

# Solutions

Performance Strategies for Managers and Supervisors

## Fall 2010

### CONTENTS

#### FEATURE:

Creativity and Change

Page 2

The Faces of Innovation:  
Part 1

Page 3

How to Use Stories as  
Management Tools

Page 4

Inside GE's Leadership  
Development Strategy

Page 5

Make a *Date* to Deal with  
Stress

The Governor's Award for  
Quality and Productivity

Page 6

Choosing the Right  
Words

Ask Questions to be an  
Innovative Thinker

## Creativity and Change

By Dr. Rick Kirschner

Taken from *myquickcoach* - The online source of practical answers to workplace challenges

Creativity: it's your birthright and it's the easiest part of the art of change. Why? Well, because you're a part of, not apart from, the fabric of the universe, which is incredibly creative. You already are. You don't have to try. You'll be creative until the day you die.

Your life is a string of experiments and best guesses. I mean did you get to where you are by doing everything right the first time? Or did you do some incredibly stupid things from which you learned everything you needed to know to make it this far?

You know, Oscar Wilde put it this way, "Nowadays, most people die of a sort of creeping common sense and discover when it's all too late that the only things one never regrets are one's mistakes." That speaks to our need to try things and fail in order to learn what we need to know in order to move forward in life. Creativity. So how do we activate our creativity? Well, it seems to boil down to three simple things, all of which begin with the letter "E."

First, **ENGAGE** your motivation. When you're connected to your creativity with the desire to be creative, you're more likely to do things that are interesting and worthwhile. Then **EXPLORE** your options because until you've actually seen what's possible, it's hard to know what the best way to move forward is. And finally, **EXPERIMENT** to find out what works – because after all, until you've tried some things, how will you know what you need to know? Of these three things, engaging your motivation is essential. How do you do that?

Well, first ask yourself what's your idea of the ideal? Every artist knows that when you begin a work of art, you stare at a blank canvas, or a blank sheet of music, or a problem that needs to be solved, and you ask yourself, "What's the ideal outcome of this? What kind of result am I trying to create here?" Once you have your idea of the ideal, then you can ask yourself the second question: "Why is that my idea of the ideal? What about that is important to me?" Listen carefully: when you take the what and add the why, you have a sense of purpose, and purpose is what sustains creative endeavor.

### Quick Tip:

Leaders create Change: It takes each of us to make a difference for all of us. If you lead, you will create lasting changes. Be prepared to take people inside and outside of the organization on a magnificent journey. Remember if you don't lead, you stagnate! Everyone has to lead with purpose and passion.

For previous Issues of *Solutions*  
[Click here](#)

## It's finally here... THE CREATIVITY & INNOVATION SERIES

PART 1

Beginning with this issue and continuing with the next three issues, *Solutions* will devote several articles to the important topic of creativity and innovation in the workplace.

Dr. Kirschner's comments were taken from the Center for Management and Professional Development's online learning system:

**myquickcoach**

**It's how busy people learn!**

Point and click to access hundreds of short online video lessons and articles by renowned consultants and educators. Each lesson is designed to help you get the most out of your online learning experience in the shortest amount of time.

**Let MyQuickCoach work for you!**

Obtain your 1 year access to the world's best business coaches.

To find out how, visit:  
[www.training.oa.mo.gov/MyQuickCoach/](http://www.training.oa.mo.gov/MyQuickCoach/)

# The faces of innovation: Part 1

By Lori Gilmore, Center for Management and Professional Development

Innovation is an instrument for reshaping the culture of an entire organization.

Organizations that want to flourish in today's aggressive environment need innovation embedded in every facet of the organization—from the top down—from executive to employee.

Creating an engaging environment filled with upbeat activities, creativity and ingenuity means constructing an organization with 360 degrees of innovation. Organizations that want to survive and thrive at innovation will need new insights, new perspectives, and new responsibilities.

There is vast acknowledgment that promoting innovation as a way of life is vital to the success of an organization—and it is just as important as planning strategies or being fiscally responsible.

