



THEATRE FOR TRANSFORMATION

NEWSLETTER 014 · JAN 2011

What is Transformation?

Today's **organisations, institutions and businesses** face the ongoing challenge of rapidly changing social and market forces. Similarly, **communities** throughout, are threatened by increasing exclusion, inequality and violence, in spite of escalated efforts to change this. Transforming existing situations, whether in communities, organisations, institutions or businesses, often encounter resistance and fail. Why? What are necessary components of successful transformation?

Here are three great thinkers and practitioners of transformative practices that influence our work at Act Out.

Augusto Boal was a theatre practitioner, who developed theatre techniques that increase sensory awareness, shift habitual ways of moving and perceiving, energise the body and bring people together. His reconceptualising of the role of the spectator in issue based performance has invited non-actors across the world to step onto the stage and contribute to possible solutions of relevant social problems.

For Boal, transformation was possible primarily through moving the spectator of a play/skit/workshop from playing a passive role into an active one.

In that active role the participant can deconstruct and examine the nature behind certain unwanted behaviours and actions. They can offer and rehearse alternative possibilities to transform their own existing challenges.

Warren Ziegler was referred to as an 'enspiritor' and an 'envisioner'. He worked towards enabling the individuals to fulfil their human potential, whether they were in the corporate world, government agencies or in non-for-profits.

For him transformation happens through deep listening, questioning, learning, imaging and intentioning – all skills he taught and employed. Their aim was to allow individuals to step away from their social biography as well as their knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes and

ACT OUT NEWS

CALLING ALL INTERESTED YOUNG PEOPLE IN FREMANTLE / MELVILLE / COCKBURN AREA!!!

Forum Theatre Youth Peer Education – Mar to June 2011

Act Out is looking for 18 young people to take part in an **exciting theatre project** that will examine violence and relationships in the community. Young people will be given the opportunity to express their ideas and experiences and gain confidence and valuable social and practical skills. For more information, applications and selection criteria please contact erika@actout.com.au

faith to be **present** to receive inner guidance **NOW**.

For him transformation was 'a new self-understanding, a fresh sense of who you are and what you are up to'.

Otto Scharmer is a consultant and senior lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has conducted extensive work with worldwide organisations around leadership and transformation.

He invites participants of his workshops to enter into a dialogue with each other about the issues they want to tackle. But to go beyond the usual polite, disconnected or inauthentic listening; past the tough-talking, debating, competitive, divisive listening; even past the more empathic inquiring listening to a **generative** listening. This is a listening that enables individuals to 'operate from the highest future possibility that is emerging'. His work with leading organisational development giant, **Peter Senge**, centres on assisting leaders in accessing an 'inner place' that allows them to recognise the 'structural habits of attention' present in their organisation. www.presencing.com

Some emerging **common principles** in transformation:

1. The raising of awareness at an individual level that allows awareness at a collective level – awareness about what really is going on
2. An inability to accept that things remain as they are
3. Practices/processes that involve connecting with the physical, emotional, creative and spiritual aspect of the human being
4. Taking ownership in ideating on the possibilities for change
5. An understanding that the inner and outer experiences in the world reflect the same condition
6. Thinking changes form, perception of others changes form, attitudes change form
7. Open leadership and skilled facilitation

Brainstorming re-revisited

Every so often the practice of brainstorming in groups receives criticism for being ineffective and hindering the idea generation process.

Case in point is the July 2010 Newsweek article [Forget Brainstorming](http://www.newsweek.com/2010/07/12/forget-brainstorming.html): <http://www.newsweek.com/2010/07/12/forget-brainstorming.html> which generated much discussion and rebuttal among those working in the field of creativity and innovation. The article based its critique on a Yale study conducted in 1958.

Jonathan Vehar, the co-founder of New and Improved, a US firm working for over 20 years to improve team creativity, refutes the Newsweek article. He points out that what many refer to as brainstorming is 'a bunch of people sitting around firing off and shooting down ideas.'

He points to studies at the International Centre for Studies in Creativity at SUNY in Buffalo, which showed that those trained in divergent thinking could generate twice as many ideas as those who were not.

Which helps to adhere to the first rule of brainstorming as developed by Alex Osborn in the 1950s:



Rule # 1 GO FOR QUANTITY

The biggest blunder, it seems, is to have an untrained facilitator.

Use a **skilled facilitator**, says Linda Naiman, from Creativity at Work. www.creativityatwork.com Use someone who is trained and will commence the session by getting the group to define the problems well; drawing up a clear **problem/opportunity statement**.

She may even get individuals to **start thinking about these before the group session**, allowing them some time to sit with the issue. As Vehar reminds us, brainstorming was developed as a 'supplement' to individual idea generation.



This is echoed by Dr Amantha Imber, founder of the successful, Melbourne based company, Inventium. While she has been a strong detractor of group brainstorming, she agrees that generating ideas alone is very helpful. She also uses a technique called **shifting**. www.inventium.com.au

This simply has participants generating ideas individually for five minutes and then bringing their ideas to the group, generating more and then returning to thinking on their own.

A skilled facilitator will also be able to **direct participants to play off each others' ideas** using techniques and processes that encourage the generation of ideas; techniques that activate right brain thinking like SCAMPER, brainwriting or physical/sensory theatre activities and games.

This would help to promote the second and third rules of brainstorming:



Rule # 2 GO FOR WILD IDEAS

Rule # 3 BUILD ON IDEAS



Other pitfalls to brainstorming that would be avoided by practised facilitator include Groupthink, domination by the more extroverted, preventing 'slackers' from riding on others' ideas and contributing nothing, and those who don't contribute from fear of having their ideas judged. Which takes us to the fourth rule of successful brainstorming:



Rule # 4 DEFER JUGDMENT

For a great website with lots of up to date discussion on creativity and innovation go to:

www.creativitycentral.squarespace.com

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