Create a rewarding feedback culture & unleash your innovation potential
by Gaelle Piernikarch, August 2019

"When the seeking systems are not active,
human aspirations remain frozen in an endless winter of discontent"
– Jaak Panksepp

Neurosciences bring an interesting light to different forms of human intelligence, whether individual or collective systems. They tell us that the brain has the capacity to regenerate, expand and change shape (plasticity) as well as create new connections. While it ensures our survival, the brain also allows us to grow beyond our known abilities.

As collective intelligence systems, organizations both strive for survival and have an immense potential for growth and innovation as well. So how can we unlock this potential to go beyond boundaries in our organizations?

Let's take a quick look at the brain. In its survival function, the brain constantly scans our environment to identify and respond to threats and opportunities, seeking ways to minimize threats and maximize rewards.

Responses to opportunities and threats are emotional in nature. When the brain perceives a threat, it gives a fight or flight response and in the long run this causes avoidance behaviors whereas when it perceives a reward, this causes a desire leading to a proactive behavior that is likely to be repeated.

Organizational networks, like brains, will tend to move toward some things to maximize rewards and away from others to minimize threats.

Creating a rewarding feedback culture in the organization, that allows to learn and grow, is key to innovate. As the brain cannot at the same time strive to survive (Fear system) and seek to expand (Seeking system), companies have to choose one system or the other. A feedback culture that fosters innovation will look at aspirations, encourage experimentation, connectedness, information-sharing and self-expression and will stay away from messages that create social threats for people.

Such feedback culture is appreciative and inclusive, creates fun experiences and stimulates emotional intelligence, both individually and in collective processes.

Because it is focusing on what people and the organization are doing well, building on their strengths and welcoming inputs from inside and outside, an appreciative feedback culture makes people and organizations constantly seek for new possibilities, thus liberating creative energies.

What are your contributions to creating a feedback culture at work, in your teams, and in your organization?

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