

Unlocking Creativity in Groups and Teams Allowing the Future to Emerge by Quieting our Egos

Creativity Guru, Dr. R. *Keith Sawyer*, the Morgan Distinguished Professor in Educational Innovations at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, is one of the world's leading scientific experts on creativity. His research has debunked "the myth of the lone genius" and illuminates the power of one person's idea stimulating the next person's enhancing idea, over and over again until the group arrives at a breakthrough innovation.

Another thought leader, Otto Scharmer, well known for his Theory U, proposes that the quality of the results that we create in any kind of social system is a function of the quality of awareness, attention, or consciousness that the participants in the system operate from." He goes on to describe the new word "presencing" - a blended word combining "sensing" (feeling the future possibility) and "presence" (the state of being in the present moment): presencing means "*sensing and actualizing one's highest future possibility—acting from the presence of what is wanting to emerge.*"

Scharmer's signature idea is to have a group follow a five step process that encourages people to enter a deeper place of knowing. In his own words, "On that journey, at the bottom of the U, lies an inner gate that requires us to drop everything that isn't essential. This process of letting-go (of our old ego and self) and letting-come (our highest future possibility: our Self) establishes a subtle connection to a deeper source of knowing. The essence of presencing is that these two selves – our current self and our best future Self – meet at the bottom of the U and begin to listen and resonate with each other. Once a group crosses this threshold, nothing remains the same. Individual members and the group as a whole begin to operate with a heightened level of energy and sense of future possibility. Often, they then begin to function as an intentional vehicle for an emerging future."

At LionHeart, we understand the power of Otto Scharmer's ideas from our own experience. We encourage our leadership clients to use a reflective practice called remembrance (**The Remembrance**) as a means of connecting to their own understanding of Source. Engaging in this practice on a regular basis allows one to add value in the workplace with their heart's inner wisdom, in addition to their minds and their hands. We refer to this as the evolution of industrial and knowledge workers into "wisdom workers" (**Wisdom Worker**). Our intention is to encourage and teach business people to eventually embody, versus simply visit, this deeper place of connection. We then become an open conduit for creativity coming through us as needed, especially when accompanied by the encouragement of like-hearted collaborators.

Geoff Colvin offers another important idea that creativity is a function of human beings' ability to deeply listen and be sensitive to one another¹ His research highlighted the need for larger groups of people with deep individual expertise to come together to solve more and more complex problems. The teams' differences therefore, require greater relationship building skills.

He continues with the idea that, "...the number one factor in group effectiveness is skill at deep interaction." Colvin goes on to cite the research of Alex Pentland's Human Dynamics Laboratory at MIT. Their research discovered that, "The members of the very best groups interacted in three very distinct ways. First, they generated a large number of ideas in short contributions to conversations; no one went on at great length. Second, they engaged in what Pentland calls 'dense interactions,' with groups constantly alternating between advancing their own ideas and responding to the contributions of others with 'good,' 'right,' 'what?' and other super-short comments that signaled consensus on an idea's value, good or bad. Third, everyone contributed ideas and reactions, taking turns more or less equally, ensuring a wide diversity of ideas."

So, if the research indicates that social connection and deep listening skills are at the core of creativity, how do we best support our people in organizational life to be creative? It would seem that it is better to have a group of people who are confident enough in themselves to put team success ahead of individual accolades. They need to genuinely care about one another and maintain a high level of respect and trust. Finally, they need highly developed sensitivity skills that open their capacity to tune into and effectively address any disengagement in real time conversations, instead of allowing an atmosphere of "undiscussable separation" to fester.

As one of our clients so wisely said, "People have to check their egos at the door. We don't want anyone to care about being the smartest person in the room. When people put aside their egos, the exhilaration of contributing to the group's success allows them to feel they are part of something bigger than themselves, because they are!"

Putting aside our egos is no small task in a society built on a "boot strap" mindset. However, the opportunity for a more reflective approach to business and leadership is gaining momentum, as noted in *Flourishing Enterprise: The New Spirit of Business*.²

You will need to do your own field research of course. We challenge you to invest more time in quiet reflection with a meditative practice on a daily basis or in nature whenever possible. Practice letting your mind quiet down to the point that your own creative voice of inspiration and wisdom can come to the surface. Let yourself be surprised at what you discover coming to you from within. And when you find yourself in a group of people who are all willing and able to do the same, see what deep listening can bring to life when your inspirations can build on one another!

For more resources go to: <http://lionhrt.com/resources>
Want to start a conversation? Contact us at: <http://lionhrt.com/contact-us/>

¹ Humans Are Underrated, by Geoff Colvin, published by Portfolio/Penguin 2015

² Authored collaboratively by 9 Distinguished Fellows, including Paul Werder, from the Fowler Center for Business as an Agent of World Benefit at Case Western Reserve University, Stanford Press 2014