

THE MEDICI GAME

Celemi's Medici Game® Helps Trustmark Take Steps to Reinvent Itself in a Changing Market

Hollywood actor John Travolta has inspired many people with his remarkable ability to shed his iconic image as the hustling disco dancer of *Saturday Night Fever* fame and reemerge, after years of dormancy, as one of the industry's most respected and talented actors.

Count David McDonough among those so inspired. As president and CEO of Trustmark, a leading insurance company, Mr. McDonough saw a parallel for the respected, but mature, company he was leading. If John Travolta could do it, why not Trustmark?

Motivated by Mr. Travolta's transformation, Mr. McDonough conceived a "Renaissance" for Trustmark in order to find new areas of growth. A rousing speech he gave to employees in the summer of 2006 about the new Renaissance

Think like an innovator!

Linear thinkers look at a product or service and brainstorm ways to make it better. By contrast, innovators and inventors think in a completely different way: they often take two disparate ideas and put them together to come up with something extraordinary. Take architect Mick Pierce, for example. Challenged to create an energy efficient office building in Zimbabwe, he stepped away from architecture and studied termite mounds. The result? A structure that maintains a consistent 73-76 degrees Fahrenheit without any air conditioning.

initiative and the need for dramatic corporate change struck Lanny Hoel, a vice president of Organizational Development, as inspirational, but conceptual.



Medici participants discover how seemingly random combinations generate groundbreaking ideas and whole new fields.

"I walked away wondering how we could support this initiative," recalls Mr. Hoel. "The CEO was asking us to reinvent ourselves, yet we were entrenched in a culture that was process and production oriented. Senior management wanted us to become more creative, but we needed the tools to help people do this."

Mr. Hoel reached out to Sharon Collins, a learning consultant and owner of Catalyst Concepts, and was surprised to discover that such a program already existed. "I suggested we explore The Medici Game® by Celemi," says Ms. Collins, "which was created specifically to help people break through old paradigms and typical linear ways of thinking in order to generate fresh, new ideas."

New Avenues of Growth

Celemi's Medici Game is based on the book, *The Medici Effect*, by Frans Johansson. The book and the game explore the "intersection" of creativity — where ideas from different fields, disciplines and cultures come together to foster revolutionary thinking, just as it did during the Renaissance period of the Middle Ages.

"Trustmark's situation gave us the opportunity to take advantage of the flexibility inherent in the Medici program," explains Ms. Collins. "We added an exercise that explored Trustmark's core competency and related it to

the current insurance environment. This way, they could explore ways to leverage their existing strengths, as well as identify entirely new ways to grow the business.”

The half-day program surpassed expectations. “We introduced it to senior managers first,” recalls Mr. Hoel, “and they were wowed by the experience. These 17 business leaders knew we couldn’t keep looking at our business in the same way, and they saw obvious value in this experience for our company.”

That value became readily apparent shortly after the program was rolled out to all 2500 employees. Just days after participating in a Medici workshop, Tsinpoa Lu, the company’s Assistant Vice President of Enterprise Computing, brought a Medici-inspired idea to life.

“I was in a session with colleagues from around the company,” Mr. Lu recalls. “Everyone was sharing similar experiences and challenges with technical support. It was truly an ‘intersection’ of thought. Suddenly, I had the idea to create a series of technical support tips and communicate them to all IT employees. Now, what once took our colleagues hours of research time has been reduced to a few minutes. In addition, it frees up my department’s staff time, because we’ve cut down on the number of calls for help.” (See QTips sidebar).

Susan Rutkowski recalls her impressions of the Medici session: “It taught us a whole different way of thinking that brought out new ideas and creativity from everyone in the room.” An associate director in Operations, Ms. Rutkowski notes that not all ideas need to be revolutionary to be effective. “In our Medici session we hit upon the idea of eliminating just one step from our payment processing procedures. Now, we process payments as soon as we open the envelopes, rather than sorting them into piles first. It’s great. We’ve streamlined our process. It’s efficient and effective.”

Thinking Like Innovators

The Medici experience is designed to be exciting and memorable. “Training in our industry is typically lecture based,” notes Mr. Hoel. “So when our employees were asked to consider what remarkable inventions resulted from ‘intersectional thinking’ — such as combining termite mounds and architecture — it stuck with them.”

In Medici, participants are challenged about their own basic beliefs and assumptions. For example, many people believe creativity increases when we are on deadline. In fact, the opposite is true. Deadline pressure limits originality; we’re less likely to come up with original ideas when under stress.

“Medici creates experiences that lead participants to break away from their traditional thought processes,” explains Ms. Collins, “and gets them to think outside the box. It also makes clear which conditions in the workplace limit creativity and which promote it.”

According to Mr. Hoel, there were two key aspects of the Trustmark Renaissance initiative and Medici addressed them both perfectly: teaching the workforce how to think more creatively, and engaging them so they would become actively involved in bringing about change. As a result, within 18 months of embarking on their Renaissance initiative, Trustmark assessed the level of employee engagement across the board and found that all eight items in the survey used to measure culture change showed improvement.

“The beauty of programs like Celemi’s Medici is that they are easily adaptable to each client’s own situation,” says Ms. Collins. “At Trustmark, we incorporated the company’s own business data and branded the materials for the Renaissance campaign. It created a seamless connection and yielded tremendous results.”

QTips: A Renaissance Idea!

Following a Medici session, Trustmark’s Tsinpoa Lu and his Technical Support team re-envisioned themselves the QTip Renaissance Team and began sending out timely tech support emails to everyone in the IT network. The QTips provide shortcuts for searching many of the company’s mainframe software components, including the Customer Information Control System, Storage and Scheduling. Mr. Lu’s team published 11 issues of QTips in 2008. He estimates these shortcuts would save hundreds of hours of search time, and reduces significantly his staff’s time handling repetitive questions.