

Tuesday, February 23, 2010. Diane Deacon, "Thinking Out of the Box."

MS. SPEERS: Good morning. My name is Bessie Speers. I'm head at Ethel Walker School in Simsbury, Connecticut. Bruce, thanks for stomping all those grapes and preparing that wonderful dinner for us last night. On the bus ride home, I couldn't help but notice the similarities we share with our students. Amidst the glow of Blackberries and cell phones, there was great laughter and conversation. A very good sign. Perhaps the wine-making process itself holds some analogies and interesting truths for us as educators.

Wine-making and art clearly live happily together, a message to us that alongside the deliberate and intricate process of wine-making, which certainly requires knowledge, skill, and patience, that creativity is somehow a very real partner, in the same way that our tour guide last night at the winery told us that the only reason corks are still used in wine bottles is because of tradition. And what is it that we in schools are still doing for tradition's sake and when will creativity win out in some important ways for our students and our schools?

This morning, it is my pleasure to introduce Diane Deacon, who will speak to us about how we, as professionals, can become more aware of our capacity for creativity and how we as educators can inspire our various constituencies to understand the power of creativity in home and school settings.

In speaking with Diane a bit yesterday, she said all of us were born creative. All of us, the students we teach, are creative to begin with. Diane's father was an inventor in the electrical field. As a young woman, she said she knew she had to think differently in order to be successful.

As we consider the creative process, it is always important to consider a variety of lenses, including gender. Diane will share with us some of her experience as a woman in the creative field. Diane is president and cofounder of the Creative Thinking Association of America. She's also president of Intellectual Equities, providing creative business services to companies worldwide.

Diane has worked for more than 20 years with Mike Vance, former dean of Disney University. She has coauthored books with Vance, including *Think Out of the Box*, *Break Out of the Box*, *Raise the Bar*, and *Creating MegaResults*. Education is just beginning to catch on and in some ways, these more challenging economic times are truly the silver lining requiring us to indeed think out of the box.

Diane, we are delighted to have you here this morning to share your perspective and out-of-the-box wisdom with us. Welcome.

MS. DEACON: Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be here with you all. It's so funny, when I first got the call from Bruce, he said, "Diane, I'm putting together this fabulous agenda for this event, and I'm noticing we don't have any women, so I'm calling you to see if you qualify."

I said, "Well, Bruce, this is the beginning."

So I want to thank you very much for inviting me here. I have had the good luck and the good fortune of working with some of the greatest creative minds of our times. So what I'd like to do, in the short amount of time that we have, is share with you some simple tools and techniques that people, organizations, companies, individuals, women, men, all around the world have used to achieve mega results and creative breakthroughs, not only professionally but personally, in their homes and with their families in what they do.

So with what, what I'd like to do is tell you a little bit about how we got started and my journey and adventures in creative thinking. As a young woman, I came out of the construction industry. It wasn't too popular to have a woman in the construction industry at the time. So I started selling real estate, and because I was young and I was a woman in the real estate business, my real estate manager would always send me to the seminars, usually put on by bankers and accountants and lawyers, and so I had to go.

One day he said, "Diane, I got a ticket for you. I want you to go to this seminar being offered at the local high school gymnasium for the Ohio Realtors."

And I said, "Do I have to go?"

And he said, "Yes. The ticket is nonrefundable. You're going."

So I was one of these sent people to the seminar. I wasn't too happy about it. So I got to the high school gymnasium. I picked a seat way in the back by the exit sign, and before the seminar began, a man came up to me and said, "Excuse me, ma'am. Are you here for the seminar tonight?"

And I said, "Yes, I am."

And he said, "Well, you do know it's going to be held up there, don't you?"

And I said, "Yes, I know that, but I'm going to stay back here by the exit sign, because if this speaker is no good tonight, I'm out of here. Who are you?"

He said, "I'm the speaker tonight. I'm Mike Vance." He said, "Do me a favor. If you like what you hear, will you move up a little bit? And if you continue to like what you hear, keep moving up, so at the end of the evening, I'll have an immediate performance appraisal about how I did tonight."

I said, "Okay, fair enough."

Well, Mike Vance was the dean of Disney University. He worked with Walt Disney and was in charge of the idea and people development for the Disney organization for many years, and he applied some of these tools and techniques that I'm going to share with you today for the development of projects around the world.

So I stayed, and I moved up a little bit. Mike had an interesting quote. He said, "All people are creative. We are born creative geniuses. It's what we do to ourselves throughout our lifetime that so often stifles our creative energies. So what we have to do is figure out what it is that's causing that, and then enable you to think outside the box, break outside the box, and create and innovate as you like. And there are some simple tools and techniques that will help you to do that."

So I stayed, and I got on his seminar list, mailing list, went and learned how to use these tools and techniques, and applied them to my project in my real estate business, and had enormous success with them. They were simple to use, easy.

I got a call from Mike's office about eight months later. I had been in touch with him, and he said, "You know, Diane, we are looking for other facilitators to help us on projects that we have who use some of these tools and techniques in our processes for the development of projects. Would you be willing to try?"