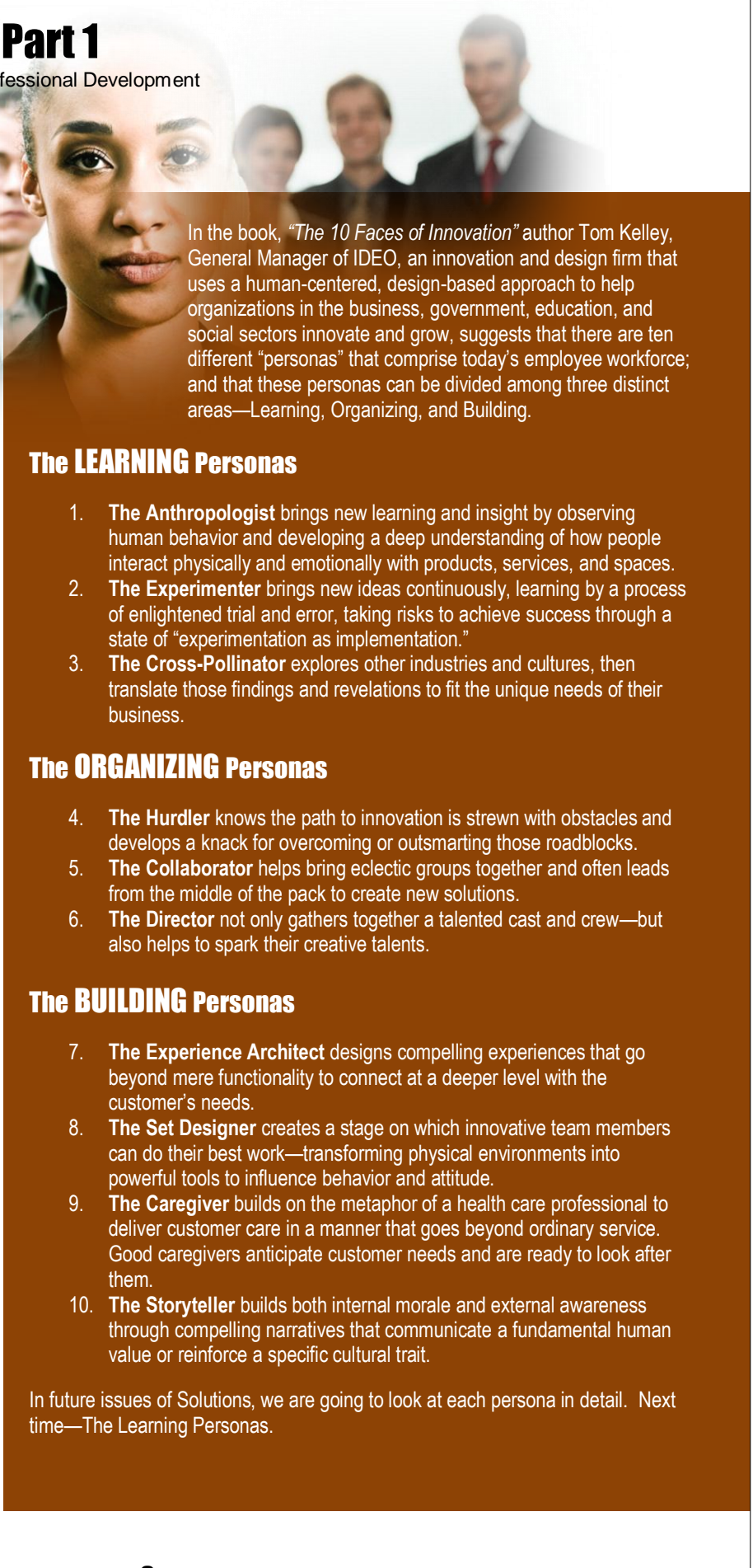
Many organizations now realize that innovation is their best strategy to grow in a competitive marketplace—and it takes each of us to make a difference. So no matter what your job is, whether in the private or public sector, you must innovate and replenish your contributions rapidly.

Archimedes said, "Give me a place to stand and a lever long enough and I can move the world."

Each person has within themselves their own "lever," their own tools and talents, and their own opinions to bring about innovation and change. In the right circumstance with the right incentive, awareness, and skill set, each of us can create an amazingly commanding force. Together we can accomplish astonishing results.

Great organizations achieve sustainable growth and profits because they do what other organizations don't: they maximize the innate, individual talents of their employees to connect with customers.

**-Curt Coffman and Gabriel Gonzalez-Molina**  
*Follow This Path*



In the book, "*The 10 Faces of Innovation*" author Tom Kelley, General Manager of IDEO, an innovation and design firm that uses a human-centered, design-based approach to help organizations in the business, government, education, and social sectors innovate and grow, suggests that there are ten different "personas" that comprise today's employee workforce; and that these personas can be divided among three distinct areas—Learning, Organizing, and Building.

