

# Innovative Leadership in Today's Demanding Marketplace: Applications of VIEW in the World of Business

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We live in a world in which a single idea from an eighteen year-old mind can change the destiny of the music industry, and probably the movie industry. It's a world in which a small regional airline targeted people who did not fly because of cost, and now has the highest market capitalization of any airline in the industry, built on the concepts of very low cost, no in-flight food, no reserved seating, high reliability, and no hub and spoke system. Such ideas are the currency of the kind of mental productivity that is needed to compete in a customer-responsive, competency-focused, variable-cost, and infrastructure-resilient manner to a rapidly changing marketplace that expects innovation "On Demand." Key to our ability to respond to this challenge is our need to leverage our human assets as effectively as we can. In this article we will review the capabilities of an instrument that can help us to answer questions like:

- How might we leverage our creative strengths and those of others to respond to customer demands presented by the marketplace?
- How might we understand our strengths and weaknesses with respect to our creative problem solving style when focused on our core competencies?
- How might the awareness and knowledge of our personal styles help us to select and use Creative Problem Solving methods and tools that promote more effective communication, teamwork, and cost-effective, resilient solutions?

In this article we discuss how understanding the problem-solving style of individuals within organizations can have strong positive impact on how they find and implement strategic innovation initiatives. We will share several examples of how individuals and executive teams have used VIEW (Selby, Treffinger, Isaksen, & Lauer, 2002) to better manage their human resources in pursuing strategic innovation.

## Implications of VIEW for Organizations

VIEW provides us with a powerful tool to use with individuals and management teams to help them to harness and realize their potential. Since it is easy to administer, score, and interpret, it is readily accessible to individuals and larger organizations alike. IBM was recently asked to make a presentation on Innovation and Creativity to more than 150 executives and managers from a worldwide utility company facing a major business transformation. We touched on the VIEW instrument and how its results could impact the successful implementation of their vision by helping them to make the most of their human assets. We were told later that this brief presentation, and the VIEW concepts in particular, were a topic of frequent discussion in the planning meetings and work sessions that followed giving them a basis to understand the impact of their actions to make change happen, and to help to make it "stick." We were told that, "the simplicity and power of the concepts were picked up in a heartbeat."

VIEW can help individuals to gain important insight into how they are creative and how they approach problems alone and as part of a group. It is more important for them to learn to appreciate their creative style and how to optimize and leverage their creative strengths than to attempt to "mold" their behavior to represent an unnatural and inappropriate stereotype of "a creative person." There are many valid ways to be creative, not just one. Results from VIEW can help individuals to recognize, describe, and appreciate their problem-solving style preferences.

In organizational settings, VIEW can help organizational members to better appreciate their creative diversity and to manage their strengths more effectively. For more than three years we have been working with clients in an offering called the Strategic Innovation (SI) Workshop, run by IBM's Executive Business Institute, at locations around the world, to help them to understand how to pursue strategic innovation initiatives in their businesses. As part of that program we have used VIEW to help the executive teams to understand their own problem solving style, and how it can help them to pursue successful implementations of these initiatives. Our experience to date is that style knowledge can be a strong, supportive, and complementary element in their planning and execution; consider the following three examples from several North American sessions.

### *Large Supermarket Chain*

First, we worked with the Chief Information Officer (CIO) and

direct reports for a large super-market chain. They were looking to build a new team that could drive the business and IT communities to collaboratively apply technology to deliver high quality and high value solutions to their company. Specifically, they were seeking to instill innovative technologies to drive down cost through improvements in their supply chain, and technical infrastructure. The team felt strongly that if they could not get moving quickly they would be run over by their competition.

ness. They now understood that they were ready to take risk, and needed to balance that risk with strong Developer thinking to ensure its success. They were compatible in their Manner of Processing favoring an external style of interacting. In their Ways of Deciding scores they favored a Task rather than People orientation in their preferences – something we have found to be common to most of the business groups where we have administered the VIEW instrument. This would ensure that they ended up with sound task resolution, but

Explorers to attack their challenge. To the delight of the group they discovered that their newly appointed e-business Solution Center VP was a very strong Explorer, and was balanced by an IS Director of Group Systems who was more moderate in OC preference. The leader and the rest of the team quickly recognized and appreciated that the strong Explorer e-business Solution Center VP would be challenging them with radical change, and that it would be up to them to find the innovative and practical path that would lead to success for their company.

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Our SI program was a critical early step in the formation of this new Information Technology (IT) management team that was hand-picked and headed by the Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer (CIO) of the group. The IT Director of Store operations and their CIO leader had Orientation to Change (OC) scores that were near the mean of the general population norms. The rest of the team, which included directors of Applications, Operations and Security, and Manager of eCommerce were all more on the Explorer side. When the CIO saw the distribution of scores favoring the Explorer style, to balance his more moderate preference, he and the rest of the group understood that, together, they were well-positioned to face their challenge.