And I said, "Sure, I'll give it a try."

So my very first project with Mike and the company applying these tools and techniques was working with a group of engineers from General Electric lighting division, and the project was to figure out, let's think outside the box and create a new and innovative light bulb that will burn longer using less energy.

Now, before I accepted the position, they didn't tell me that I would be working in one room with 80 male engineers. Many of them had wingtips this big, smoked a pipe. It was a new experience for me. But at the end

of the day, we had the creative breakthrough which today is the Watt-Miser light bulb. And again, we just used these simple tools and techniques, so that I'll share with you.

How this all got started was that Mike, as I mentioned, worked very closely with Walt Disney, and he was in charge of idea and people development. After he left the Disney organization, he went on to teach this, and one of his very first clients when he left the Disney organization was Steve Jobs, Apple Computer. Steve Jobs said, "I want to be the next Walt Disney." He had loved Walt Disney. He said, "Mike, teach us how to do it."

I had the opportunity to work with him, too, and we set up creative environments and universities within Apple. It was fun hearing John say yesterday that Pixar had Pixar University, as well.

So when Steve Jobs took Apple public, we said, "What are we going to do with Steve when we take Apple public?" And Steve had never been fishing. So the week Apple Computer went public, we took Steve Jobs fishing for one week where there were no phones, no radios, no TVs, nothing. Not only were they fishing for fish, but they were fishing for ideas as well.

So we have applied some of these tools and techniques on many projects. I live in Cleveland and Florida, but the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland -- I don't know if any of you have been there; we're doing one in Canada right now, too. We used these simple tools and techniques to develop some of these.

And another one, Taco Bell. It's just a joke. "Think outside the bun." You know, get them thinking differently. They still use it today.

This actually got started because Mike Vance years ago had his own TV talk show in Los Angeles. Now, this was a show for its time. It was called "Men at the Top." It was sports time. I give him some beans about that. But he would interview creative thinkers from all walks of life, whether they be authors -- the great Louie L'Amour -- to businessmen. And one of the guests on his show was Walt Disney.

So Mike said, "Walt, tell us, what do you think are the keys to having high-level creativity and innovation?"

He would ask everyone this question. Well, Walt Disney was very impressed with Mike's thinking and what he was doing, so he said, "Mike, will you do me a favor and come into the Disney organization? Because what we need is to create a culture of continuous innovation and creativity. You know, just because we have one good movie doesn't mean that's it. We need to keep raising the bar and keep generating the creative process and energies that are in all of us. So what I'd like you to do is figure out how do you give all these principles in your culture?"

You could do it today, as well. So that's when Mike started work with the Disney organization. And Walt Disney said, "I want you to focus on three things. Number one, figure out how we can work and communicate differently so that we can eliminate many meetings and reports as a way of doing business."

I don't know the group of you, how many meetings and reports that you have, but in corporate America it's usually a lot. So he said, "Figure out a way we can work and communicate and create and eliminate many meetings and reports so we can use that time for the development of our ideas. So that's the first thing I want you to do."

He said, "The second thing, look, I want a process that will help capture and stir the imagination and creativity in all of us. Figure out a simple process that we can use to do that.

"And third, there's no corner on brains. I want you to figure out how we teach it."

By the way, that was Mike as one of the pigs there. When you start to work for Disney, you have to go out as a Disney character to get a different perspective. Many times we would put the lawyers in the Three Little Pig costumes, send them on out there, give them a new experience in life.

Anyway, Walt Disney said to Mike, "I want you to create a culture of continuous innovation and creativity."

You all can do this, too, in your organization. So what would be the culture? How do we get the place, the environment, to be more creative through the architecture and what you put in it? What is the process? And then what are the tools that help you continue to think outside of the box and think very differently?

Walt said, "There's no corner on brains so I want everyone contributing to thoughts and ideas." And he would kid them. He said, "No matter how bad you think your job is, I want you to think again. It could get worse."

So he said, "Look, I want everybody thinking outside the box, and we have to raise the bar. We need to take all we do to a whole new level we've never thought of before." And Walt said, "I want to do that with an amusement park. I want to create the greatest destination resort the world has never seen, right in the middle of Florida, in the actual swamp, and I want to create the greatest mega result we've ever seen."

So as we get started, you all know things change. Things are changing as we're sitting here today. Things change, whether we like it or not. I don't know if you have seen them, but these are some of the new gasoline signs around America. Talk about change. Or the new bathroom of the future.

So we all have to ask ourselves the question: If you're doing things the same way, you often get the same results, or less, because everything's changing around us. So the issue we all have is: How do we create and innovate and really change the direction and the way we want it to go?

We work with organizations around the world, and so often they're thinking the same way and they get the same results. It's like taking a herd of cattle, putting them through a meat grinder, and all you get is a little meatball out the other end. And we continue to do it, time and time again. One meatball.

