

# THE EXTRAORDINARY TEAM

*Tips and techniques to improve  
the way your teams work.*

## A Different Perspective *By Robert Theobald*

How do we know we are moving in positive directions rather than reinforcing dying patterns?

Tom Atlee has stated that “things are getting better and better and worse and worse, faster and faster.” I use this insight widely and find that few people fail to resonate with it. The question then becomes how do we distinguish between better and better and worse and worse in the context of an ever faster rate of change.

A first step is to admit that “planning” is becoming impossible. Planning assumes that one can be aware of the most likely future states of systems and be ready to deal with them. In today’s world, events will increasingly blind-side us. For example, practically nobody foresaw the fall of the Berlin Wall and the essential collapse of communism.

More recently, India’s nuclear testing was a “surprise” despite the more than adequate warnings from the new government. The continued developments from the Asian collapse

and El Nino weather patterns show how events outrun our forecasting.

The challenge today is not to “plan” but to have systems that can respond rapidly and effectively to whatever conditions emerge. This is the difference between “getting one’s ducks in a row” and having people available to respond as conditions change.



One helpful image is to think of running the rapids: one does not plan what will happen at a given moment but one places the competent people in those positions where they can deal with the vagaries of the river.

And this is the overall clue to what is “better and better.” We need to make the opportunities to create more intricate and resilient systems. We cannot plan a positive future. But we can so organize our societies that they will act in ways that respond to opportunities and challenges.

*Brad Harper of Trigon sent this to me. Interesting perspective... I think there’s a balance between planning & having the right people in place to take advantage of opportunities.*

*Reprinted with permission of Robert Theobald, author of “Reworking Success.”*

## Be Creative & Critical with Storyboards

Storyboards are visualizations of the team’s work. First developed by Walt Disney to display the animators’ work at a glance, storyboards are a great way to collectively analyze, improve, create or present information. If your team is planning a project, solving a problem, preparing for a presentation, developing a process or communicating ideas, storyboarding helps the team to create *and* evaluate their work.

Storyboarding taps into both the creative right brain and analytical left brain to improve both the flow and the content. It helps the team to see the logic of their concepts and forces them to organize and critically assess their work. Try these techniques to storyboard your project:

### In this issue . . .

*Team Activities:  
Streamline a Process*

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The Individualized  
Corporation*

*Why Customers Aren’t  
Coming*



### Team Feedback

The single most important skill in solving team problems is the ability to give and receive constructive feedback. When discord arises, most people tend to get defensive, react negatively and then justify their actions. Others simply sit on their feelings for the sake of team harmony and hope the situation will take care of itself.

When a problem arises, team members must take responsibility to give feedback to each other in a meaningful way:

- ◆ Be timely.
- ◆ Ask if it’s wanted.
- ◆ Phrase as a statement.
- ◆ Use “I” statements.
- ◆ Be descriptive.
- ◆ Give specific examples.
- ◆ Don’t exaggerate.
- ◆ Be positive, honest & direct.
- ◆ Address only those behaviors they can change.

Listen to the feedback as an opportunity for growth and improvement. Acknowledge the valid points and thank them.

# TEAM

*"The team is really looking forward to tackling this challenging race. Coast Guard people thrive on challenges and this is a great race to demonstrate teamwork, fitness and can-do attitude."*

*Rich Arnold  
Team USCG, RAAM*

## ▶ Storyboards *(cont'd)*

**Gather** a small group of four to eight people. Write the *(continued on page 2)* title at the top of a large piece of poster paper. Make sure that everyone understands what the topic is and why the team is holding the session.

**Brainstorm** important subjects to be considered. Ask each team member to write their idea on a large (8"x10") index card with a thick marker, so all can see. Encourage symbols, drawings and stick figures to represent ideas, things, and people. Remember: a picture paints a thousand words! Continue brainstorming until all ideas are exhausted. Some common headers include: purpose, results, future state, people, equipment, actions, process, cost and miscellaneous.

**Critically discuss** each heading. Identify duplicates and subjects that are less important. Set aside headings that are considered to be a subcategory or "subber" under another heading. If there is an objection, the team tries to remove the objection by "plussing" or improving the idea. Change the card if the idea is improved. Remove the card if the objection cannot be resolved. Continue the discussion until the team agrees on the important subjects to be considered. Place the header cards directly underneath the

title, horizontally across the page. (Hint: for each header, use a different color index card. When developing the subbers, use the same color index cards. This helps the team to sort the different ideas).

