The Innovation process that eats “Holy cows” for lunch!

A brief description of the process of innovation in the County Council of Västerbotten

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To be able to illustrate our method an interactive and participatory workshop (4 hours) would be appropriate.

In our workshop we will offer the participants a creative venue where they will be able to challenge their thoughts, get entirely new ideas and investigate how far they can take them. This is done by exploring parts of our innovation process and using tools for creativity to create innovations for improving new procedures, matters of routines and patterns of behaviour.

We have during 2005-2006, with initiative from Michael Bergström, The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, developed and tested a successful innovation method which combines our Department of Memeology’s model for improvements and an innovation methodology from Realize AB. The method derives from the work of Edward De Bono, Paul Plsek, Peter Senge and others.

The process of innovation

Our experience tells us that it’s not enough to build a creative work environment or to have fun with creative tools in meetings. We need a process that guides a change team all the way from ideas to action. Furthermore, sometimes we do manage to get new ideas, but not the ideas that will help us challenge the fundamental thoughts and acts that in some cases are needed to turn around in order to get what we want and reach our aims. Sometimes there is still need for innovations and our work process focuses on that.

The method has been successfully adopted by departments and clinics to look for and work with new perspectives and creative alternative ways of actions. In order to make full use of our imagination and think beyond conventions embedded in our minds we are using a set of
tools and methods that stimulates creative and lateral thinking and the ability to think outside the box of existing routines. These are part of the process that also includes tools that focuses on refining the ideas into actual innovations, i.e. a focus on improvement work based on PDSA-cycles.

The process starts with defining the specific subject area in which you want to improve. When wanting a breakthrough improvement, participants will have to describe the area for improvement before going into the answers of how this area will be better. In our workshop we will start by defining a specific area for improvement and let creativity flow until it’s time to give priority to the ideas that has been generated. We also will pay attention to how these ideas will be described and tested in reality at home after completing the workshop. To get this far it usually takes two days of working with our process. But we are confident that participants at the Thinking Conference will get the central parts of our innovation process and will be able to reproduce it later on, with more time for discussions. Our experiences of this method are very good and participators have got clear, noticeable results. The participants have been able to break up the safe daily rounds and patterns of behaviour and can afterwards bury old matters of routines in order to achieve an improved fundamental pattern of culture.

Our experiences achieved by the method are summarized in these main points:

- To work with creativity brings hope. To be able to put new ideas to an insoluble problem increase the perspective of the future. When you realise that you can make improvements it will increase the feeling of personal security and self-confidence and the delegates will show an increased commitment in work.
- The problems will turn to challenges instead of a hindrance to development. The possibilities will grow when problems combines with ideas. This fact will also give the individual a constructive way to look at problems.
- You dare to meet the facts. The tools are easy to adopt and help you to see your behaviour from new perspectives.
- It will bring joy back into work! When the delegates discover that all ideas are welcomed and there are no threats about them, it’s a freedom that creates cohesion and joy at work.
- The participation at work will increase. Everyone is welcome to attend in their own way, which makes it possible to increase participation in the group.
Some examples of new ideas that has come to light with this method:

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<tr>
<th>Take advantage of the fact that the patient is present</th>
<th>Idea generation to facilitate health to the population</th>
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<td>• The dentist controls blood sugar, makes a health screening when the patient is at the dentist’s office (increases the capability to discover diabetics)</td>
<td>• Walk the talk – employees in health care centres make personal experiences of healthier living, exercises, food etc in order to make better recommendations to the patients</td>
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<td>• Mutual plan between dentist and health care centre for patients with pain complications</td>
<td>• Advertising campaign for colds, stomach disorders etc</td>
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<td>• The same health oral control for elderly patients whoever the patient visits (dentist or health care centre)</td>
<td>• Campaigns with other organisations in the community to strengthen the population’s health</td>
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<td>• Teamwork with focus on the patient to decrease waiting time</td>
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Conclusion

We will split up the innovation process into three steps during this four hour workshop and let the participants together try the tools of the specific steps. The workshop will be interactive and based on learning by doing. After this workshop you the participants will be able to;

1. Use laterally thinking systematic
2. Use different tools that stimulate their and others creativity
3. Know a method that generates completely new ideas
4. Complete a structured plan to bring innovative action