So we'll do this in organizations. We'll all get together, they're thinking inside the box, thinking the same old way, take a herd of cattle, put them through the meat grinder. They may get a couple meatballs, but you all know and you all have the opportunity to create the environment, provide the processes, tools, and techniques to create the mega result, the big beef out the other end.

So what we're all challenged to do -- think about it. What results do you want to create? And then here's how you go to do it to get the mega results. You have all heard the term "Think outside the box." "Think outside the box." We've had fun with them. Really, what it means is getting out of your old box patterns and into some new and innovative thinking habits.

We teach the process of how you get started. You all know this puzzle is: How do you connect the nine dots using only four straight lines without lifting your pen or pencil? And you all know, in order to do that, you have to think outside the imaginary box that the nine dots create.

So what we tell people is: There actually is a process to help you think outside the box. One of the things you want to do, though, is be a little outrageous in your thinking. You can always pull it back in and get as conservative as you like, but you want to start out being a little outrageous at the beginning.

What are the results that you want? We have a formula for it. I'll go through it quickly and then we'll actually give you some details. All of you, when you start, whatever the project or the initiative is that you want to create, you need to have people collaborating, because it's best if you get many creative minds working

together and that they care about something. Caring is a major ingredient. Are you passionate about what you're actually doing?

Then we have to have the right people, the right place, and the right product or service to work on. And then, how do we get everybody informed and involved and inspired to create the vision? What's the vision we want to create? Then let's talk about the actual method that will get us there to do it. That's what Walt Disney did.

Now, quickly, as we begin, if any of you have problems thinking outside the box, I recommend this magazine. I don't know if any of you read it here. Mad Magazine has been around forever. Alfred E. Neuman is the character on the cover there. Walt Disney would actually read Mad Magazine for serious literature and the Wall Street Journal for humor. He thought the Wall Street Journal was actually funny there.

But think about it. You know, it's out-of-the-box thinking. Alfred E. Neuman had a great quote in one of these magazines. He said, "You know, just because everything has changed doesn't mean anything is any different."

All we have to do here is create the change we actually want. Now, as we begin going through the process, if any of you have any trouble thinking outside the box, I highly recommend -- I carry around what I call my spare brain. I don't know if any of you have these. They say we only use about 8 to 10 percent of our brain power, and for some, that's even stretching it. I'm sure you know some. One day I was giving a speech and a man came up to me and said, "What is that?"

I said, "Well, that's my spare brain. Would you like to borrow it?"

And he said, "What for, Diane? I don't even use the one I have."

I said, "I know that."

But what's most interesting is that all of us have the creative muscle between our brains. The question is, how do you use it? How do you exercise it to get the actual results that you want to get? And we've learned how to do that. And I'll share some examples with you from some of the greatest minds and creative thinkers of our time.

This is Mike Vance on the left. On the right -- we had the opportunity to work with this man named Jim Newton. Jim Newton was a land developer down in Fort Myers, Florida, and as a young land developer down there, he built the Thomas Edison Museum in Edison Park, and through the process, he got to meet Thomas Edison. Thomas Edison was in his 80s at the time. And then next door to Thomas Edison's home was Henry Ford's home. So he got to befriend Thomas Edison and Henry Ford. Jim Newton's best friend was Charles Lindberg.

So I got to work with him and it was interesting. In his 90s, he would say, "Diane, I can't say much about my past, but my future is spotless."

His wife, Ellie, lived to be over 100. He wrote a book called Uncommon Friends, about what all these creative innovators of our century had in common and what stirred their imagination, their ability to create the things that they actually did do. In the book, the one major characteristic all these creative innovators had in common -- you're not going to believe this -- was that they loved to laugh. They loved to kid and carry on, because they said if you were laughing, you were loosening up yourself to all the possibilities.

He would show me that Thomas Edison had a journal. You can see it in the Edison Museum. It would say, "Tell joke to team." And then it would say, "Tell a good joke to team." Henry Ford would actually hire a joke-writer to tell jokes to Thomas Edison.

We studied this at the Creative Thinking Association, and we learned the average child will laugh on an average of 400 times a day, and the average adult only 15 times a day. And they say accountants laugh maybe only five times. So I say, you look around, we've all gotten way too serious too quickly. Look around. There's humor. I don't know if any of you saw this one, the Tattoo of the Year Award last year. I mean, these are outrageous. We've all gotten too serious. Or this one, Don't Swallow the Bubble Gum Magazine.

So what Walt Disney would do at the organization is, if a team was getting way too serious, he would take them out on his little train back at his home, put people on the train and make them go round and round and round until they were loosened up and having a good time.

So I recommend to all of you, if you want us to have fun, keep the laughter coming, because it's very good for the creative process, and you can enjoy yourself.

Now, of all of the projects that I work on around the world -- and by the way, I am really pushing on my projects that they have a woman on the team; at least one, if not more, because women add so much creativity and innovation to the projects. So I'm on a movement for that. But anyway, so I said to Mike, "What's happening? All these projects we all get started, like yourself, and we begin developing a master plan to come up with some break-throughs for whatever the project is, and we get started, and we're all excited and energetic, and then there would always be at least one person on the team who would say, 'Oh, but that's a stupid idea. That will never fly.'"

