January 2011

Hello ToP friends:

I am seeking partners to spend 1-2 years on a design team to explore development of a new workshop for facilitators, tentatively titled “*Creativity of ToP*”. This new workshop would seek to translate and apply emerging creativity research through ToP facilitation skills and methods. At the ToP Network annual meeting in San Antonio, I will host an open space session to “officially” introduce and launch work on this concept.

Brain research in recent decades has yielded insights into the biological, social and psychological processes that occur when new ideas are born in the human mind. This research is reaching the stage of practical application, as evidenced by dozens of new resources on creativity relative to organizational development, business innovation, childhood development, aging, and personal creativity enhancement.

Many of these new approaches resonate with methods already woven throughout ToP facilitation workshops. Brainstorming, clustering and naming are all ways to help groups generate new concepts and are basic to ToP methodology. Creativity-enhancing tips and anecdotes are sprinkled through trainings based on the experiences of particular trainers. The Creativity video in the Group Facilitation Methods course strikes a chord of innovation near the onset of every ToP-trained facilitator’s journey.

With these things in mind, I believe there is tremendous potential in scanning the new creativity research with a ToP lens to discover—and create!—applications specific to a ToP context. At the least, I expect a *Creativity of ToP* course would contribute depth to the facilitators’ toolbox, in much the same way as “Secrets of Implementation” and “Facilitation Graphics” provide a focused immersion on topics that build off the core ToP skill set. Also possible is discovery of a new group process that complements Consensus Workshop, Action Planning, Strategic Planning, etc., in the ToP library. Either way, the end result will be more ToP-trained facilitators able to adorn their practice with techniques, data, and stories that call forth group creativity.

While it’s doubtful (and possibly not desirable) that humankind will ever know how to “sell creativity in a bottle”, ToP methods show that it is possible to guide a group of people through processes that make new ideas and solutions more likely, if not predictable. *Creativity of ToP* would seek to highlight and optimize this aspect of the facilitator’s competency.

Below is a very “drafty” timeline of the design process. Note that, besides needing to be reviewed and revised by planning partners, this draft presents an aggressive 12 month planning outline. It may actually take twice that long!

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| Jan-Mar 2011 | * Identify design partners
* Assemble bibliography of creativity research resources
* Review resources (assigned among design partners?)
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| Apr-May2011 | * Series of ORIDs to discuss resource review and identify themes and potential workshop components
* Draft rational and experiential aims for workshop
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| Jun-August 2011 | * Draft, review and narrow list of possible workshop components
* Draft workshop outline
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| Sept-Dec 2011 | * Finalize workshop outline
* Draft and finalize workshop manual
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| Jan 2012 | * Offer workshop trial run
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Please let me know if you are interested in being a part of this design process, want to learn more, and/or if you know others who might be interested. My expectation is that design partners will contribute a spectrum of roles and time commitments, to be discerned as the work gets underway. That said, my hope is that a core team of committed individuals will emerge to do most of the heavy lifting.

This is an exciting path to venture down – I look forward to meeting you along the way!

Many thanks,

Matt Rezac

ToP practitioner (seeking certification!)

Blandin Foundation

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