They needed to drive pilots and prototypes for the use of new technologies, while maintaining high reliability and cost effective-

ness. They now understood that they were ready to take risk, and needed to balance that risk with strong Developer thinking to ensure its success. They were compatible in their Manner of Processing favoring an external style of interacting. In their Ways of Deciding scores they favored a Task rather than People orientation in their preferences – something we have found to be common to most of the business groups where we have administered the VIEW instrument. This would ensure that they ended up with sound task resolution, but

#### *Large Insurance Firm*

Second, we worked with a large Life Insurance firm, who brought the executive team responsible for launching their first e-business presence in the marketplace. Their objective was to infuse innovation by focusing on their core competencies, using e-business to be more responsive to their customers while controlling their cost. They were primarily Line of Business executives with two key Information Systems (IS) members, and led by the Vice President (VP) of Group Strategy to address this critical mission. It was a new team with a leader who had a moderate Explorer style.

The VP had formed a well-balanced team of Developers and

VIEW focused their appreciation for the diversity of styles on their team and the power that it would bring to their project. Prior to this session they knew that they were “different,” but did not understand how to balance those differences to their advantage. Their Manner of Processing results made them aware that they had a wide range of preferred styles. Acknowledging this, they discussed how to ensure that both the External and Internal styles could be appropriately included as they worked together as a team.

Their preferences for Ways of Deciding were all very strongly skewed toward the Task side. As a result of our SI program, and the insights provide by VIEW, they began to provide equal focus to the people and cultural changes required, as well as to the technology decisions, inherent in their e-business initiative.

#### *Very Large Financial Services Firm*

Last, we worked with a very large Financial Services firm, with significant focus on Property and Casualty (P&C), Life, Auto and Small and Medium business insurance. The attendees represented a mature IT executive team responsible for all IT application

development, who led over sixty managers and eleven hundred staff. Their objective was to be more progressive in developing a balanced portfolio of innovative offerings so that they would be viewed as more responsive to their customers and leaders with e-business in their industry. They came to IBM for a highly tailored two-day SI event to explore the process of strategic innovation. On the first day we scheduled only 90 minutes on the concepts of Creativity, including a brief twenty-minute overview of VIEW without individual assessments. In an end-of-day checkpoint of the agenda for day two of the program, the executive team unanimously requested that we add a more extensive discussion of VIEW and its implications, and insisted on completing the instrument that evening so that they could see how they scored. The next afternoon we had a lively 90-minute session focused on VIEW, their scores, and the implications of their styles for their mission. They had a balanced OC profile on their executive team with strong Explorer and Developer players, along with a healthy group of OC-centric players who could be help the “bridge” the strong players on both sides. We handed out graphical representations of their scores which did not show specific names, keeping that information confidential unless they wanted to share. Within minutes of the end of our discussion the group had taken the charts and voluntarily identified the names associated with each score on the three scales, and were discussing how they could take advantage of their excellent diversity. Before the day was out they asked us to fly to their midwest headquarters location to repeat our creativity and VIEW presentations and to score every manager on their staff. They saw the insights that they gained as fundamental to new and innovative thinking, helping

them to establish a language and a behavioral understanding of how to leverage their critical human resource assets.

### Summary

At IBM we have helped clients, and employees, around the world to appreciate their creative style using the VIEW instrument. We have had very positive results in every country and culture where we have used it. We have validated that VIEW results can help individuals test their reported preferences against their typical behavior in varied situations, in order to affirm or modify an understanding of their strengths or weaknesses in relation to problem solving style. VIEW results can enable individuals to identify ways to be at their personal best, and to determine how they might benefit from the strengths of others. They can learn to use knowledge and awareness of styles to support and personalize their selection and use of creative problem solving methods and tools and to promote effective communication, teamwork, and more insightful results. VIEW also provides a common vocabulary within a group for understanding and appreciating style similarities and differences constructively. It can also be used in guiding groups in strategic planning, innovation, product development, project management, or other deliberate change management initiatives.

### Reference

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### Editor's Note

If you would like to know more about the instrument used to assess creative characteristics in this study (Something About Myself, from The Khatena-Torrance Creative Perception Inventory), visit the Center for Creative Learning website. The “books” at the left side of our home page are buttons you can use to navigate among the other pages; choose the “Assessing Creativity” book. Or, you can simply go directly to: [www.creativelearning.com/AssessingCreativity.htm/](http://www.creativelearning.com/AssessingCreativity.htm/). This page contains a link to our data base with information about more than 70 instruments that measure various aspects of creativity. You can also print the reports for any of the instruments in the data base.

If you locate other instruments that are not in the data base, or any updates or corrections, we would also appreciate it if you would let us know so that we will be able to maintain the data base's completeness and accuracy.