You all know the types. They're negative, negative, they'll drip, drip, drip on your projects, your ideas, until it stops you dead. So I said, "Mike, we've got to do something about these negative people because they're stopping the creative process."

Now, Mike at the time was doing a lot of lectures, and for some reason he was big with the nuns. He would speak at a lot of nuns' conventions, and he loved it because he said, "I never have to wait long for the restroom."

So we were working with this one nun who had many health care organizations around the United States. She had her own helicopter. We actually called her the flying nun. And we asked her, "What do you do with these negative people when you're working in your organization?"

And she said, "Well, you know, I know it's not nice to say, but we label these people."

I said, "You do?"

She said, "Yes, we have a name for them. We call them pissers and moaners. That's all they do, is piss and moan all day long, so it stops you dead."

So we decided to make a button, and I brought some here. Just in case any of you have to work with any of these people, you give them a "Stop pissing and moaning" button. If you have to live with them, it's even worse. We just did it for a joke. I had a banker call. He said, "Diane, I'll take 300 pisser-and-moaner buttons. 300. Everybody in my bank is a pisser and a moaner here."

So I said, "Mike, we have to write a book."

So I called my publisher and he said, "Diane, I'm not going to publish a book with that title on it, but you go ahead."

So we did, just as fun. There is a questionnaire with 100 questions in here, and you take the questionnaire, give yourself a score to see if you are one. A lot of people don't want to admit it, but they're chronic. From the minute they get up in the morning to the minute they go to bed, that's all they do.

Now, some of it is legitimate. You're allowed to do some to hopefully get the change going, but I'm on a mission and I want you all to help me here. We need to convert these P&M-ers. You know, stop the pissing and moaning and create. Let's solve the problems instead of just complaining about them.

So I want you all to help me on this thing. As we get started to develop and work with the creative process, you always have to have the right team of people. Where is our conductor here in the group? We do have a conductor, don't we? All right. Bruce is here. He's the conductor.

We always start out on these projects -- and we'll rotate -- but somebody has to keep the rhythm and the flow going. So we always recommend one person, and they act kind of as the leader. They ignite the team however they want to do it, to get the energy flow going.

Now, you want to put together a multidiscipline team. You don't want all the same people and types, because they all think alike. I highly recommend you have at least one accounting person on your team so you can pick on them. They're a lot of fun. But they tend to be very creative and innovative and out-of-the-box people. So we always like to have them there.

By the way, I don't know if any of you know -- and this was a picture of Roy Disney here. Roy Disney was the model for the character Jiminy Cricket. So if you could imagine your accountant in your company looking like Jiminy Cricket and smoking a big cigar, that was actually Roy Disney there.

So you want to have a multidiscipline team that you put together. I was doing a project, if you can imagine, for Coca-Cola and they were using the display, thinking, story-boarding process that we taught them, and this was to develop products for Coca-Cola for the World Cup. And if you could imagine, not one person on the team had ever been to a World Cup. Not one. That was a very, very long week for me. So you always want to have, as a major point, at least one person on the team who knows what they're doing. Now, how do you know? Many times you do a quick pow-wow. Get together and ask them some of these basic questions. What are your skills? Input. Do you have the time, the commitment, to work with us on this? You want to have what we call a brain exchange, where we exchange ideas real quick and fast, see if you have the right skills. Because you want to have smart people on your team so you get the big results.

Many times we'll ask people -- and this came from Mike, you know -- we believe reading makes you smarter. I'm sure all of you have thought about this, too. Mike as a little boy would recommend -- and he read all the time -- that you read 300 books a year. So there we are, telling people you have to read 300 books a year. And you could imagine the pissers and moaners coming at us. 300 books? So we took it down to 200. Same thing. No way. Okay, 100 books. "No way, Diane, could we do it."

I said, "Okay, we're back up to 300, but we'll cut you a little slack here. Not only do you want to read books but you want to read people."

We have a whole people-reading course. I don't know if you have ever done that. Have you ever read people? It was so funny. We were doing a seminar, and one day Mike goes up to a woman and says, "I have this people-reading course, and I'd like to read you."

She looked at him and she said, "I have already been read, but you can browse a little if you like."

So anyway, you want to put together the right people, a winning team to get the right result, and you want to pick the right people very, very carefully. You want the right people on your team to give you the mega results, somebody who can carry the ball.

I asked Mike, "What is the quality that you seek for putting together the right team of people so you can get the big, big mega results?"

And he drew me this picture. I said, "What is it? An upside-down McDonald's?"

He says, "No, Diane, these are the people that you want on your team to get you the big results. People who will put their butt on the line for you."

I know a lot of you, your butts are on the line already. But we have a few buttons there if you need a couple of people. But we have discovered problems become opportunities when you bring the right people together to go to work on them. And you all know, I'm sure you have all had it when you have the wrong team, the wrong people, you don't get the mega results there.

