



Don't Stifle Intuition in Your Workplace

How to foster intuition among your employees.

By Arupa Tesolin

Recently, French architect Jean-Pierre Houdin put forward a new theory on how the Great Pyramid in Egypt may have been constructed from the inside out. This theory credibly challenges previous theories, which contend that the stones used to build the massive structure were lifted into place using external ramps.

Houdin was able to crack the 4,500-year-old mystery before he even visited the site, by using flashes of intuition that his father, an engineer, received eight years ago.

Houdin's discovery is yet another example of the important role that intuition plays in the development of new products, ideas, and inventions. Intuition, which is typically defined as knowledge or insight that arrives without thinking and shows up through a vision or images, or a clear sense of knowing, inner words, gut feelings, or physical sensations that can be unique to the person receiving them.

The intractability of intuition has long been the reason why it is undervalued as a business tool. Linkages between intuitive insights and their outcomes are ambiguous and hard to trace. Instead, most organizations choose to rely solely on information and knowledge, although they often fail to produce the desired outcomes.

As the information age matures, companies are looking to become more innovative to stay competitive and generate profit. Computers, after all, can process linear thinking better than humans can. As a result, valuable skills such as intuition have now

become the premium stock in trade for human capital.

Intuition is economical. Generating results by encouraging greater intuition doesn't require a lot of capital or time. It frees the imagination and fits organizations' sustainability models by enabling their employees to draw from a wider set of variables than analysis. It generates outcomes far beyond its investment, often yielding results that are disproportionately large by comparison.

Doesn't it make sense then to cultivate a skill that is well worth our attention and investment?

Encouraging intuitive skills

Intuition is connected to issues we find increasingly important these days—meaning, wisdom, and creativity. Unlimited, it serves as the ultimate renewable resource for imaginative potential.

Here are some of the questions you can ask to improve innovation in your organization:

- How can our organization become more intuitive?
- How can we develop intuitive capabilities in our talent force and managers?
- What kind of a culture do we need to support intuition?
- Where are the best places in our organization to apply intuition?

These are some of the steps that you can take to champion the use of intuition as a sustainable business advantage in your organization.

Recognize intuition as a skill that can be developed.

Most employees and managers today are accustomed to an environment that does not encourage intuition. Becoming intuitive takes practice. Include developing intuition capabilities in your competency plans. Decide how and where you want your staff to be intuitive, and develop learning and training plans from there. Make sure you consult and exchange ideas with your staff about this initiative.

Three Steps to Improve Intuition

1. Be open-minded. Create a learning goal for yourself to be more intuitive. By doing this, you allow both your logical and creative minds to bring more intuitive cues to your attention.

2. Pay attention. By recognizing the many ways in which intuition reveals itself to you, you can pay attention to its signals and cues to strengthen your intuition smarts.

3. Do nothing for five minutes each day. The clearest intuitive signals come through when you are relieved of stress and overburdened thought processes. Give yourself the privilege of at least five minutes per day just to relax and be aware of the present time. This will help you to slow down and become more efficient in developing your intuition skills. Self-aware people are more intuitive and tend to be better listeners, change agents, and relationship builders who are more anticipatory, proactive, and open to new directions.

Don't just validate intuition; start developing intuitive capabilities. It's easy to get stuck in the validation phase, in which the goal is recognized but no real action is taken to achieve it. Save your energy and get better results by going straight to building capability and learning through use.

Build an intuitive language. Becoming more intuitive means inviting into the organization people who are physically, emotionally, and mentally balanced and can contribute the most to its agenda. People who are both intuitively and cerebrally intelligent add value by their creative contributions. Support them with a genuine commitment from your organization and management team that honors their contribution.



