

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 81

A great way you can obtain a shared sense of the future is to verbalise it in an interview ...

Create a Vision...

"The best way to predict the future is to invent it." Alan Kay, Computer Scientist



"Vision"

Do you need to explore the future? Have you ever seen a "Samurai warrior" playing "Fly Me to the Moon" on a grand piano, whilst his Japanese colleagues croon along? This was just part of a slightly surreal entertainment I enjoyed at a recent Solutions Focus conference in Cologne.

This was a ten out of ten event, a benchmark for other conferences, with great entertainment (my singing apart) and a great deal of learning. What was particularly useful for me was to learn new ways to use old tools and I'd like to share one with you.

Traditionally, when seeking to explore the future, I have groups draw pictures or use magazine photographs. This encourages discussion as people explore metaphors they can use to describe their situation.

At the conference, Hans Peter Korn, a Swiss consultant, demonstrated an excellent

alternative. In this case we are using a business scenario, but you could use it for any context.

HOW TO DO IT

If you would like a full description visit Hans Peter's [site](#) and download the PDF with the same name as this article). It works like this.

You start with a statement e.g. *How will my business still be competitive in five years' time? How will it look, what will we be doing?*

Peter next uses the idea of a time machine to take people five years in to the future, year by year. Finally you arrive. "We are in 2013 and what we want to happen has happened. The organisation is delighted and would like to hold some interviews, describing what the organisation is like now and how we achieved what we did."

People adopt the roles of internal stakeholders, e.g. the Managing Director, the Finance Director, one of the staff etc. and external stakeholders e.g. clients, union representatives, journalists. In addition, you have a facilitator, a scribe to write key notes on Post Its or cards (for use later) and an observer who ensures that people stay in the present tense and don't become problem focussed.

The interviews begin. These could be a group interview (asking different questions of different people) or on a one on one basis.

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Some example questions are:

- What have we achieved? What has changed since xxx?
- What have you noticed, specifically?
- How did we overcome difficulties?

After the interviews are complete, the facilitator brings everybody back to the present day. Following a short break, the facilitator asks the group about the interviews. Example questions are:

- What surprised them?
- What was interesting?
- What was better than expected?

Next the group reviews the notes, perhaps clustering them in to themes or evaluating which are the most important points for further discussion.

SO

I found this a very constructive and useful exercise for these reasons:

- The spontaneity of the responses can elicit previously unconscious or unspoken thoughts
- Verbalising thinking in this structured way deepens thought
- The group very quickly develops a greater understanding of different perspectives

ACTION

Download Hans Peter's article and get fuller details on the tool. Try this exercise with a few people before moving on to larger groups. If you would like my article on Solutions Focus, please send me an e-mail.

TO CLOSE

I mentioned I attended a Solutions Focus event. One of the questions we ask in this approach is the "miracle" question: "Imagine a miracle has occurred and what you want to

happen has happened. What would you sense is occurring?"

I sometimes find this question difficult to ask, because people scoff at the idea of miracles. However, at Brussels station on the way home from the event, I spoke to my son on the telephone.

He told me excitedly that our football team, Fulham, had just avoided relegation from the Premier League on goal difference, recording their first ever run of three away wins in the Premiership.

After that, I will never, ever, find the miracle question difficult to use. Not ever.

May miracles happen for you this week!

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