So what you want to do is pick the right team. Otherwise, this is what we get in corporate America, in the United States, in our government. You all know. We have to get the right people working together. I said, Mike, "What's the ideal number? You don't want the teams to get too large. What do you think is the right number?"

He said, "Diane, seven," without hesitation.

I said, "Why seven?"

He said, "It worked so well with Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. She had a variety of multidiscipline teams of all the different types of work there."

So what you want to do is pick your teams, not too large, and then you can add some people to it, but you want cool people, clever people, creative people to help you do this.

So let's assume now we put together the right team. We got the right team of people. Now what's going to be our process in developing the big ideas? And when Mike started work with the Disney organization, he went to the Disney Studios and he saw Walt Disney here was using a concept calling story boarding. You heard John Lasseter talk about it yesterday. A lot of companies still use this process.

What they would do is put little sketches and drawings up on a board to tell a story. Any one of you could walk in and actually see the story that they were creating and contribute your thoughts and ideas.

This was Walt Disney in front of a storyboard of the motion picture Fantasia. And this was Leopold Stokowski, who was doing the score, the music for it. I don't know if any of you saw the movie Fantasia, but when he first released it, it was not a big hit. Then they re-released it in the 1970s when people were smoking dope and drinking, drugs, and things, and then it was a huge hit. They couldn't figure it out there. I guess timing is everything.

So one of the things Mike did, he said, "Let me take the concept of storyboarding" -- you can all do this, too, in your environments -- "and create team units where we put all the storyboarding here."

So this might be the team unit and then the team surrounding it for the motion picture Fantasia. This could be the team unit for Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. This could be the team working on Walt Disney World of Florida, and so on, and then Walt Disney and his team would actually walk around and very quickly have a

briefing, because he was working with the speed of light versus the speed of sound, which is quicker and faster. Instead of having a meeting report, I could go in, see what they're doing, see what they're not doing, very quickly, very fast, and everyone else can do it, too.

This is where the term "walk-around management" actually started. We at the Creative Thinking Associates are trying to go back in history to learn, where did the concept of display thinking and storyboarding actually start? And as back as we can tell, it started with the Egyptians in about 3000 BC, except they used marble and chiseled it on.

So this could have been Mr. Galbraith, you know, putting together a plan. And this could have been Karen saying, "No way."

So these tools that I'm presenting to you have been around and used for centuries. But we said, "Look. What's simple? Let's use cards and pins. They're cheap, they're fast, and we can move them around. Spelling doesn't count. Writing doesn't count."

I love the quote Mark Twain said. He said, "It is the work of an uncreative mind that cannot come up with more than one way to spell a word --"

So we all get very creative. All of you can do this. Use cards and pins. What is our master plan and topic? What will be the subject areas we want to go to work on? What will be the details? And we create storyboards for plans.

Then -- and this is going fast, but this is all in our books -- how do you take your master plan through the MICORBS process? Now, when I developed that Mike said, "Diane, it sounds like an intestinal disease." MICORBS. But no, it's a mnemonic, meaning you always want whatever your project is to have a master plan, go to idea development, communication, how are we going to organize it, retrieve ideas, quick briefing, and synapse. I'll take you through very quickly so you can do it.

Companies around the world. The only project I ever worked on was a coal mining team. You have not lived until you have worked with a coal mining team. They chewed and spit tobacco that whole time. So anytime we had a big break, it went in that cup there. But any one of you can walk in, and this project was, let's develop a quality program in security so in our coal mine nobody gets killed and nobody gets hurt. So we had very clear goals and objectives. What's the plan on how we're going to do it? Any of you could walk in, see what we're going to do, how we're going to do it, when, and so on. It was a huge success, simple to use.

General Motors. We were asked to do the Y2K project. Got to get all the factories Y2K compliant, 32 different countries, in less than one year. Any one of you could walk in, this is why we're going to do it, what we're going to do, the master plan and the how, real quickly, at a glance, and you could participate in it as well.

Again, this is just very low-cost. I'll show you later how you can get it very high-techy and fancy. You could put it in your computer, if you work with different languaging and different people around the world you could put it in many different languages.

Then from your master plan, you go to idea development. You say from your master plan what ideas do we need to really develop in detail further? You had many idea development boards. This is one for Johnson & Johnson, a specific project. We had over 100 idea development so we took a room like this, a group of people like this, and in one week had the plan done, executed it, and had mega results when we're actually doing it.

Always think about how you're going to communicate and plan the plan, plan how we're going to execute, and execute it according to schedule. Where we've had a lot of break-throughs in organizations and projects around the world, and we're still doing it today -- I don't know about you, but life is getting a little shorter for

me, so I want to get these things out quicker and faster. So many of these projects are: How do you shorten the timeline? If it takes seven years to develop a new innovative product, how can we do it in three and a half?

So think about all you're doing. How can you actually move the timeline and get creative and out of the box to achieve the actual mega results that you want? Many times we do it over not only a year, monthly, but in two weeks.

