

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 127

Need to influence transformation? Look for what's working...

Use Clues to Make Change Happen...

"If some stupid fans don't understand and appreciate such a gift they can go to hell." Mohammed Al

Fayed, Fulham FC Owner on erecting a Michael Jackson statue at Fulham's ground



"Michael Jackson statue at Fulham FC"

What would you do next in this situation?

You are facilitating a meeting with a team that is transforming how it provides its services.

You ask the people to describe their preferred future when everything is working well. What will be happening? What will people be doing, saying, thinking, feeling etc? How will the processes and systems be operating? They do it.

What happens next? Typically, the next step in organisations is to describe what is stopping the team from achieving the preferred future. They list what is wrong, things they have been discussing for ever that never seem to get resolved.

People become dispirited and defensive as they sense people are blaming them or their department for what is wrong. The positive energy drains away and resistance to change develops. Friction occurs, or worse, apathy. Actions aren't followed up.

Is this recognisable to you? It's noticeable in transformation programmes, especially when the initial euphoria has ebbed away.

An alternative approach for creative leaders is to identify what is working.

Where can we see clues that the preferred future is happening already, examples of good practice?

The purpose is to encourage people to sense that much is going well and they can build on it. In the book, "Solutions Focus", by Mark McKergow and Paul Z Jackson they refer to these clues / examples as "Counters".

Usually, I have teams list the examples on a flipchart and use them to influence the next exercise. Recently, while working with a fairly large team I found a way to build on each example that can help accelerate the transformation. It worked well, so I thought I would share it with fellow Gorillas.

SO

This is how you do it:

1. Identify key themes in the ideal future. For example with a team, two themes in an ideal future may be that they are collaborating well and they have much more face to face discussion. You may already have your themes in your existing vision or strategy. If you do, use them.
2. Ask them to find at least one clue from each area, e.g. "the Chief Finance Officer meets regularly with the Head of Sales" would be a clue to either of the above themes. Sometimes people will say that they cannot think of anything, often because they are seeking a big example. Small clues suffice so encourage people to look for them.

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3. Now for the additional piece. Ask them to identify where they might build on the clue, but in other places e.g. the Head of Sales might also meet face to face with the Head of Customer Service. It is important to find a small task here, something to implement easily. In practice we used a table to record the input as follows:

| THEMES | CLUES | HOW TO REPLICATE? |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Increased face to face communication | Head of Sales meets with CFO monthly | Head of Sales and Head of Customer Service to meet monthly |

The team can use these tasks in the third column as small steps to move the transformation forward.

You may question small steps, but often a transformation is happening at the same time as production. Asking people to take huge actions on top of daily tasks is a recipe for a transformation to stall.

ACTION

A small one! Try this tool with your team or with clients. Keep it simple at first and don't seek too many actions.

TO CLOSE

So where does Mr Jackson fit in? On Sunday I was at the Fulham Football Club ground to see my team play Blackpool. You may have seen in the press that Mohammed Al Fayed, the Fulham owner unveiled a statue of the singer Michael Jackson at the ground on the banks of the Thames.

If you have read any UK media you will know that the statue received some pretty awful press and Mr Al Fayed put up stiff resistance. With so much bad press he is highly unlikely to remove the statue now.

Having seen the statue myself I took a more solutions focused approach to highlight its positive aspects. So... It's almost in Fulham colours. It will provide shade on a sunny day. Sitting on its pedestal would give a nice view of the Oxford v Cambridge boat race on the Thames. Yes! And... It was unveiled on a day Fulham won 3 – 0. (That's one I'd like to replicate elsewhere.)

Yes. You can find positives clues in the most difficult situation. If the press had taken that approach we might have been able to influence Mr Al Fayed to at least cover the statue so it doesn't scare the seagulls. Still. I suspect they may give their own verdict on it.

John Brooker | Facilitate, Innovate, Transform.



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