



The Howells Group, Inc.

Bringing Business to Life

Disruption Births Innovation

May 2009

***"Learning and innovation go hand in hand. The arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow."
- William Pollard***


As I write this the curtain is open wide on a world stage of disruption. Chaos and uncertainty have dominated our world markets and systems for over half a year. Fear and hesitation is prevalent, and around the globe we still seem to be holding our collective breath.

So, in the midst of our tangled mess of a financial system and still escalating unemployment, is it false optimism to see opportunity? No. Charles Dickens expressed it well years ago "it was the best of times; it was the worst of times". This has been true throughout history. Necessity- and major disruption – is truly the mother of invention and innovation. Every change and downturn can offer a rich opportunity for those who have the imagination and fortitude to look for it. This is true for large systems and individuals.

Remember Apple Computer? In the midst of its worst downturn, it rose, thanks to Steve Jobs leadership, like a phoenix from the ashes to become one of the most effective brands in the world. Apple continues to be a driving force, reinventing how people interact with music and media. Our current social "safety nets" including social security and Medicare emerged from the crisis of the Great Depression. Periods of crisis birth new solutions.

For many of us, 2008 has been disruptive not just economically but personally. My year included juggling my cancer diagnosis and treatment, unexpected family challenges and significant business growth. Initially, I did not see that this "perfect storm" could be a needed catalyst for change and growth. It just felt like a storm! Instead, it is helping me refocus my overloaded life and create new vision for a sustainable life. What initially seemed disastrous has sown seeds for positive change and reinvention.

Think through your own history for a moment. Where have you made those "big leaps" of growth? When life was peaceful and calm? Most likely – no! When have you acted on your dreams and vision? When did you "go for" a stretch goal? What motivated a new idea? Chances are when you had no other choice – when live or die circumstances can be the push you needed to birth a brand new approach in your business – or your life.





The Howells Group, Inc.

Bringing Business to Life

Five Ideas for Insight and Action

1. Draw your life as a continuum. Note with a slash mark the times of greatest growth and change. What was happening in the background that generated these shifts? What patterns do you notice? How do those relate to this time in your life?

2. Recognize your role in change. What bothers you most about your work, your business or your life right now? Name it. Own it. How could this discontent be a seed for meaningful innovation or even total reinvention?

3. Recall a time when you were innovative (created or adapted an idea/product/habit) to craft a new approach. Identify and list the specific aspects that aided you towards success. Now – how could you create that climate once again to put yourself in an innovative space?

4. Answer the questions: What role does fear play when it comes to thinking of new approaches and opportunities? What needs to replace the role fear plays to access your innovative spirit?

5. Get support. Think of the people in your life. Who in your life encourages you (I call them “balcony people”!)? Who are those who create fear and generate negativity (I call them “basement people”!)? Tip the scales to your advantage and intentionally spend more time with all the balcony people in your life that you can.