Trane Air Conditioning. This was a project where we said, "Let's shorten the timeline on a new outdoor air-conditioning product."

We went offsite to a nature resort and for one week worked on it. Any of you could walk in and see, we brought the project in 18 months ahead of schedule, \$40 million more to the bottom line, just by thinking outside the box with a group of people like yourselves.

So I often say the answers are out there. How you measure the results, however you want to do it, is up to you.

Now, I had the great privilege and opportunity to have working with the late great Frank Lloyd Wright. All of you know he designed the Epcot Center, the dome, the dome down there as you walk in. Bucky Fuller was a great mathematician, great, great creative mind for our time. And we brought him in on a project -- I was a young woman at the time -- and I said, "Bucky, tell me how do you keep the creative process going?"

And he would say, "Diane, the answers are out there. All you have to do is go find them."

And I said, "Bucky, how can you be so sure about that? You know, we've got issues and problems in life."

He said, "The answers are out there, Diane. Trust me."

And I said, "Well, give me an example."

He said, "The universe is creative. Look at how it reinvents itself time and time again. All you need to do is tap into the general principles that are available to us in the universe."

And I said, "Well, that sounds good, Bucky, but can you give me an example? How do you do that?"

He said, "Okay, you want an example. Everyone credits me, Diane, for inventing the geodesic dome and designing it. But I didn't invent that. I found it in nature. One day I'm working in my laboratory and I see this fly flying around. I grabbed hold of the fly and put him under my microscope and studied it. The eye of the fly was a geodesic structure. All I did, Diane, was copy the eye of a fly, and everyone credits me."

By the way, years ago they used to call the dome the fly's eye, but they didn't think that was a good name, so they changed it. He said, "The answers are out there in nature. All you have to do is tap some of the general principles and then bring them into whatever it is you're actually working on."

When we worked with Jim Newton, he said Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, a lot of the great inventors of our time would do what they call cosmic fishing, where they'd go out and they'd fish for ideas with no hook or bait, get in touch with some of the general principles out there.

I said, "How do you do that?"

Buckminster Fuller coined a term called synapse or synergy, meaning the coming together of all related ideas into a meaningful purpose to have a big breakthrough. So I said, "How do you do that?"

He said, "You take ideas, bring them together, mix them up to see if you can't have a breakthrough."

One of my clients in Latin America did that, and they said, "We brought salsa to baby food." They thought that was a great synapse example. I said okay, but think about it. Coca-Cola and McDonald's came together. Or think about this one. Proctor & Gamble brought their batteries into razors. Just a synapse. Bring them together, unrelated things, and see if they can't have a meaningful relationship.

You know, I was kidding as an author, I said, Let's look at bringing together unrelated authors to see what we have. If we brought Truman Capote and August Busch, we'd have In Cold Bud. Or think about it. Stephen Hawking and Ted Turner, A Brief History of Time.

Anyway, you could have fun with the synapse. These are just some that you can try. I recommend you give them a try, see if they'll work.

Now, retrieval. Many times you have a lot of great ideas but you haven't developed them. So many times we say put together a retrieval board, or where do you house these great ideas? Walt Disney would actually house -- he had a facility about the size of a football field below Disney Studios where you could walk in and see many of the unused ideas that go back, and actually retrieve them, bring the boards up.

It was interesting, Walt Disney shared with Mike years ago -- I don't know if you know -- but during World War II, the Disney Studios were turned over to the Defense Department to make documentaries and films for the war and the military. Walt Disney said what was interesting was that the military would have a briefing, they'd all come in, they'd stand, and they'd say, "Okay, what do we need to do today? What are we working on? What's done? Anybody have input? Any hangups?"

It was quick communication, quick and fast. Walt Disney said, "Mike, figure out how we do that in Disney Studios so we communicate quick and fast." Today we can do it electronically, too, so we can eliminate many meetings or reports.

So you might want to try some of these. I don't know how you all work. But have briefings. You could detail them. Many times, if you're working on three four projects at one time, you have many briefing boards, so can you see immediately where you are at a glance. And you can do this electronically, too. You can do company briefing boards. It's funny. We get e-mails from people who say, "We had a company briefing board and we had great results with it."

I'd say, "Yeah? What were the results?"

"We put on the briefing board, 'Harry needs a date for Friday night.' Okay, anybody have any ideas? We'll put it up under here."

But you could have a lot of fun with these actual briefing boards. They can be very low-cost, just cards and pins. Coca-Cola, McDonald's, General Motors, Y2K. You all know Norman Brinker, who recently passed away, the Chili's Restaurant/Macaroni Grill. His team center environment is called the salad bowl, where he's mixing up ideas. So there's Norman again there.

We do this many times for our government, but we can't photograph some of them.

So let's say we have our process, we have the right people put together. I don't know if any of you fish. But if any of you fish, you know you have to have a place to go fishing in. Many of us want to fish for ideas, but we have no physical place where we think, plan, strategize, and communicate. So I say, if you really want to catch the fish or the whale of the ideas, you have to have a place to go fishing in.

