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Everywhere I Look I See Management!

Following are some management musings generated from books, newspapers and 9-11.

- I've been reading a book about managing innovation entitled *The Medici Effect* by Frans Johansson. One of Johansson's concepts is that great innovation is realized at the intersection- a place where ideas from different fields and cultures meet, collide and blend.
- At the intersection of rock and classical music sat Mike Oldfield. His creation, Tubular Bells (in the movie, *The Exorcist*), wasn't a rock band playing classical music. Instead, Oldfield created a blend of rock /classical themes and instruments that resulted in a truly innovative musical piece.

To achieve this type of innovation Johansson suggests the following:

- Highly varied experiences are critical.
- Hire people that make you uncomfortable or that you don't need yet.
- Work with a diverse group of people.
- Be prepared to change your plans- they'll need adjusting.

- Reward idea generation as opposed to the success or failure of those ideas.
- Generate an explosion of ideas. The more ideas the greater possibility of good ones.

Some of this goes against the grain of most managers. We tend to hire people like ourselves, look only for people who have the experience necessary for the job, reward good performance and punish failure. Incremental innovation is possible, but true breakthroughs remain elusive in this environment.

If you're seeking real innovation you may want to consider hiring someone from another discipline or someone from another culture. Then place an emphasis on idea generation. That's when the gems appear. For example, only about 35% of Mozart's work is played. That means he generated a lot of work to result in the few magical pieces known and loved throughout the world.

- Recently, in the Chicago Tribune there was a revealing article about Lovie Smith, the coach of the Chicago Bears, written by the Chicago Tribune's David Haugh. Following are some of Lovie's notable management practices:
 - The players like the fact that Smith holds them accountable in private rather than in the media.



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- He came to the Bears in 2004 with the philosophy to create more turnovers. Since then, the Bears have 63 takeaways, enjoyed an NFL high 10 defensive touchdowns and led the league in defensive scoring in 2005.
- “He’s not a wishy, washy guy and that goes a long way with players.” (Ruben Brown)
- Smith looks beyond the numbers and is able to converse with the players about their colleges and families.

The fact that he was able to realize his defensive philosophy of more turnovers is impressive. It’s a good management style that allows philosophies to blossom.

- Another book I’m reading is *First, Break All The Rules* by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman. Following are the 12 questions they suggest asking to discover the strength of a workplace:

1. Do I know what’s expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?

4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does my supervisor or someone at work seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission/purpose of my company make me feel my job is important?
9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?
10. Do I have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months has someone at work talked to me about my progress?
12. This last year, have I had opportunities to learn and grow?

My question is do we have the confidence to ask our employees these questions?

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