



# I M P A C T

Your Performance Improvement Resource from BEI

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## Performance Perspectives

### Creativity and Economic Wealth

*In today's day and age - where does economic wealth come from?  
People have argued that it comes from knowledge, it comes from information, or it comes from technology. However, the more fundamental factor is that we now have an economy powered by human creativity. Creativity – “the ability to create meaningful new forms,” as Webster’s dictionary puts it – is now the driving source of competitive advantage.  
– Richard Florida author of “The Rise of the Creative Class”*

The key generator of economic wealth today comes from human creativity. Not just technological or economic creativity and innovation like entrepreneurship – creating new firms and industries. Creativity is far more sweeping and increasingly in every product we use today. It’s not just software, computers or semiconductors, but every day products from automobiles to eyewear have a creative component that is the source of value. It isn’t just the physicality of products that is creating a motor force for economic growth, but how we constantly revise and enhance every product, process, and activity imaginable and fit them together in new ways. In today’s economy creativity is pervasive and ongoing, and the winners in the long run are those who can create and keep creating.

Thus creativity has come to be a highly prized commodity in our economy – and yet it is not a commodity. Creativity comes from people. Creativity is not a province of a few select geniuses that can get away with breaking the mold because they possess superhuman talents. It is a capacity inherent to varying degrees in virtually all people, which means that creativity can be developed in all organizations. Creativity must be motivated in a multitude of ways, by employers and by people themselves. Creativity requires an economic environment that can nurture its many forms.

Creativity involves distinct kinds of thinking and habits that

#### **How to Bury a Good Idea**

*It will never work.  
We’ve never done it that way before.  
We’re doing fine without it.  
We can’t afford it.  
We’re not ready for it.  
It’s not our responsibility.*

must be cultivated both in the individual and in the workplace. Even though much about the creative process seems strange and elusive, there does appear to be a consistent method underlying it. Creative people share certain activities – steps in the creative process. There is no such thing as a recipe for creativity, yet over and over, in the lives of great artists, scientists and thinkers, they:

- Challenge Assumptions
- Recognize Patterns
- See in New Ways
- Make Connections
- Take Risks
- Take Advantage of Chance
- Construct Networks

These activities are key to open the doors to creative powers – powers that an organization needs to grow economic wealth and nurture a creative environment.

### **Creative People Challenge Assumptions**

Challenging assumptions is daring to question what most people take as truth. People once assumed that the world was flat, that the sun revolved around the earth, and that evil spirits caused disease. The bold thinkers who challenged these ideas were scorned or even despised by their contemporaries, but later were revered.

### **Creative People Recognize patterns**

Recognizing patterns means perceiving significant similarities or differences in ideas, events or physical phenomena. In searching for patterns, we attempt to give form to the world. Detecting patterns in the unknown is a way of creating order out of chaos.

### **Creative People See in New Ways**

Seeing in new ways is seeing the commonplace with new perceptions, transforming the familiar to the strange, and the strange to the familiar. Looking at this page, what do you see? You probably see it as words to read. Now try looking at it as a graphic – as a page of images and type. Or imagine that you are trying to decode a secret message hidden on this page. Now think of it as a collection of billion carbon atoms.

### **Creative People Make Connections**

Making connections is bringing together seemingly unrelated ideas, objects or events in a way that leads to new conception. Making connections can be like the moment in a mystery story when the author suddenly allows the link between episodes or characters to become apparent.

### **Creative People Take Risks**

Taking risks is daring to try new ways or ideas with no control over outcome. Creative people are willing to take risks. They are not afraid of being wrong; they are willing to try long shots.

### **Creative People Use Chance**

Using chance is taking advantage of the unexpected. The creative person is open to chance. Pasteur said, “Chance favors a prepared mind.”

## Creative People Construct Networks

Constructing networks is forming associations between people for an exchange of ideas, perceptions, questions, and encouragement. A net is stronger than its separate strands. Letters, meetings, and chats stimulate ideas.

The successful organizations of the future will be those that overflow with new ideas and imaginative ways to foster and embrace innovation. According to a new PricewaterhouseCoopers report, "Innovation and Growth: A Global Perspective", innovation will be the prime strategy for company growth and value creation.

**BEI** can help your organization develop the competency models for innovation and create an environment that fosters innovation and creativity.

## Lessons Learned

**Topic:** Diversity

An organization's diversity awareness and the skills to successfully manage the diversity continue to impact business success. Whether meeting with customers or working in internal teams, members of an organization need to continually see value in differences to produce positive business results. Here are some lessons that we learned in working with clients on diversity initiatives:

- **Diversity should not be confused with affirmative action.** Diversity refers to differences found in the mainstream population. In addition to differences in gender, race, and culture, you can also find diversity in peoples' learning styles, work styles, and personalities. Affirmative action refers to a moral and social responsibility to increase the representation of those who experienced past wrongs because they were not of the majority population. Only affirmative action is based on numerical measures.
- **Learn to see diversity as opportunity rather than a barrier.** Our biases toward the unfamiliar do not evolve overnight. The "baggage" we carry with us as a result of our upbringing and our personal and professional experiences as adults constantly impacts us. To rid ourselves of this baggage and begin looking at diversity as an opportunity, 1) we need to examine the assumptions we make about differences, 2) check the reality of those assumptions, and 3) begin building trust by looking for commonalities rather than differences.
- **Communicate.** Don't avoid communicating with someone because they speak with an accent or take too long to express themselves. You could miss out on a very important idea or business concept. How do you become more open and accepting of different communication styles and, in the process, improve your communications? Go back to the basics. As the speaker, clarify your purpose, clearly state your message, and check for understanding. As the receiver, listen attentively, acknowledge the message, and respond appropriately without judging the message.
- **Don't make exceptions for diversity.** A successful organization is one that is inclusive. Often the assumption is made that diversity brings with it a need to adjust or lower organizational standards or make arrangements to provide special consideration or treatment for certain people. This only produces misunderstanding, conflict, and exclusivity. The value of diversity is in the successful and profitable blending of ideas and experiences while working toward a common vision.

## Marketplace

### Competency Model Definition and Alignment

*Aligning Human Capital with Business Goals*

Acquiring and developing the right human capital has become a strategic issue for many organizations. To succeed in today's knowledge-based economy, you need to select the best talent, align this talent to your business objectives, and provide continuous development opportunities.

One way to accomplish this is to identify the competencies, or capabilities, that your organization needs to meet its business goals (core competencies) and that individuals need to perform their jobs (job specific competencies). Aligning these competencies with the strategic objectives of your organization can provide a model for:

- Recruiting
- Selection and Hiring
- Succession Planning
- Performance Management
- Training Design and Development

BEI works with companies to define and align core or position specific competency models, create Learning Maps to help employees close the gap between current and expected performance for a specific competency, and develop interview guides based on these competencies.

Contact **BEI** at 248.652.8100 to learn how we can help you align your human capital with your business goals using competency models.

## Worthy Web Sites

<http://www.pwcglobal.com/> *Business News from PricewaterhouseCoopers.* Gateway to a wealth of business insights and solutions such as Executive Perspectives (containing archived articles), Management and Industry Issues, and Survey Reports. Use the Site Map to help with navigation.

<http://www.howstuffworks.com/index.htm> *How Does (just about anything) Work?* The ultimate website for the curious at heart. This Scientific American award winning site explains how everyday objects, technology, pick pockets, fireworks and even that singing fish works.

<http://www.mel.org/> *Virtual Library for Michiganians.* Access to over 20,000 sites using the award winning index in 14 major subject areas including business, news, education, recreation, and governmental issues. Databases also available.

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