

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 92

Process is a great tool, but have a way around it if you don't want to get stuck

Have a Process Escape Hatch to Innovate...

"Nowadays, we have become so obsessed with process, we go to restaurants and eat the menu!" Unknown



"And feel sulky afterwards"

Are your processes a burden?

Many of you will enjoy listening to music and will use or be aware of iTunes, the Apple media download service, which allows you to purchase and listen to music on your PC. Recently, I have been enthused by a new service on iTunes called "Genius".

With this service, you click on a track you like, click the Genius button and it instantly provides a playlist of up to 99 songs to complement your selection. In addition, it lists similar tracks you might like to listen to and buy.

I now use the Genius process regularly and this led me to think about my old "process" of music selection. Essentially, a song would pop in to my

head and I would pull out a CD and play the album.

The problem was that out of my large collection of CDs I probably only played ten, as I tended to play my favoured albums. Playing single tracks from others was a chore.

When I bought an iPod, I transferred lots of albums on to it and I made up a few playlists. But again I found myself listening to the same ones.

In other words, the process limited my exposure to new stimulation and so my music listening became somewhat stale.

This thinking led me on to a recent conversation with a friend. He had mentioned that his company has a development process with clear guidelines and the usual gates to leap over, from requirements' gathering through to development.

It is a vital process, enabling and facilitating people to work efficiently. However, the process takes an age and any ideas not harvested in the requirements stage tend to get lost, which is not good for innovation. This has not been a problem with their main clients, who traditionally have tendered for major projects involving large sums

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and long lead times. However, the environment is changing:

- Existing customers and potential new customers are preferring smaller projects with shorter lead times
- The company is working with much smaller and nimbler partners who have no need for major processes; they ask the CEO and he says, "Do it!"

The process is causing tension between those who are responsible for the development process and those seeking to meet new customer needs.

SO

I am not suggesting we get rid of processes! Processes are vital for efficient working. However, I do suggest that process can become too rigid and limiting, as with my music analogy.

We therefore need to balance process with its focus on efficiency, with tools to enable flexibility and responsiveness. We need to give people ways to get round the process or perhaps have a sub process for exceptions, an "escape hatch".

My friend's company has a group of people working to identify how they can do just that.

ACTION

Think about any process in your organisation that is inhibiting people. What might you do about it?

If you have a similar issue with an innovation process, I recommend you read a copy of James A. Christiansen's work on innovation ("Building

the Innovative Organisation"). He identifies a number of management tools that can help.

Alternatively, employ a genius...

TO CLOSE

I admit Genius isn't perfect. For some reason, it doesn't work on all tracks and just now I used it on a Pink Floyd track where it listed as its top purchase recommendation.... "40 Golden Greats of Cliff Richards".

No disrespect to Cliff but this album includes the first record I ever bought, in 1962! Time to put on my cardigan and slippers I think!

Thank you for being a Gorilla Trooper, I look forward to writing more for you next year.

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