Frank Lloyd Wright, whom Mike Vance had the opportunity to study with, said that most of us live and work in sanitary slums. He said they're not enriched to help you think differently, work differently, and create the results you want.

So I'm going to show you how you do it in your work environment and your home. It can be very low-cost, team centers, planning centers, depending on your budgets there. And again, you can get as simple as you like, or -- and we actually put these on factory floors, as well -- General Electric locomotive center in Erie, Pennsylvania. You'll see the storyboards on the board. We had to go fast because in Erie, Pennsylvania, it's only summer for a week. Then it's winter again. So we had to go fast.

I only had one client. He said, "Diane, I want you to build one of these and design them."

I said, "What's your budget?"

He said, "We don't have a budget. Spend whatever you like."

Wow, what a client. Never had that before. You all know a gas and pipeline and oil company there in Houston, and we put the team centers and the display thinking and storyboards all electronically in their workspace and their team centers, and had no square corners. We wanted to think outside the box.

You want to think carefully about your environment. Otherwise, facilities people -- you know what they give you. They'll give you something like this and say, "We're being creative in our environment here."

Now, all of you probably have a home you live in. And one of the things we recommend -- you all have a kitchen with all this technology that helps feed your stomach, radar ranges, microwaves, refrigerators. But today we have all this great information and technology to help feed our minds, but we haven't created the environment where it all works together, like the kitchen of the stomach. We've got all this technology spread through all of our houses.

So years ago, we put together a program on how to create a creative living center in your home, or you can call it a kitchen for the mind, where you put together thoughts, ideas, programs, technology, everything to make recipes for the mind like you make recipes for the stomach. You'd be surprised. There's no right or wrong way. These are just some examples here. I don't like to show pictures of some of the clients that have been done, because then you might think, well, just copy it and do it the same way.

I recommend, think about your homes. You know, we have dining rooms that we don't use, living rooms that we clean. Create a kitchen for the mind, a creative living center in your home to help you think better, work better, live better, and create, recipes for the mind like we do recipes for the actual stomach.

I kid people, I say, "What meal is prepared in a kitchen of the mind?" And it's Thanksgiving, and on and on and on that we go.

Okay. So we have the right place, whether the kitchen of the mind or the team center, the work environment. We have the right people. We have a process, and you can add other tools and techniques to go with it, as well. But then how do you get the real big breakthroughs? Breaking out of the box was our second box. How do you get the breakthroughs, where you come up with ideas that have never been thought through before? There's many ways that you can do this. I'll just introduce a couple to think about, where we have had big success. Coca-Cola, McDonald's.

Look back in history, where have been the great historic breakthroughs in history, in whatever it is that you're working on? And let's learn what was the process, what was the thought? What do they do? And then

how can we reinvent it? Because we often say, creativity is the making of the new and the rearranging of the old in a new way. So many times, the answers are out there and you just need to rearrange it in a whole new way.

Doing work that I enjoyed, M&M Mars, I thought it was only my job in working with them to learn all their products and experience and eat them. I gained about five pounds and thought I'd lose my teeth. But I enjoyed every minute of it.

All of you can imagine working on this project for M&M Mars, Snickers has been around for years. It's a great product. The project is how you sell more Snickers bars. Thinking outside the box, the breakthrough: Just make them smaller.

Now, our studies were that the average person would eat about the equivalent of two and a half of these. The only thing, we hide the wrappers, so there's no actual evidence of it. And then we make them crunchier, and so on. So think outside the box.

This project was: How do we sell more Comet? And it was in the actual design. Just make the holes at the top a little bigger. Have you ever tried that? Pour it out, let the pan turn blue. It was really creative.

Now, don't let anything stop you. When you're working on breakthrough ideas and coming up with creative thoughts, you know, we've had people say, "Oh, but."

I say, "Hey, figure out a solution to it."

We're working with some people overseas, and you all remember when the SARS epidemic hit, and when the SARS epidemic hit, they ran out of the surgical masks. So my client came up with a solution. They sent it to me. They said, "Diane, we solved the problem of not having enough surgical masks."

And that was it. I thought that was creative thinking outside of the box. So just think of all of you in this room, what creative breakthroughs I'm sure you could come up with.

Many times, again, creativity is just making of the new and the rearranging of the old in a new way.

This project was: How do we make more money selling lettuce? And it was just dicing it up, chopping it up, washing it, putting it in a bag and selling it for four times. How many of you have been guilty of buying this? It's right here. Uh-huh. It's just, again, creativity often is making of the new and rearranging the old in a new way.

I often say we have hidden oil wells in all of you, and in the wonderful people in your schools. These are the creative minds of our times. How do we pump these oil wells to get the actual big breakthroughs? And I often say, sometimes we all get in a rut, and how do we get ourselves outside the box and outside the rut?

We have a program called Repotting Cycle, and you all think about it. I don't know if you need to be repotted, but throughout life sometimes you do. Think of yourself in this flower pot. What is the dirt, the skills, water required to achieve the flowers and the stems of success you all have? Sometimes we get root-bound. How do you repot yourself so that you can grow and create new things?

