as to further advances or adaptations;
7. Working with the technical developer to build in adaptations (in this case it was to change the image to landscape on the iPad for better visuals);
8. Build in feature developments such as photographic style, shape, tone etc.;
9. Give the end product to sales staff to start using on the shop floor. Monitor and assess reactions to the innovation.

## **Mini case 10(ii): Team building the BMW way**

### **Discussion point**

#### **Do employees take company training days seriously?**

Company away days for training have become part of organisational folklore in the sense that many workers view them as a less-than-serious attempt at team building and worker cohesiveness. The reaction of workers to training days ranges from the cynical to the enthusiastic. Most workers see training days as a break from the routine but with little long term benefit. This is often dependent on the reasons why the training day has been deemed necessary: if there is a direct link to their work or if it is to explain new processes or how to work new technology, then the level of engagement is likely to be higher. On the other hand, if it is a contrived set of activities designed to build teamwork then workers may not see the benefits. In many cases, workers take a sceptical view of such events but once actively involved in them derive some satisfaction and benefit. For example, they may be able to meet and communicate with other workers they would not normally have any interactions with.

#### **Questions and task**

**Identify one of the training activities in the BMW team building training programme.**

All of the training activities at the BMW training programme features driving one of the fleet of BMW cars. A typical training exercise is to get two staff members who do not ordinarily work together to negotiate the track. The driver is blindfolded and has to trust the direction of the navigator to complete the circuit. The exercise is designed to build trust and teamwork.

**What is the most common feature of the BMW training programme activities?**

The main feature of the BMW training programme is building trust between workers. All the activities require participants to have some level of trust between themselves and other participants to complete the tasks successfully. The BMW training staff members believe that this trust-forming relationship is the key benefit that can be transferred to the workplace and helps to build longer lasting and more meaningful relationships between staff.

**How do the training activities at BMW transfer to the workplace experience?**

One way the BMW trainers build trust is to deliberately match people from different departments or work functions and get them to collaborate on activities. They especially look out for tensions or stresses that may exist in the relationships between people from different departments. The activities help the workers to break down the barriers that undermine effective relationships, and require them to work collaboratively to achieve a shared goal. This has distinct benefits in the workplace as it allows workers to build a positive relationship through a shared experience that can be transferred to a new form of relationship in the workplace.

**Mini case 10(iii) Bowes Consulting: a team approach to managing growth**

**Discussion point**

**What can consultants deliver on team building that organisations cannot manage themselves?**

External consultants are often hired to conduct team building exercises because they may be able to offer specialist skills in training for team building. There is also no existing relationship between the consultants and the staff undertaking the training. This is important because staff may not respond positively to training programmes delivered by colleagues with

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whom they already have a working relationship. Issues of attitude, bias, assumptions, and trust, among others, may undermine the full engagement of staff on training programmes delivered by internal managers. External consultants arrive with no 'baggage' or historical relationship and have no other motivations other than to deliver an effective training programme. Staff may be able to speak candidly with external consultants in a way they could not with internal managers.

### **Questions and task**

#### **Give an example of role playing in a team building exercise.**

Role playing often involves playing out the role of another staff member from a different department when confronted with a problem that involves and requires collaboration from different departments. This offers an opportunity for staff to think through the solution from a different perspective given the aims and purpose of the different department within which their role is situated. For example, people from human resources, production, sales, and marketing departments may swap roles when considering what type of new recruit should be hired.

#### **Are there any dangers associated with self-managed teams?**

There are well-documented dangers associated with self-managed teams. Most relate to the ways in which newly acquired power is exercised. The self-managed team may individually or as a group see themselves as a separate and special entity within an organisation and become remote and detached from what the organisational aims and objectives are. The elite nature of such teams tends to alienate other workers unless they can see a compelling reason for its creation. In some instances teams can overstep their remit or power and start to make strategic decisions that may not be in

alignment with organisational strategic aims. Also, the effectiveness of self-managed teams depends on positive and collaborative relationships where each member understands and works towards a common, shared goal. The complexity of the human condition determines that forming a team is always laced with risk. The team may not function properly, there may be power struggles for leadership roles, or they may not be able to reach a consensus on the way forward. Teams may deliver many benefits but they are not without tensions, and sometimes those tensions undermine what the organisation is trying to achieve.

