

TEAMWORK – IT TAKES ALL KINDS

Isaac Newton said "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."

It is a recognition that even Isaac Newton, one of the greatest thinkers of all time, cannot stand alone. He built on the achievements of others.

When we look at a supply chain or inventory management system we may not have or need the same calibre of thinkers but we do need to build on and with the work of others. We need to build on the skills, knowledge, capabilities and personalities of all the people who manage and operate the processes and systems.

It would be all too easy if we could read a treatise on how to run an inventory management system and apply it as the orthodoxy as to how to do things. The problem is that every business is different, at least to some extent, and the linkages across and beyond the supply chain, the translation of business strategies and policies into organisation, processes and systems are all different. We need people to mould and refine the way things work.

So let's look at how people can work together to make improvements and achieve breakthroughs that rise well above the standard orthodox approaches. How can you create and deliver something that genuinely adds value and rises above the pack?

A model of how people can work together to create these kind of superior outcomes has been described by Meredith Belbin. It describes nine team roles, all with something very different to contribute to the final result.

Without going into more detail, hopefully we are all aware of the need to work with a variety of people from across the spectrum to achieve a result. The trick of course is to understand how to balance these different roles. You might need Plants and Resource Investigators for ideas early in the life of a project. However they may be less important later during a change when an Implementer can translate things into practical reality and a Complete Finisher can make sure all the details are in place in sufficient time for your go live date.

We also need to be aware of the need to ensure people don't overplay their roles. For example, a Completer Finisher can obsess about all the details, but may delay the implementation while they strive for perfection even though 80 percent of the benefits might be readily available. Equally a Monitor Evaluator can help carefully analyse the options but there is a time to decide the approach that will likely produce the best result, without another six months of analysis.

Someone who is more predisposed to a Shaper team role can help cut through the analysis paralysis to help you capture a lot of the benefits, fast. Then when you have things basically in place some more careful analysis and refinement can be undertaken.

Now we don't want to turn this into a treatise on teamwork, but we do want to implore you to consider the following:



- There is a people dimension in every project, in every system. Be sensitive to the different contributions that people can make and manage each person so they play to their strengths.
- Find ways to challenge the orthodox views with genuine innovation and by adopting ideas from elsewhere. If you can buy the right tool, you can buy 'bottled innovation' and a lot of 'user experience' to help implement it. A really good inventory management system can help teams, especially small ones, adopt innovations at least that is the way a Resource Investigator would see it.
- Harness your team's talents to deliver results that move you away from administratively intensive, productivity sapping processes to strategy, policy and master data driven approaches that deliver superior business results.
- Within this context, consider the tools and capabilities that can help you maximise what each and every member of your team can deliver, so they can deliver to their full potential and in turn help you maximise your results.
- Of course the tools also need to adapt to the different ways that different types of people might use them, and also track how they do, in fact, use the tools. Can yours?
- If you have access to such tools, keep extending and reinventing them, to deliver even better results.

We may not individually be able to deliver the great advances of a giant like Isaac Newton, but together we can still achieve some great results, with the right attitudes, a good balance of capabilities, strengths and personalities and the right tools, we can make better decisions and implement better operations. It does however have to start with a desire to make a difference.

Plant	Creates ideas. Enjoys challenging the status quo with unconventional thinking. They help make sure you do not follow the herd
Resource Investigator	Great networkers. They make sure people do not reinvent the wheel – rather they can help make sure your organisation can adopt the best practices from elsewhere.
Coordinator	A leader who can help everyone contribute to the team.
Shaper	The person you need to crack the whip when the project needs to be brought in on time, even though it might ruffle some feathers.
Monitor Evaluator	When you are dealing with thousands of items and perhaps tens or even hundreds of warehouses you need to carefully and objectively evaluate the options and what can and should be done. A Monitor Evaluator will be ideally suited to tuning and evaluating and refining your policies, as long, of course, as you have the right tools to support such analysis.
Completer Finisher	In a master data driven system all the details need to be accurate. Being half right is simply not good enough.
Implementer	All the ideas and all the changes need procedures and rules that people can follow religiously.
Specialist	There are some areas that require specialised knowledge. When you need that knowledge you need someone who has made it their life's passion to know ... even faster than Google.
Teamworker	There will be some rough passages during any journey. Some people are simply much better than others at making sure that the rough passages are not rough on people.

Worth thinking some more about?
Worth doing some more about?
 For further information consult
www.horizoninventory.com.au or
 email info@horizoninventory.com.au