## The LEARNING Personas

1. **The Anthropologist** brings new learning and insight by observing human behavior and developing a deep understanding of how people interact physically and emotionally with products, services, and spaces.
2. **The Experimenter** brings new ideas continuously, learning by a process of enlightened trial and error, taking risks to achieve success through a state of "experimentation as implementation."
3. **The Cross-Pollinator** explores other industries and cultures, then translate those findings and revelations to fit the unique needs of their business.

## The ORGANIZING Personas

4. **The Hurdler** knows the path to innovation is strewn with obstacles and develops a knack for overcoming or outsmarting those roadblocks.
5. **The Collaborator** helps bring eclectic groups together and often leads from the middle of the pack to create new solutions.
6. **The Director** not only gathers together a talented cast and crew—but also helps to spark their creative talents.

## The BUILDING Personas

7. **The Experience Architect** designs compelling experiences that go beyond mere functionality to connect at a deeper level with the customer's needs.
8. **The Set Designer** creates a stage on which innovative team members can do their best work—transforming physical environments into powerful tools to influence behavior and attitude.
9. **The Caregiver** builds on the metaphor of a health care professional to deliver customer care in a manner that goes beyond ordinary service. Good caregivers anticipate customer needs and are ready to look after them.
10. **The Storyteller** builds both internal morale and external awareness through compelling narratives that communicate a fundamental human value or reinforce a specific cultural trait.

In future issues of Solutions, we are going to look at each persona in detail. Next time—The Learning Personas.



# Tell me a story: How to use stories as management tools

Management may be about hard numbers and objective data, but leadership is about emotion: motivation, persuasion, commitment, and other so-called “soft” skills. And the most effective type of leadership communication isn’t a chart or a memo, but a story.

“People tend to not remember data,” says Richard Bradley. “And they do remember a story.” A portfolio manager for professional and management development at the American Management Association (AMA), Bradley currently teaches “Storytelling: The Secret of Great Communicators,” a seminar he helped develop for the AMA. In a recent interview for “Leading for Results,” he shared some of those secrets.

“A lot of people think, “Are we going to sit and sing ‘Kum Ba Ya’ around the campfire?” But I like to say that storytelling is the antidote to death by PowerPoint.”

## What’s in a tale?

A good story doesn’t have to be long – 10 seconds can be enough time to make a quick illustrative point, Bradley says. An effective story can use humor, but it doesn’t have to be a joke. In fact, jokes don’t often make very good stories, according to Bradley, because they don’t fit into the six categories he emphasizes in the course: who I am; why I’m here; I know what you’re thinking; my vision; my values and actions; and teaching stories. Good stories tend to come from four “buckets,” as Bradley calls them:

- A time that you shined
- A time that you blew it
- A mentor, and
- A book or a movie

Basing stories on your personal experience helps appeal to the listener’s emotions. “If you’re telling a story that’s sincere and that’s true, it will resonate emotionally with your listeners,” Bradley says. Remember to share something that your listeners don’t have the same experience in. “I like to use the analogy that if you want to impress somebody about the horrors of war, the best experience would be to listen to the stories of the men and women coming back.

## Principles of organization

So you’ve got a tale to tell. How do you actually tell it so people will listen and understand? Bradley’s course emphasizes working from these six principles:

- Storytelling is developmental.** Lead people to their own conclusions instead of just reporting your conclusions. “Take them through A, B, C, and D, so they conclude E on their own. Bradley advises.
- Maximize oral language.** Use your body, eyes, gestures, face, words, tone, and timing to engage the listener’s attention.
- Clarity of intention.** Learn how to resolve internal conflicts—fear, anger and so on first—so people don’t corrupt your message. Guard against unconscious negative thoughts that might affect your delivery.
- Imagery.** A listener’s imagination uses sensory details—sights, sounds, feelings—to build scenes in the theater of the mind. When it comes to retention, vibrant imagery beats credibility, accuracy, and detail.
- Participation vs. control.** “I think there’s a tendency for someone telling a story to try to control the presentation,” says Bradley. “Don’t let anybody interrupt me. And really, just the opposite gets the best effect. Leaving space for interpretation builds participation in your story.”
- Point of view.** Don’t tell a story for your own needs. Think about how your story will serve others. What do you want them to do, know, or understand after the story is finished?