So I recommend all of you to think about your repotting cycle. Go back in history. How many years and what caused you to repot? And then what is going to be your next pot and how are you going to get the actual big results?

We did this with General Foods, their coffee brands. How do you sell more coffee? Let's repot the coffee and put it in new packages, and instead of beans and grounds, let's make it powder and different flavors. It was an absolute huge, huge success.

So I say to all of you, you know, all of us have the creative muscle in us. All we have to do is exercise it more. Think outside the box, or think outside the bun, whatever you want to do. Break outside the box and what it is you're thinking. And I often say that creative leadership -- and all of you are in this position -- is the ability to establish standards and manage a creative climate where people are self-motivated toward the mastery of long-term constructive goals, in a participatory environment of mutual respect compatible with personal values.

All of you know how to raise the bar and you all have the creative muscle in you, so I challenge all of you to create the mega results that are within all of us, because as Mike Vance said, if not me, who? And if not you, when? And if not now, when? When are we going to do it?

So I challenge all of you. The answers are out there. All you need to do is go find them and create them. The world needs us now more than ever. You are the facilitators of some of the greatest creative minds of our times. So we look for you to create the right environment, the right tools and techniques, to achieve the mega results we all need.

So keep in touch with me. Let me know how you do it. Thank you very much for inviting me here. It was great being with you. I'll give you my creative muscle, Bruce.

MR. GALBRAITH: Thank you very much. We would love some Q and A. We have a mic, and would you please state your name when you ask? And one of the things that we always are interested in is, can you talk to us a little bit about working in a school or with the faculty, and some ideas that we can apply?

MS. DEACON: Well, I had the opportunity in a couple of schools. Number one was a vocational school where these were children of many talents, but they wanted to go outside the box and not take the traditional route that we did take. So we put together a team center and a planning center on how we create some role models and examples, but encourage them to take their creativity to a whole new level. Just because they weren't in the typical box that everybody else was doing it in didn't mean they needed to be stereotyped as they were being.

So what we were doing is changing the stereotype. It's okay -- and we did a whole campaign on it, too, with the participation for everybody -- that even though you're going to be a little outside the box, you can create and develop yourself and be a huge success in whatever field that you actually wanted to be.

We did another project. If you think about it, some of these retirement homes. You know, retirement homes traditionally are a place where you just kind of wait. You know, you're circling and waiting. And so we said, "These are some of the greatest creative minds of our time, too. They have a lot to contribute that we can learn from." It was called Agape University in Los Angeles. We put together a team center and planning center. How do we take these senior adults and have them work with the community and projects? Because they have a lot of creative ideas and so on.

So we have a lot of creative thinking workshops and team centers in retirement housing centers now.

MR. GALBRAITH: What are one or two of the biggest sins of the leader, when you're working with a team and trying to do this, or what are one or two of the biggest strengths? What do you see as the things that stand out to you? When we're trying to be the leaders of this group and trying to be creative, what are a couple of the best things we can do, or a couple of things we should really try not to do?

MS. DEACON: Well, one of the things I recommend -- and I have used this project for over 20 years in a variety of specific projects -- when I had to go to work with a group of people like yourselves and develop a plan, get it implemented and get the results that we wanted to achieve, what I recommend to all of you, because I worked with many, and I sincerely mean this. You are all creative geniuses. You've got the creative muscle here. All we need to do is put together a team, have a place where we think, plan, strategize, go to work, what are goals and objectives, and then develop the plan of how we're going to achieve those. And again, you just use storyboards to develop the plan and actually implement it. It's that simple. Any one of you can do that at home, in your work environment. What's fun is to develop the creative plans. What's our vision? And then how are we going to achieve it? It's that simple.

MR. GALBRAITH: In a lot of examples you showed, you went away from the home site.

MS. DEACON: From Cleveland?

MR. GALBRAITH: When you took groups, you went to retreats and so on. Is that really, really important, or is that optional?

MS. DEACON: It depends. Sometimes we do it to not have the distractions. And my one out-of-the-box was the Trane Air Conditioning, we went out to a wonder lodge where we didn't have telephones and everything, but we had animals. So we had to keep the doors closed because Shetland ponies would come in, and I said, bring them on in, give them an apple, let them join us.

But many times, when we have a very short timeframe, we need to stay focused. If they don't have an environment where we can spread out like this, get all of our thinking up, mess with it, you know, get it up, many times we do have to go offsite. But I think there's a lot of creativity in nature and if we tap into some of those general processes, it does help.

MR. GALBRAITH: Other questions? I found it pretty successful to have a one-day retreat, but with an overnight. Start with a half-day and put everything up in the air, and then tomorrow morning when we have a deadline that we have to be done by 11:00, it's amazing what happens in the last hour. I don't know if you find that to be true, too. A finite amount of time.

MS. DEACON: Yes, it gets the creative juices going, many times.

MR. GALBRAITH: Thank you so much. This was great. Thank you very much for joining us.