Team Creativity: Applications of the Jazz Metaphor to Organizations

Ronald E. Purser, Management, Andrew Speight, Music, Wendell Hanna, Music, Frank La Pira, Management
Improvised Agenda

• Though this represents our current direction, these plans are subject to change
• Quick overview and background on the project
• Progress to date: Major accomplishments and activities
• A Sneak Preview of a *Jazz@Work* program
• July 1 + Future Deliverables and Professional Growth & Development
Objectives and Background

- Study jazz ensembles for the purpose of deriving a grounded theory of team creativity (observation, qualitative methods, lit review)
- Develop and deliver an educational, “arts-based” training program to Bay Area companies using live jazz performances as a teaching metaphor for enhancing team creativity
- The Generations Jazz Band, which is in residence at SFSU’s School of Music and Dance is a collaborative partner in this project.
- Develop a DVD and supplemental teaching materials that can be used in MGMT courses (Organizational Behavior, Intro to MGMT, Leadership, Creativity & Innovation)
Progress to Date:

• Comprehensive Literature Review on the Jazz Metaphor, Improvisation, and Team Creativity in Organizations (over 125 articles, 1988-2010)
• Consultation with Dr. Keith Sawyer in July 2010 and observations of the Generations Jazz Band at the Stanford Jazz Workshop
• Beyond the Jazz Metaphor: Extending organizational theory to unpack the “Jazz Mind-Set” or Jazz-as-a-Thought Process
• Development of an Interactive, Arts-Based Training Workshop (multi-media), based on key principles of team creativity
• Creative production of an “infomercial” video on *Jazz@Work*
• Debut of *Jazz@Work* at *The Economist’s* Magazine Innovation Summit, March 23, UC, Berkeley, Haas School of Business
• Website
Key Factors of Jazz Improvisation/Ensembles

- **MASTERY**
- --ATTENTIVE VIRTUOSITY
- --DYNAMIC SYNCHRONIZATION
- --RAPID PROTOTYPING
- --DISTRIBUTED COGNITION
- --COMMUNITY-OF-PRACTICE
- **CREATIVE COLLABORATION** (Team Creativity)
- --SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE
- --SHARED LEADERSHIP
- -FLEXIBLE STRUCTURES (minimal structure/maximum flexibility)
- --GROUP SYNERGY
The “Jazz Mind-Set” – Jazz as a Thought Process

The jazz mind-set is skilled and adept at managing multiple creative tensions simultaneously.

Tight

Soloing

Play

Tradition

Loose

Innovation

Serious

Accompanying
# The Socio-Technical Systems of Jazz

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Structure</th>
<th>Technical Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Norms</td>
<td>Keys, Chord progressions, repertoire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative Codes</td>
<td>Templates of songs, choruses on which to improvise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnering in autonomous ensemble</td>
<td>Wide stock of talent and performative competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust within wide zones of manoeuvre and constructive controversy</td>
<td>Knowledge of music technology and instrumentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternate soloing and comping. For leadership and personal development</td>
<td>Experimenting with new instruments, styles and textures of sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk-taking and continuous learning</td>
<td>Refashioning performance in response to colleagues and audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Value of the Jazz Metaphor – Organizational Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construction Metaphor</th>
<th>Jazz Improvisation Metaphor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sequential progression</td>
<td>Iterative dynamic progression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product structure defined and fixed at start</td>
<td>Product structure evolves in response to new ideas and environmental change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles fixed in skill base and temporal involvement with project</td>
<td>Roles rotate and project involvement is continuous throughout the project's lifetime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes difficult to achieve.</td>
<td>Changing structure and new structure is the norm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User input limited temporally and functionally</td>
<td>User input critical throughout project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology fixed at start of project</td>
<td>Technology adaptation occurs as new tools and methods are explored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on technology and rigorous adherence to pre-defined design.</td>
<td>Focus on creativity and development of new ideas within a minimal design framework</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Arts-Based Training Workshop

Live “Informances”

- Participant Workbook (Questions, Exercises, Group Reports)
- Multimedia Slides
Jazz@Work

- Movie
INNOVATION SUMMIT, Haas School, UC, Berkeley, March 23

5:00pm Flash of Genius
Andrew Speight

7:45 pm
Cocktail reception
Introductions by: Vijay Vaitheeswaran, Global Correspondent, The Economist

The mind of the jazzman with Andrew Speight, Ronald Purser and John Kao
Andrew Speight, Music Faculty Lecturer, Founding Member and Artistic Director, Generations Band, Ronald Purser, Professor of Management, San Francisco State University;

10:00 pm
End of day one
Additional Deliverables - July 1, PG&D

- DVDs for instructional use, combined with teaching notes, Powerpoint slides and experiential exercises
  - Organizational Behavior, Leadership, Creativity & Innovation, Strategic Management courses—others as well on campus

- Fully functioning Website/articles and resources

- Qualitative case based on in-depth interviews of Generations Band members – *Human Relations (interdisciplinary journal social science)*

- Professional Growth & Development—Some reflections
Future Research and Practice

• Survey-based study of large sample size of jazz bands using MySpace
• Program offerings at Google, Apple, HP
• Organizational Survey on Team Creativity and Improvisational Competence
• NSF “Creative IT”
• Lengthier instructional DVD for educational use
• Scholarly article on Articulating the Jazz Mindset/Debunking the Myths of Improvisation
• Possible co-authored book..