**Choose one** header and brainstorm ideas to achieve the "header." Write the ideas or "subbers" on smaller (4"x6") index cards and place them under the heading. Continue brainstorming until all ideas are exhausted. Then, critically discuss the subbers as above. As you begin to see connections, use arrows to connect ideas and show relationships between items.

**Continue** to generate subbers for each of the headings. Make sure you brainstorm first, *then* critically discuss the items. Try using an extra-large index card with "creative" written on one side and "critical" on the other as a signal to the team! The ultimate objective is to narrow the list of creative ideas to something manageable.

**Take a picture** of the completed board. You don't want lose all that great work! Storyboarding helps the team to see where they are lacking substance and makes it easier to identify and correct the ideas. It allows the team to alternate between creative brainstorming and critical review, while keeping a visual record of the team's work.

*Reprinted from Kristin's TeamWork column in the Daily Press, May 7, 1998.*

## ▶ Team USCG: Race Across AMerica

Talk about teamwork! **Quality Process Consultants, Inc.** is proud to sponsor the Coast Guard Team in the grueling Race Across America (RAAM). Heralded as the "toughest race in the world," **Rich Arnold** and three of his fellow Coasties, **John Davis, Kevin Sprouse** and **Gary Wilhelm** will start in Irvine, CA on July 26 and will finish in Savannah, GA 2,900 miles and six or seven days later!

The first ever all-military team to compete in the RAAM, CG Team RAAM has been logging hundreds of training miles every week and a "century" (over 100 miles) each weekend. The team recruited a support crew to drive three vans, prepare meals, fix flat tires and basically keep them pedaling across the country without any major mishap.

As of this writing, the team was positioning itself in Irvine, waiting for the gun to go off! What an exciting moment in history. Good Luck Team Coast Guard!!



# TEAM

A newsletter designed to facilitate discussion and share tips and techniques to improve the way your teams work.

*Summer 1998  
Vol. 3 No.4*

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**The Extraordinary Team** is a quarterly publication distributed to clients, friends and partners of Quality Process Consultants, Inc. Articles are welcome and encouraged. We sincerely would like to know what you are doing.

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"Kristin is a beacon for other women business owners."

James L. Windsor  
Small Business Awards Luncheon

THE EXTRAORDINARY

# TEAM

## What's New at QPC Inc.

Hope you're enjoying the summer - and are able to take some time off as well. We've been busy helping our several clients do strategic planning and I am looking forward to doing my own this August!

For those of you who wonder who's coming and going...in June, **Amanda Wallace** had a baby girl, **Adriana Madison**, and is looking for a new position a little closer to her home in Gloucester. **Sandra Verdeja** has joined the staff as Concierge for the Arnold Building. In addition to answering the phone, she'll be keeping tabs on me and the other tenants. She hails from Chicago, so say "howdy" the next time you call!

Along with this month's newsletter, I have enclosed our brochure for the Arnold Building. We are very proud of the Antoinette and Adele rooms - and hope you can drop by for a tour soon.

I am really looking forward to the upcoming public facilitator workshops. If you are interested in attending, or know of someone interested, please give me a call.

If you can't come, we now have a three-cassette tape version of "Facilitation Skills" - from a session I did for ASTD last year. It's available for sale at \$49.95 and is full of great tips & techniques for great meetings.

Lastly, I am proud to have

## Seminars

August 25-26 **Facilitation Skills**  
Hampton, VA

September 15-16 **Advanced Facilitation**  
Hampton, VA

October 21-22 **Exercising Influence**  
Richmond, VA

*Please call 800.589.4733 for more information on our public course offerings.*

received the Women in Business Advocate of the Year Award from the Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce. Thank you for all your support - Kristin

## Practical Team Activities: Streamline the Process!

### Streamlining the Process!

*To demonstrate the issues associated with improving a process*

**Time - 20 minutes**

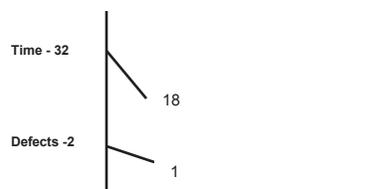
**No. of Participants: 5 or more**

**Materials Required:** A ball, a flipchart and two colored markers

Introduce this activity as a way to demonstrate the issues around improving a process. Ask the participants to stand up and gather around in a circle.

Explain to them that the ball you are holding is "a process." And the process starts here (hand the ball to a participant). Then ask the "starter" to throw the ball across the circle to another participant. (Don't forget to call their name before you throw it!) Continue to pass the ball until all participants have touched the ball ONCE.