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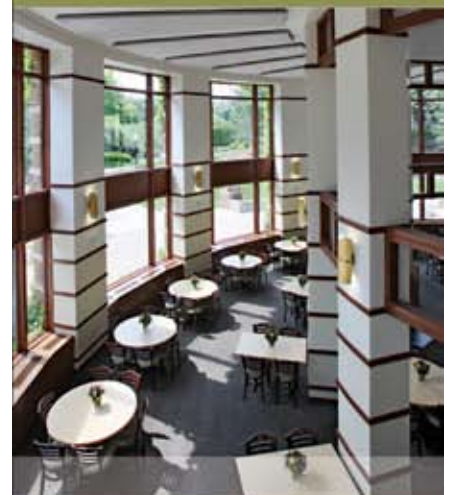
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To build an intuitive language, go back to your organization's "raison-d'être" and ask where intuition fits in and how. Then build your strategic language, your business stories, and the language of your business culture in ways that are inclusive of the kind of people and intuitive responsiveness you want.

Focus on connections rather than divisions. Define your customer relationships and processes in ways that value people with good intuition skills, and create a climate where your organization's stories and connections between intuition and results are recognized.

Recognize the value of providing an emotionally healthy workplace. Employees under stress are unlikely to be innovative. Prolonged misery exacts a toll from even the strong. Make an effort to eradicate stress and get rid of poor management practices and processes that put an unnecessary strain on your employees. Turn up the joy factor, and turn down the stress.

Successful organizations find ways to help people fulfill their dreams and inspire commitment by articulating a great vision and promoting an open and honest communication style, which in turn fosters real cooperation.

Focus on application with less analytical information and more imagination. Technology, information, tasks, and role demands on the job compete for attention. The more "noise" there is, the less clear and effective we become. We need to change the linear way we compartmentalize data—collecting lots of information, then sorting, categorizing, and sifting through it until few workable solutions emerge.

Intuitive clarity is more like a tuning station that cuts through the noise and meaningless information. Intuitive solutions emerge in a nonlinear way, sometimes through surprise and opportunity, and thrive during periods of change.

Recognize the heart as an instrument of perception. Try this short experiment. Experience in your own senses the thought of "having an intuitive culture" versus "working as you do today." Which one gets you more inspired? Intelligence derived from the heart can be superior to intellectual knowledge. We cannot afford the luxury of dismissing vital knowledge that lies outside traditional knowledge domains. Instead we must allow ourselves to be guided by rightness in order to cultivate emotional investment and personal meaning.

Get specific with innovation capital. Organizations don't innovate; people do. If you're serious about innovation, it has to start with individuals. Only when we start to see people as innovators and begin to develop their capabilities does real innovation happen at a collective level.

The future is all about unleashing innovation and invention capacity. We dream first, and then create. We need to learn how we truly move a concept from the unimaginable to the imaginable, then to the conceivable, and finally to the created.

So start by turning people into innovators, and ideas into inventions and results. Build an innovation strategy supported by clear training and development plans. But recognize that innovation training is part of a continuum, in which there are many other components, such as building imagination, learning creative problem solving and visualization, and developing creative thinking tools.

Shift from an "inherited vision" to a view of the future where anything is possible. To attain new visions we must engage our imaginations. Currently, organizations mostly perform adaptive innovation based on implementing incremental improvements. Thus, they proceed on the basis of an "inherited vision" from the past, which is usually the industry benchmark.

If we dream only adaptive dreams, we encourage limitation and dis-

Famous Uses of Intuition

Nikola Tesla (1856-1943), a Serbian American inventor of alternating current motors and generators, could visualize machines in such great detail that he "knew" whether or not they would work and what improvements and modifications could be made even before the machines were built. His flashes of insight were so compelling that he could see the images as if laid out on the sidewalk before him.

Isaac Newton (1642-1727), the father of modern physics, had the power to hold a mental problem continuously in his mind until the solution was revealed. Then he would "dress up" what had been revealed through intuition in the acceptable format for presentation, in his case the language of mathematics.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), a brilliant musician, composer, and child prodigy, could "hear" in his imagination entire musical scores as if in a lively dream. By the time he wrote them on paper they were already complete pieces.

courage invention. Pure innovation is something else entirely. It is a new dream, a fresh vision.

By saying "yes" to intuition we open up a lot of doors for greater success and creativity. By learning how intuition occurs for us we gain command of our abilities to recognize it as more than a fleeting experience. Then, once we understand what it's telling us, we can move on to even greater things.

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