

Creativity, Innovation, and Foresight in Action

Marc S. Galli

Walden University

Professor Kathy Disney, MBA, MSPM, MSTM

WMBA 5020: Fostering a Culture of Innovation

March 7, 2021

Individual Reflection On Creativity

Some view creativity as some sort of rare and spontaneous event which only few are capable of, as if in an instance of creative expression all of one's electric nerve impulses in the brain were transmitting simultaneously or in some dramatic coordination with one another such that neurons bridged unimaginable gaps within one's mind and awe-inspiring imaginative concepts never before conceived were being birthed in that moment of sudden creativity. Contrarily, findings support that creativity is not some unexplainable phenomenon, nor is it a mysterious event, but rather a systematic process whereby opportunities for innovation are sought out based upon foresight (Cabra, 2010). There existed a simpler time, prior to the 1800's, where many generations existed without experiencing any significant social or technological invention of any kind (Cabra, 2010). During the twentieth century, however, many technological and social inventions came about, to wit: organ transplants, genetic engineering, space exploration, the civil rights movement, the creation of personal computers, mobile phones, and the internet (Cabra, 2010). An observation was quickly made within the private and business sectors, that in order to avoid obsolescence, both organizations and the people within had to change and many abounded in skills such as creative thinking, decision making, problem solving, basic reasoning skills, adaptability, and the lowering of one's internal resistance to change (SCANS Commission, 1991).

Foresight, Creativity, Innovation and the Juxtaposition of the Three

With due consideration given to the aforestated chronological retelling of the explosion of innovation, it can be stated without further explanation that workers who once dedicated themselves to creating long-lasting, durable products necessarily had to shift their focus to the

refinement of existing products' features and the creation of new devices to keep up with market expectations (Cabra, 2010). In the last century, the life-expectancy of a product dropped to the range of five to ten years for most products, but dropped to merely a year or less for highly technological products (Hunter, 1996). This recent trend of shorter product life-cycles is one which highlights the accelerating nature of change and elucidates companies' need to possess foresight to predict product obsolescence and to stay creative to continually innovate (Puccio, 2012). In synthesizing Cabra (2010) in the excerpt from the Cambridge Handbook of Creativity, I assert there are stunning connections between individual creativity, an organization's capacity for innovation, and foresight. I contend that an organization's capacity for innovation subsists of factors such as personnel, organizational size, finances and budget, and the company's resources which are at its disposal (Cabra, 2010). Meanwhile, foresight can be summarized as the ability to predict coming trends and other important developments successfully (Cabra, 2010). Studies emerged which documented that companies ranked significantly higher in innovation when their workers gave prudent forethought in challenging the existing model and the ways in which products in the market were customarily produced (Blau, 1979). It has become clear that design concepts should not be standardized and that attempts should be made to constantly invent new methods to problems which products aid in solving (Blau, 1979). The process is iterative and taking a systematic approach lends to creativity which is perceived by the masses as innovative.

Analysis of Best Buy as Pertains to Foresight, Creativity, and Innovation

In the winter of 2019-2020 I was hired by an agency, which was outsourced by Intel, to work for Intel and to represent them in a Best Buy retail store. It was over the course of the ensuing months that I observed some thoughtful innovation. Best Buy's mission statement is

positively geared toward taking an ethical approach to creativity, innovation, and foresight, to wit; to be a growth company focused on better solving the unmet needs of customers, whilst relying on employees to solve those puzzles (Best Buy, 2019). The mission statement incorporates three goals: To improve lives, to exceed expectations, and to stimulate growth. Best Buy exhibits creativity through putting their core values into practice. Their core values include: Utilizing their employees' abilities to the fullest, learning from challenge and change, showing respect, humility, and integrity, and to "have fun" while being "the best" (Best Buy, 2019). Best Buy exhibits foresight in the ways it stays relevant when unplanned setbacks arise. One such example is how Best Buy drafted plans for technological increase, scalability, curbside service, and video virtual-consultations before the coronavirus was even a thing in the United States (Verdon, 2020). They promptly rolled out these plans as need for them arose. They were able to retain eighty-one percent of the prior year's sales during the last six-weeks of the first-quarter of 2020 without a single customer entering the stores (Verdon, 2020). Best Buy stayed innovative even in the face of bankruptcy in the myriad of ways that management executed an impressive turnaround (Trainer, 2018). The methods which they employed included restructuring the business, cutting costs, optimizing the balance sheet, and through recognizing their company's unique strengths and what specifically makes them unique and capitalizing on these elements (Trainer, 2018). Each of the methods of differentiation which Best Buy employed were done ethically; examples included: directly working with vendors to increase core product value, increasing environmental efforts, prioritizing efficiency in core operational aspects, and energizing employees to individually practice more foresight in day-to-day operations (Trainer, 2018). In summation, Best Buy demonstrates creativity, innovation, and foresight from the top-down, each in an interrelated and ethical way.