Take the ball and explain that they have now defined their process. Give the ball to the starter and ask them to repeat the process - using the same order.



1 2 3 4 Interval

Congratulate them on their performance. However, the company down the street can do it faster. Give them two minutes to identify what they are going to do to improve their process by 50%. At the end of two minutes, time them, and post the cycle time and defects.

Congratulate them on their performance - they probably hit the target by realigning the people to the work flow.

Tell them that the company down the street can do it even faster. Give them another two minutes to improve their process by 50%.

Chart the progress, congratulate them and challenge them to do it faster until they have it down to 2 seconds.

Debrief the activity by asking what worked well. Some typical comments:

- ◆ There is a lot of chaos at first with people brainstorming ideas.
- ◆ Pick one idea and see if it works.
- ◆ You have to get close to each

“True empowerment occurs only when it grows out of a reciprocal system of faith. Those deep in the organization must have faith in their company and its leadership, and senior management must have faith in the people in its organization..”

Sumantra Ghoshal and Christopher A. Bartlett  
*The Individual Corporation.*



## From the Bookshelf

Okay, I admit it. The title intrigued me: **The Individualized Corporation: A Fundamentally New Approach to Management.** In screaming red letters across the top of the book jacket, it professed: “Great companies are defined by Purpose, Process and People.” Yep. I agreed with that. So I tucked it under my arm and took it home for some light, bed-time reading....

They said up front: “While not offering either universal solution or a quick-fix prescription, we believe we can provide managers with a perspective that will allow them to make sense of the revolution in which they find themselves, as well as suggest some ideas to help them manage successfully through it.”

I don’t believe in quick fixes either, so I kept reading. And before I knew it, two hours had passed.

The Individualized Corporation is interesting reading. I found it similar to Collins & Porras’ **Built to Last**, with lots of examples from companies who have been successful. Similarly, this book compares and contrasts the Individualized Corporation and the definitive Organizational Man.

I don’t think there is anything profoundly “new” in this book, but I did think that the book provides a great context in which many “new” concepts can be much more than just the “program du jour.” They simply *are* great ways for companies do business.

They maintain there are three core capabilities that distinguish the Individualized Corporation:

- ◆ The ability to inspire individual creativity and initiative in all its people, built on the fundamental faith in individuals.
- ◆ The ability to link and leverage pockets of entrepreneurial activity and individual expertise by building an integrated process of organizational learning.
- ◆ The ability to continuously renew itself.

I agree with much of the book - in theory. I think the challenge, however, is in implementation. The leadership *and* management have to have faith in individuals - and *each other*.

The book develops a “new” model of the organization as a “portfolio of processes” rather than a hierarchy of tasks. It describes the new roles that frontline, middle and top-level managers must play and examines the personal attitudes, knowledge, and skills they will need in order to succeed.

It gives some (not lots) of examples of companies who have successfully evolved. From these examples, we might be able to figure out what will work within our own culture.

Clearly, a program of the month strategy won’t work. Leadership must be committed to a set of core values around purpose, process and people — and behave consistently and systematically.

While this is a great book for forward thinkers — I am not sure mainstream corporate America is willing to have as much faith in the individual as Ghoshal and Bartlett have.

## Why Customers Aren’t Coming

If you’ve driven across America much, you’ve probably seen a sign sometime for Wall Drug Store in Wall, South Dakota. They advertise all over the country. I was in Singapore and I saw an arrow pointing west — it said something like “Wall Drug Store 10,000 miles.” This once little drug store in an unknown town has grown into a major tourist attraction — some days they’ll draw 20,000 people! But it wasn’t always that way.

In 1931, a young pharmacist and his wife bought the drug store in Wall, this dusty little town on the edge of the Badlands. And for five years, they barely eked out a living. On the verge of giving up, the druggist’s wife had an idea. Because of the new Mt. Rushmore attraction, lots of cars were going by — but they weren’t stopping. Her idea? Advertise the one thing those travelers needed after driving across that hot prairie — ice water.

They put out signs for free ice water..the people began to stop..and the rest is history. Here’s what that couple said looking back over the years at the amazing things that had happened — no matter where you live, you can succeed because wherever you are, you can reach out to other people with something they need!

Steve Holcomb sent me this e-mail. “Thought this might be useful in a team setting. People weren’t coming when all the drug store did was sell their products. But people started pouring in when the store identified a need and filled it! “

