

GROUP GENIUS

The Creative Power of Collaboration

KEITH SAWYER

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The Web site for this book is at www.groupgenius.net.

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MAIN IDEA

Collaboration is the real secret to breakthrough creativity – not a lone genius having an “Aha!” flash of inspiration. Genuinely new ideas are never the brainchild of a single person. Instead, they emerge bottom up from the creative efforts of a large number of people, each of whom nudge the idea forward or add a little twist here or there. What finally comes out the other end of the creative process is an idea which cannot truthfully be said to be the exclusive result of any one person’s thinking. Instead, all kinds of different people have added a little bit here and deleted what doesn’t work over there.

From an organizational perspective, if you want to generate more earth-shattering innovations, make it easier for people to work together on new ideas. Install collaboration as the central framework of your innovation projects, and don’t forget to invite your customers and your peers to be part of the overall process. Find new and better ways to help people collaborate using emerging communication technology and you will be well positioned to see some highly creative ideas come forward.

Above all, don’t delegate the responsibility for being innovative to some research and development unit or other designated part of your organization. Instead, make it possible and feasible for everyone to collaborate on developing new ideas. That’s the only way you can fully utilize the combined brain power of your people to best effect.

“Innovation is what drives today’s economy, and our hopes for the future – as individuals and organizations – lie in finding creative solutions to pressing problems. My goal is to reveal the unique power of collaboration to generate innovation. And it’s my hope that you’ll use these new insights about group genius to create more effective collaborations in your own life – at work, at home and in your community. We can all tap into the creative power of collaboration to make our own insights more frequent and more successful. Forget the myths about historical inventors: the truth is always a story of group genius. And today’s innovations emerge from ever more complex organizations and many interacting teams. Group genius creates today’s cutting-edge products.”

– Keith Sawyer

Group Genius

Part 1

The Highly Impressive Creative Power of Group Collaboration

7 key characteristics of effective creative teams

10 essential conditions for creativity to naturally flow

Although crediting an individual for an innovation is a tidy and simple way to do things, the reality is most significant innovations which come about are actually an amalgamation of the thoughts and ideas of lots of different people.

When people pool their talents and ideas in a group setting, some highly creative ideas can be generated. If the group is allowed to improvise by having the goal specified but the means left entirely open, it’s not at all unusual for some exceptionally creative approaches to get suggested and ultimately implemented.

Group collaboration has loads of untapped potential. You just have to develop some workable ways to channel this creative force in the right direction.

Part 2

How Group Collaboration Works in Real-World Situations

5 basic stages:
1. Preparation
2. Time Off
3. The Spark
4. Selection
5. Elaboration

The most recent research on the collaborative nature of the mind suggests although an innovative insight may feel like an “Aha!” style flash of inspiration, the chances are the true roots of your new idea lie in collaboration rather than a solitary creative leap.

If you’re honest, you’ll admit your flash of inspiration is an amalgamation of your previous analysis, hard work and discussion with other people who have each added little tweaks and inputs.

This is good to know. It means creativity isn’t magic or mystery but is a process which can be followed and used by anyone, regardless of their innate personal creative capacities. Using collaboration, everyone can generate more frequent insights.

Part 3

How to Build a Genuinely Collaborative World-Class Organization

10 secrets
5 key features
Application to society at large

Most of what is usually written about innovation is based on the myth of the lone genius working in splendid isolation. With this in mind, the real key to making any organization more innovative is to make it easier for effective group collaboration to occur.

The more teams you can get interacting together, the more robust and worthwhile will be the innovations which flow. Design your organization to maximize group interactions and you create the ideal conditions for breakthrough new ideas to bubble up and get noticed.

This same principle of working together can also be scaled up to society as a whole. If new and better ways of working together can emerge, we can literally solve every problem we face.

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