## May the best story win

Bradley’s course is based in large part on a book recently published by the AMA: *Whoever Tells the Best Story Wins*, by Annette Simmons. Bradley’s explanation of the book’s title provides an apt reason for the importance of storytelling as a management tool: the title comes from the movie *Amistad*, in which a group of slaves takes over the ship transporting them from Africa, then face trial in the United States. They are defended by former U.S. president John Adams, who at one point says, “In a court of law, I’ve found that whoever tells the best story wins.”

In the world of leadership, that’s often true as well.

Leading for Results  
Ragan’s Management Resources  
111 E. Wacker Dr., Ste. 500  
Chicago, IL 60601  
Telephone: 800-878-5331  
Email: RMR@ragan.com  
www.managementresources.com  
Reprinted with permission

# Solutions

“The problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.” Albert Einstein

Solutions is published quarterly by:

STATE OF MISSOURI  
**Center** FOR  
**MANAGEMENT**  
AND  
**Professional**  
**Development**  
Office of Administration, Division of Personnel

**Bill Miller, Division of Personnel Director**

Guy Krause, Deputy Division Director/Manager,  
**Pay, Leave and Reporting**

Allan Forbis, Manager,  
**Center for Management and Professional**  
**Development**

Doug Smentkowski, Manager,  
**Employee Services**

**Editors and Layout**  
Allan Forbis and Kelly Levy

# Inside GE's leadership development strategy

The first years of Jeff Malehorn's career at GE were like a master's class in leadership: As a member of GE's corporate audit staff, Malehorn traveled around the world performing financial and operational reviews of different business units. "You did that every three months," said Malehorn. It was a three-part process: Assess the environment, package and synthesize the information into action plans, and then work with management to put the ideas into operation.

Malehorn learned a lot at GE—and a lot about leadership. Today Malehorn is president and CEO of GE Healthcare Financial Services, responsible for 800 employees and a \$20 billion asset portfolio in corporate finance, real estate finance, vendor financial programs, and other elements, all in the healthcare space. And he's intimately involved in developing GE's next generation of leaders.

## The big four

GE's leadership development strategy zeroes in on four distinct components:

- Integrity
- Training and Development
- Actions and Values
- Growth Traits

Malehorn breaks "action and values" down into four basic concepts to illustrate what a strong organization should look for in potential leaders:

**Imagination.** GE looks for people who are passionate about learning and always curious. As Malehorn puts it, "I'm starting my fourth year in this business, and on January 1, 2008, I said to myself, 'I'm going to walk into the business like it's my first day on the job.'"

**The ability to solve problems.** GE provides plenty of resources to its leaders, but it's looking for people who are resourceful on their own, and willing to be accountable to their teams, to communities, and to the company's shareholder.

**Team-building.** GE prides itself on being a meritocracy, but the emphasis is on the team's talents, and not individual leaders. "Can you raise the performance level of your team to the next level because of your actions as an individual, and as a team member?" Malehorn asked rhetorically. "I see an awful lot of people early in their leadership, and [their attitude is] 'It's all about me.' The real test is what happens when you leave your organization and team to move on to your next position. Is it going to be better for the person that follows?"

**Honesty.** It's about openness and candor, Malehorn explained. "I find leadership to be very open and very energizing at GE, and I try to make sure my door is always open to anybody." This atmosphere extends in both directions—Malehorn always feels comfortable raising issues with his superiors, even GE chairman Jeff Immelt, as long as he also has a solution to suggest. "That's always a good trait at GE," he noted. "People who can just raise a problem but not give you their solution are not as helpful."

## Stretch yourself...always

Malehorn contends that many of today's would-be leaders don't want to stretch themselves, singling out one more important strategy for developing leadership skills in employees—or in oneself. "You have to step out of your comfort zone," he said.

Malehorn remembers waking up in the middle of the night after accepting several leadership assignments (including a posting in France, despite his lack of fluency in French), asking himself, "What the heck did I just get myself into?" and breaking into a cold sweat. "But I look back later and go, 'Wow, I did that.' Not all by himself, of course: "As long as I'm surrounding myself with a good team, we're going to figure this out. You're not taking it on yourself."

