

Mastering the FISO Factor

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by Blythe J. McGarvie

Communicating for Innovation

About a year ago, I had an “aha” moment. Affiliates working with Leadership for International Finance perform outstanding and customized work. We share an approach to business that emphasizes communication despite differences in functional expertise. When we decided to work together, we needed to tap into this common element as a means of finding a way to repeat what works well to build profits. So, we held a day session focusing on innovation. The “aha” was that the various models for solutions, leadership, insight or influence varied, but the core stayed the same: talking about innovation created actionable ideas.

LIF’S LESSONS:

What we’ve got here is...

[a] failure to communicate.

Some men you just can’t reach.

*So you get what we had here last week,
which is the way he wants it...*

*-spoken by Captain, Road Prison 36
to Cool Hand Luke (1967 movie)*

This was true for what we were doing in the room and just as true for our clients. One of the key discussion points revolved around The Innovator’s Solution, written by Clay Christensen. He wrote that once you stop delivering growth, the odds of ever being able to deliver it in the future are very low. Of all companies whose growth had stalled, only 4% were able to reignite growth even to a rate of 1% above GDP. That statistic is alarming. Think about those companies once heralded by brokers and headlines as innovative and wise investments that now lay on the



Blythe McGarvie speaking at the College of William and Mary

ground like dogs. (Many non-internet companies come to mind.)

Usually well before a share price drops, leading indicators suggest financial results will be heading south unless the company takes new action. One of those leading indicators is avoiding innovation. Management may think it is communicating the needs for change and the ways of implementing it, but the people in the company continue to do the same things,

day in and day out, hunkering down and hoping that the changes in their markets and demands from their customers will go away.

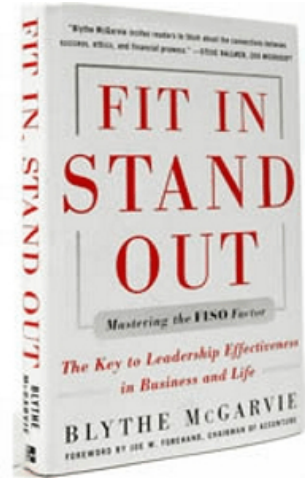
LIF'S LESSONS:

Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower..

- Steve Jobs

Practical innovation oftentimes depends on learning as well as communication. Learning is one of the FISO Factors. You must learn “what is” before you can reach for “what could be.” Take the example of Michael Armstrong at the beginning of his tenure as AT&T’s CEO. He explained that his first task would be to listen. “Paradoxically,” explains Dick Martin, AT&T’s former head of media relations, “the best way for the CEO to engage employees initially is not to give a rousing speech, but to listen.” Actually, it is not such a paradox. The leader who does not bother to learn what is happening within his company and within the minds and hearts of its employees cannot cope to create feasible futures. Further, if you cannot fit in, you cannot lead the change efforts that are necessary to successfully innovate.

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Fit In, Stand Out: Mastering the FISO Factor as the Key to Leadership Effectiveness in Business and Life, was published in October 2005 by McGraw-Hill. It is available from Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, and other fine booksellers. (ISBN: 0071460799)

The *Mastering the FISO Factor* newsletter supports the mission of Leadership for International Finance to achieve outstanding, sustainable results for clients through speeches at conferences and forums, consulting with organizations, and coaching executives.

The FISO Factor™
Fit In, Stand Out