How Best Buy Prevailed Amidst Challenges Imposed by COVID and Amazon

Aptly titled “brick and mortar” stores have seemed to always have some serious advantages over online-retailers. Whether it is to avoid shipping expenses, to get their product instantly, or to be able to sample or try a product before purchase, consumers often prefer brick and mortar stores. Although I have merely scratched the surface in listing the benefits of brick and mortar stores, Amazon, an online shopping giant, inconceivably pioneered free, next-day shipping; two concepts no one thought possible which quickly placed them on a semi-level playing field. With Amazon’s integration into UPS Stores and other retail locations, they are able to offer cost-free returns and convenient locations to drop off those returns. They have effectively mitigated or eliminated a large percentage of consumers’ reservations to shopping online. Best Buy has been quick to combat this by offering free standard shipping on any order over thirty-five dollars and free next-day delivery on a percentage of their most popular items under a certain weight (BestBuy.com, 2021). They have also improved the in-store shopping experience and revolutionized their inventory and restocking methods with innovative e-ink electronic price/product display tags. They have instituted price matching to combat Amazon’s low prices (only achievable by Amazon due to low/minimal overhead), and setup enhanced product displays and demo stations to enhance the in-person consumer shopping experience. Amidst challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, they have perfected curbside pickup for fulfillment of mobile and online orders and have even gotten creative and innovated with virtual product demonstrations as expressed in the Future Stores (2020) article and made it possible to order curbside by increasing staffing during holiday and high-volume ordering times. Best Buy has also expanded their return policies and created several sales and special-pricing campaigns to

benefit consumers, each aligning within parameters covered in the article by Schumacher (2013) on ethical innovation.

Analysis in Light of Hamel (2009)

In analysis of the aforementioned specific set of challenges which were imposed on Best Buy by COVID and Amazon, I contend that at least three management challenges and goals apply as presented by Hamel (2009). First of these is the unleashing of human imagination. Since Best Buy is corporately owned and not a franchise, many decisions have been dictated from the top-down, but locally, stores were given some creative license and leeway to permit local management to make changes within their stores to accommodate for elements which differed regionally and to permit each store to thrive using the foresight of local workers, a smart move on Best Buy's end. A second management challenge covered by Hamel (2009) which applies has been the de-structuring and disaggregation of the organization, albeit in a small yet still perceivable way. Best Buy has given some license to employees to make some decisions on the spot about price matching in-store and even in how they chose to re-open their in-home computer repair services through their Geek Squad brand as appropriate regionally (Verdon, 2020). Verdon (2020) goes into more detail and specifics on how Best Buy enabled services while being safety-conscious and consumer-minded. Lastly, a third management challenge which Hamel (2009) details and which Best Buy overcame was the redefinition of the work of leadership. During my tenure with Intel and in working directly with Best Buy staff while maintaining a position outside of the hierarchical structure but still able to look upon it, I observed that Best Buy managers, in a preferable manner, rarely dictated and more often facilitated innovation by sharing information with the aid of their own prior experience and

foresight and led employees to use their creativity to promote the development of innovative ideas home-brewed in the shift-meetings and brain-storming sessions. For all of these reasons aforestated, I assert that Best Buy appropriately and ethically puts foresight, creativity, and innovation in action and is a role model for other organizations to follow.

References

- Best Buy. (2019, July 3). *Best Buy's mission statement*. Mission Statement Academy.
<https://mission-statement.com/best-buy/>
- BestBuy.com. (2021). *Free Shipping*. <https://www.bestbuy.com/site/help-topics/free-shipping/pcmcat276800050002.c?id=pcmcat276800050002>
- Blau, J. R., & McKinley, W. (1979). *Ideas, complexity, and innovation*. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24, 200–219.
- Cabra, J. F., & Puccio, G. J. (2010). *Organizational creativity: A systems approach*. In J. Kaufmann & R. J. Sternberg (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity* (pp. 145–173). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Future Stores. (2020, June 19). *Here's how Best Buy is teaming up with the technology world to take the fight to Amazon*. <https://futurestoreseast.wbresearch.com/blog/best-buy-strategy-to-beat-amazon>
- Hamel, G. (2009) *Moon Shots for management*. *Harvard Business Review*, 87(2), 91–98.
- Hunter, J. E., & Schmidt, F. L. (1996). *Intelligence and job performance: Economic and social implications*. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 2, 447–472.
- Puccio, G. J., Mance, M., Switalski, L. B., & Reali, P. D. (2012). *Welcome to the world of change: Life in the 21st century*. In *Creativity rising: Creative thinking and creative problem solving in the 21st century* (pp. 13–20). Buffalo, NY: ICSC Press.

SCANS Commission (1991). *What work requires of schools: A SCANS report for America 2000*.

The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills. Washington, DC: U.S.

Department of Labor

Schumacher, E.G., Wasieleski, D. M. (2013). *Institutionalizing ethical innovation in organizations: An integrated causal model of moral innovation decision processes*.

Journal of Business Ethics, 113, 15–37.

Trainer, D. (2018, June 7). *Best Buy Rising From Ashes To Lead New Retail Paradigm*. Forbes.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/greatspeculations/2018/06/07/best-buy-rising-from-ashes-to-lead-new-retail-paradigm/?sh=29e20911b443>

Verdon, J. (2020, May 21). *Best Buy Worked On Its Tech Before The Pandemic And Now It's*

Flexing Its Muscles. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/joanverdon/2020/05/21/best-buy-worked-on-its-tech-before-the-pandemic-and-now-its-flexing-its-muscles/?sh=16fff173fd90>