"Leaders coming up today tend to be impatient for promotion." Malehorn said, but on the plus side, he's struck by the new generation's desire to do something positive in their careers. "They really want to connect with their communities. You have to be able to energize your teams." Malehorn said in describing a successful leader. "You have to be very inclusive, you can't build boundaries, you can't look at layers, you really have to connect with the people, and build loyalty and commitment."

Good advice from an industry leader for managers and potential leaders in any industry.

Leading for Results  
Ragan's Management Resources  
111 E. Wacker Dr., Ste. 500  
Chicago, IL 60601  
Telephone: 800-878-5331  
Email: RMR@ragan.com  
www.managementresources.com  
Reprinted with permission

Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening when you'd have preferred to talk.

—Doug Larson, Olympic Gold Medalist



## Self-Direction

# Make a date to Deal with Stress

Stress can certainly build up from small, seemingly unimportant things and fill your life with pressure, but the good news is that you can also successfully attack stress in small ways. Here's a very simple one:

**Create a monthly system.** Buy a wall calendar that has a separate page for every month. Hang it someplace you'll see it, so you'll remember to flip the page.

**Note your stresses.** At the beginning of each month, write down a list of five to ten things that are currently worrying you. Some may be large, like the illness of someone close to you, or career difficulties—or maybe something small, like traffic jams on the way to work. Fasten the list to the following month on the calendar so it's out of sight until the beginning of that month.

**Compare lists.** On the first day of the next month, write down a new list of what's worrying you. Then flip over the page and compare last month's lists to the new one. Chances are good that a fair number of the worries you had last month are gone by now, just in the course of living.

Maybe you had a good month at work and aren't quite so concerned about your career. Maybe you found a new route to work that avoids the traffic, and so on. Of course, that person close to you may still be ill, and you'll probably have some new small worries to bear.

**But the truth is that much of what stresses us out doesn't last.**

**Think ahead.** The next step, of course, is to catch yourself as you begin to obsess on a new worry. Before you do, ask yourself, "Is this issue really worth getting so upset about? Is it going to be a lasting issue?" Well, now you have a way to test it: Write it down on your monthly list.

Managers Intelligence Report  
Lawrence Ragan Communications  
316 N. Michigan Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60601  
[www.managementresources.com](http://www.managementresources.com)  
Reprinted with permission

## Innovation Spotlight:

# The Governor's Award for Quality and Productivity: Innovation at its best in Missouri state government



By Denise Osborne, Center for Management and Professional Development

These days, almost any study on organizational growth and survival suggests that businesses rank innovation as one of their top priorities. These studies support the realization that we need innovators today more than any time before.

That's one of the reasons the Office of Administration works so diligently to coordinate and promote the annual Governor's Award for Quality and Productivity (GAQP). Each year, teams of state employees submit information about projects they have championed that address one of four categories:

- Customer Service
- Efficiency/Process Improvement
- Innovation; and
- Technology in Government

Teams selected to receive a Governor's Award must meet established requirements that make their project a model of excellence for state government nationally.

A selection committee evaluates each project to select one winning team from each of the four categories—then forwards their recommendations to the Governor's Office for final approval. While all categories may not be awarded each year, the goal of the program remains constant—to establish clear winners that serve as a model of efficiency, quality, and effectiveness for state employees to follow.

This year, the GAQP program was revised to include a new Pinnacle Award that can be given, if in the opinion of the selection committee, one nomination clearly encompasses multiple award categories, or exceeds all other nominations.

**Photos:** OA Commissioner Kelvin Simmons providing opening remarks at the GAQP ceremony  
Commissioner Simmons, Department of Corrections Director George Lombardi and Division of Personnel Director, Bill Miller congratulating a member of the Puppies for Parole team

Listed below are this year's award recipients:

### Customer Service:

*MoDOT Motor Carrier Services Customer Satisfaction Team*  
Department of Transportation

### Efficiency/Process Improvement:

*H1N1 Mass Vaccination Team*  
Department of Health and Senior Services

### Innovation:

*Puppies for Parole*  
Department of Corrections

### Technology in Government:

*Contamination Characterization through Airborne Hyper-spectral Imagery*  
Department of Natural Resources  
University of Missouri-Columbia  
Missouri Wing Civil Air Patrol

### Pinnacle Award Winner:

*Diverging Diamond Interchange*  
Department of Transportation

Each of these teams represent the very best in innovation, teamwork and service excellence.

