



## Creating A New Possibility

*by Jon Craighead*

In his book Buy-In, John Kotter describes this possible scenario: “You have a good idea and you know it. You present it to a group hoping for support. Instead you get confronting questions, inane comments, and verbal bullets. Before you know it your idea is dead.” What happened? The most likely answer is the absence of enrollment. A definition of enrollment is: a process of creating a possibility such that others take on that possibility as their own and embrace it with the same enthusiasm and commitment as if they originally created it themselves. The pursuit of alignment by enrollment is based on creating an inspired objective. To create buy-in requires this critical first step for connecting with your audience. Without this step the presentation is yours not theirs.

The vehicle for a successful accomplishment is a project. The project is the job that has to get done. It has a specific beginning, middle, and end. Typically a project refers to a set of interrelated activities, usually involving a group of people for a specific period of time. The formulation phase of the process is often mired in the minutiae of complex details, i.e. selection of personnel, locations, timelines, purchasing, materials, transportation, and product assembly. Then of course setting up the application and testing of the finished product. The typical life cycle of a project is: (1) Planning, (2) Organizing, (3) Implementation, and (4) Phase-out.

Once enrollment is established, the next component is people to make this new idea a reality. The selection of the right team is consequential to project success. The key aspect of managing teams is Leadership in the form of a project manager (PM) who guides or directs the group. The PM has an indispensable role in setting priorities, eliminating duplication, providing guidance, coordination, training, and development. The PM, particularly in an innovation project, must possess an in-depth mission clarity and understanding of the potential integration of the project results into an existing system.

The project manager responsibilities are a riddle of paradoxes. The PM must

- have a comprehensive plan while being prepared for the unexpected breakthroughs or mishaps;
- maintain a big picture perspective, yet be constantly on alert to the smallest detail;

- maintain high energy to inspire the team while simultaneously demanding performance excellence;
- and demand all of this with compassionate sensitivity.

It is normally expected that the project manager will cause a successful completion of the project. However, what separates a highly successful PM from an ordinary leader is the individual growth and development of each team member as well. The project manager is unquestionably an indispensable part of the project equation of any successful project.

Another essential component of the developmental process is to create a sense of urgency. Urgency is defined as the importance of swift action and persistent insistence. This mindset creates an all-hands-on-deck phenomenon – a much needed dimension, particularly when there’s no existing reality to hang your hat on. Urgency is also needed to sustain momentum when the best laid plans fail to materialize as anticipated, thus providing the resilience needed to keep everyone on point. This pivotal mindset provides the needed approach required to develop actions for fulfilling the proposed objectives regardless of circumstances.

Next is the ever-present demand for skillful communication. Great concepts to the thinking of one may be an enigma to another. Effective communication requires an exchange of ideas inside the listener’s worldview. To expect someone to understand without bridging the gap of understanding is wasted effort. It is universally understood, though often missing, that creating a positive relationship with another is the first step to clarity, understanding, and partnership. The military is a great example of this. You can’t find a more disparate group of people than in a military unit. They comprise an amalgamation of cultures, wealth, education, and political perspectives. However, regardless of their differences, they achieve partnership and excellence through their alignment based on a mutual love of country.

Finally, Human beings are connected by one consistent and unassailable fact: we are more alike than we are different. Because of this incontrovertible link, it is always possible for people of good intentions to develop these much required new possibilities.