### **What are the main reasons for establishing self-managed teams?**

Self-managed teams are established because management believe that particular aims and objectives can be achieved through collaboration between a select group of workers. The team may comprise people with specific skills or competencies that, combined, may deliver added value in terms of outputs or the generation of new and innovative products or services, or new ways of doing things. Self-managed teams are given authority to make decisions that allows them to pursue activities they deem necessary to achieve their aims. This is an important part of establishing a team whereby attributes of speed, efficiency, and agility are key characteristics of teamwork.

### **Case study: Les Folies Bergeres Theatre**

**Make a list comprising functions that are 'artistic' and others that are 'production' oriented at Les Folies Bergeres.**

Artistic functions:                      Production:

Artistic director                      Producer

Orchestra	Company manager
	Stage crew
	Production team
	Technical department
	Stage management
	Fly men

**Choose any two functions from Figure 10(vi) and explain why they need to know and understand what each other is doing.**

Any two functions can be chosen for this task. An example is the link between the artistic director and the stage management. The artistic director has an overall vision of the production and the requirements of the show. The artistic director needs to explain the choreography, timings and set to the stage management team. The stage management team is responsible for ensuring that the lighting, sound and stage scenes are in exactly the correct place and sequence, according to the script and the choreography put in place by the artistic director. The quality of the show depends on the synchronicity between the artistic production and the stage management. The artistic director has to be able to communicate what the show requirements are, and the stage management team has to be able to deliver the scene in exactly the way envisioned.

**Identify five potential sources of tension and conflict in the production team at Les Folies Bergeres.**

Tension and conflict may arise through:



- The artistic director not being able to explain the sequence of events that make up the show in a clear and systematic manner, leading to confusion among production staff;
- The sequencing of activities that make up the show may be such that stage crew are unable to deliver the changes necessary in time allocated;
- The production team need to be able to work with the technical department to ensure that what is envisioned by the artistic director is capable of being produced. Tension may arise if the vision of the show is pushing the technical capability to the limit;
- There must be a clear understanding of lines of authority, otherwise commands will not be obeyed and the whole production will be in jeopardy;
- The company manager is responsible for ensuring the welfare of the performers, and tension can arise if the rewards do not reflect what the producer is asking them to do.

### **Chapter question and tasks**

**Summarize the main advantages associated with virtual teams.**

Team members can be located anywhere in the world where access to electronic means of communication exist and can be recruited for their specific skills or expertise. Virtual teams can be operational quickly and disbanded on completion of the aims. There are no overhead costs associated with physical buildings and there are low transport and no commuting costs for staff. Team members can work around the clock in different time zones and can organize times when they 'meet' via video-conferencing or other electronic media. There is also flexibility as there is scope to determine if the entire organization is to be virtual, or if there will just be some few specific task teams set up to complete a particular task. Also, teams can be established to focus on a specified product or market.

**Why have cross-cultural teams become more prevalent in organizations in the last two decades?**

Cross-cultural teams have become more prevalent in organizations because of the trend towards globalization and greater mobility of the workforce in the last two decades. Many countries have become multi-ethnic in that timeframe and this is reflected in the composition of the workforce. Team formation reflects this trend with workers from different cultural backgrounds working closely together. There are possible advantages of bringing together people from different cultural backgrounds to form a team. The differences can prove important when generating new ideas or being creative about the development of new products or services. A cross-cultural team may have a better understanding of the distinct requirements of different customer groups or the way business is conducted in different countries where the organization has operations or partnerships. Cross-cultural teams benefit from knowledge-sharing that encapsulates a broad range of cultural norms and values. Cross cultural teams can swap ideas; generate insights

from the integration of cultural values and ways of doing things; find ways of working through issues that affect the cohesiveness of a multi-ethnic workforce; and better understand perceptions and behaviours of customers, co-workers and others along the supply chain. These are the main reasons why cross-cultural teams have become more prevalent in organizations in the last two decades.

**Explain the difference between groups and teams.**

A group can be defined as two or more individuals who are connected to one another by social relationships. A team is a group who work intensively with each other to achieve a specific common goal. Note that teams can be a form of work group, but that not all work groups are teams. In fact, work groups are more prevalent than teams.

**Using Belbin's role model, identify what role(s) best suit your personal characteristics.**

Students can self-assess their own personality characteristics and link them to the assigned roles in Belbin's model.