**Solutions encourages you to read more about the accomplishment of each winning team and the GAQP program at**

[www.training.oa.mo.gov/erp/index.htm](http://www.training.oa.mo.gov/erp/index.htm).

## Choosing the right words:

*Ready-made phrases to get started*

Great managers seem to have a way with words. They're able to inspire and motivate, and they get to the point.

But it's not easy. Even the best managers can struggle to find the right words. Here are a few ready-made phrases for just those times.

**To deny an employee request:** *"I'd like to be able to do that for you. The reason why I can't is \_\_\_\_\_. Here's what I can do for you."*

**To encourage buy-in when delegating:** *"I have a project I'm bringing to you because it's essential it's done with care."*

**To develop solutions:** *"What changes do you think we could make at this point to improve the results?"*

**While investigating a complaint:** *"I'll be talking with other people about this. Is there someone you think I should talk to?"*

**To uncover employee strengths:** *"What can I do to make your job more satisfying and less frustrating?"*

Source: Perfect Phrases for Managers and Supervisors by Meryl Runion

## Ask questions: The single most important habit for innovative thinkers

*By Paul Sloane*

Asking questions—the simplest and most effective way of learning. Brilliant thinkers never stop asking questions because they know that this is the best way to gain deeper insights.

Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google, said, "We run this company on questions, not answers." He knows that if you keep asking questions you can keep finding better answers.

When Greg Dyke became Director General of the BBC in 2000 he went to every major location and assembled the staff. They came expecting a long presentation. He simply sat down with them and asked a question, "What is the one thing I should do to make things better for you?" Then he listened. He followed this with another question, "What is the one thing I should do to make things better for our viewers and listeners?" He knew that at that early stage he could learn more from his employees than they could from him. The fact that the new boss took time to question and then listen earned him enormous respect.

Columbo solved his mysteries by asking many questions; as do all the great detectives—in real life as well as fiction. The great philosophers spend their whole lives asking deep questions about the meaning of life, morality, truth and so on. We do not have to be quite so contemplative, but we should nonetheless ask questions about the situations we face. It is the best way to get the information we need to make sound decisions.

### Why don't we ask questions?

If it is obvious that asking questions is such a powerful way of learning, why do we stop asking questions? For some people the reason is that they assume they know all the main things they need to know and they do not bother to ask more. They cling to their beliefs and remain certain in their assumptions—yet they often end up looking foolish.

Other people are afraid that by asking questions they will look weak, ignorant or unsure. They like to give the impression that they are decisive and in command of the issues. They fear that asking questions might introduce uncertainty or show them in a poor light. In fact, asking questions is a sign of strength and intelligence—not a sign of weakness or uncertainty. Great leaders constantly ask questions and are well aware that they do not have all the answers.

With our friends, employees, colleagues or other managers we can check assumptions and gain a better appreciation of the issues by first asking questions. Start with very basic, broad questions—then move to more specific areas to clarify your understanding. Examples of open questions are:

- What are we really here to do—what is our added value?
- Why do you think this happened?
- What might have caused this problem?
- How can we reduce customer complaints?
- Why do you think he feels that way?
- What other possibilities should we consider?

As we listen carefully to the answers, we formulate further questions. When someone gives an answer we can often ask, "Why?" The temptation is to plunge in with our opinions, responses, conclusions or proposals. The better approach is to keep asking questions to deepen our comprehension of the issues before making up our mind. Once we have mapped out the main points we can use closed questions to get specific information.

Closed questions give the respondent a limited choice of responses—often just yes or no. Examples of closed questions are:

- When did this happen?
- Was he angry?
- Where is the shipment right now?

By giving the other person a limited choice of responses we get specific information and deliberately move the conversation forward in a particular direction.

Asking many questions is very effective, but it can make you appear to be inquisitorial and intrusive. So it is important to ask questions in a friendly and unthreatening way. Do not ask accusing questions. "What do you think happened?" will probably get a better response than, "Are you responsible for this disaster?"

Try to practice asking more questions in your everyday conversations. Instead of telling someone something, ask them a question. Intelligent questions stimulate, provoke, inform and inspire. Questions help us to teach as well as to learn.

Paul Sloane is the founder of Destination Innovation ([www.destination-innovation.com](http://www.destination-innovation.com)), a consulting firm that helps improve innovation. He gives talks and workshops on leadership, creativity and innovation. He is the author of 17 books; the most recent being, "The Innovative Leader," published by Kogan-Page.